

ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL ASPECTS ON INTERNATIONAL MARKETING AND ADVERTISING AND PROPOSAL OF APPROPRIATE ADVERTISING STRATEGIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN GERMANY AND BRAZIL OF BANK AND BEER COMMERCIALS

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RESUMO

What people value around the world depends on their cultural background. That is why, some people value individuality while others value togetherness; some value spending, others saving; some value cooperation and others competition. Marketing and advertising should be based on consumer's backgrounds. Yet many ethnocentric approaches can be found in the area of marketing. A study shows that Germany and Brazil will be among the ten biggest and most powerful economies in 2050. As both countries are of such importance, many foreign companies try to import their products or even establish subsidiaries. Considering the economic and cultural impact of both countries, this study aims at investigating characteristics of German and Brazilian culture and their influence on advertising, especially in the areas of banking and beer represented by this case study. Furthermore, appropriate advertising strategies based on the findings have been developed in order to avoid intercultural problems. The findings show that the theoretical concepts and models defined by culture researchers can be found in all commercials of the case study. Consequently, the cultural aspects have an influence on advertising. The findings not only confirm differences between German and Brazilian culture, but also point out some similarities. Since the developed strategies include cultural aspects, such as cultural difficulties and the influence of culture on a consumer's behavior, and consider the different stages of marketing, they intend to prevent marketing failures. As most of the analyzed beer brands and banks were national ones, it was assumed that a hypothetic international bank or beer brand would apply these strategies. The findings show that in most cases adapting ads to local culture is the best option.

Keywords: Germany. Brazil. Advertising Strategy. Cultural Aspects. Interculturality.

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INTRODUCTION

Today we live in a globalized world. Most products we use in our daily life are not local products anymore, but are imported from all over the world. In the last decades, specifically since World War II, the world has gone through a great transformation, with many global companies being established worldwide, which originally only served the local customers. While in the 1980s, the term “Global Marketing” did not even exist, today it has become essential for a company’s survival (KEEGAN, 2005, p. 2).

In that regard, it is important for an international company to know the local culture of its markets. What people value around the world depends on their cultural background. That is why, some people value individuality while others value togetherness; some value spending, others saving; some value cooperation and others competition. Marketing and advertising should be based on consumer’s backgrounds. Yet many ethnocentric approaches can be found in the area of marketing. According to Mooij “there may be global products, but there are no global people” (MOOIJ, 2014).

A study by PwC shows that Germany and Brazil will be among the ten biggest and most powerful economies in 2050 (PwC *apud* MARTIN, 2017). Considering the importance of both countries, many foreign companies try to import their products or even establish subsidiaries. We can also find many German companies in Brazil and a growing number of small Brazilian businesses in Germany.

Therefore, in this study the Brazilian and German cultures will be compared with the help of cultural models. Later, the influence of these cultural aspects in ads will be analyzed. Based on the findings, advertising strategies for the intercultural context will be developed.

This study focuses on the bank market as well as on the beer market, as beer is one of the most consumed alcoholic beverages in both countries (SEBRAE, 2014). Further, food and banking are strongly related to culture because they cannot be easily standardized for different countries.

In this study, the influence of cultural aspects in the intercultural advertising in Germany and Brazil will be analyzed. The central research question is “Which cultural aspects influence the intercultural advertising and which advertising strategies should be applied in order to avoid intercultural problems?” For this case study, ads from German and Brazilian banks and beer brands have been chosen. The analysis is based on cultural models.

The study aims at investigating characteristics of German and Brazilian culture and their influence on advertising, especially in the areas of banking and beer. Furthermore,

appropriate advertising strategies based on the findings will be developed in order to avoid intercultural problems.

The specific objectives are:

- Analyze characteristics of German and Brazilian culture based on cultural models (Iceberg and Onion models, Hofstede's dimensions, Hall's dimensions, aspects of intercultural communication/ Lewis Model);
- Define aspects of international marketing;
- Analyze German and Brazilian bank and beer commercials in terms of cultural aspects;
- Compare and summarize the findings;
- Develop adequate advertising strategies focusing on cultural aspects.

During this study, an exploratory research approach has been used. It aims at understanding a specific situation and exploring reality.

First, a theoretical framework and a bibliographical review were developed with the objective to provide a better understanding of this study context.

Next, a case study on the influence of intercultural aspects on ads was carried out. This part of the study is based on secondary data, already collected and available in other studies. Thus, an evaluation schema based on the literature review has been developed. Some parts of the evaluation schema were extracted from a study conducted by Hentzen³.

Among the secondary data, we can find bibliographic material such as academic articles, virtual sources from the internet and manuscripts by different authors. Reference material has been studied in English, Portuguese or German.

For the case study, five German and five Brazilian bank and beer commercials have been chosen. An overview of all bank and beer commercials is displayed in the Appendices A and B. All brands have been chosen according to popularity, customer preference or market share. All 20 commercials, retrieved from the platform YouTube, were analyzed based on the evaluation schema. It is understood that this sample is small and not representative of the whole market. However, the findings and observations analyzed and compared, enabled the author to address the cultural theories and models, explained in chapter two, and apply them to real ads. Based on this, advertising strategies, which consider cultural aspects of both countries, have been developed.

³ Some parts of the evaluation schema have been developed based on a Thesis by Hentzen (2016).

1 THEROETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was conducted in the context of cultural aspects. Hence, culture can be defined according to Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1990, p.3 *apud* SAMLI, 2013, p.19), as “a set of values, ideas, artifacts and other meaningful symbols that help individuals to communicate, interpret, and evaluate as members of a society.” All these factors are learned through social processes and later influence the way members of a group act, think and feel (LANG; BALDAUF, 2016, p.3). As reported by Steers, Sanchez-Runde and Nardon (2012, p.50 *apud* LANG; BALDAUF, 2016, p.3), Hofstede understands culture as a collective programming of the mind through which one group of people differs from another. Additionally, according to Cateora, Graham and Gilly (2011, p.90), Hofstede refers to culture as a “software of the mind”, which people use as a guide in order to think and behave.

Herskovitz (1952, p.634 *apud* CATEORA; GRAHAM; GILLY, 2011, p. 109-118) presents five elements of culture: values, rituals, symbols, beliefs and thinking processes.

Culture can also be compared to an iceberg. This model was developed by Edward Hall in the 1970s. The top, or the 10%, of the iceberg is visible, whereas 90% is below the surface. Similar to this approach is the Onion Model by Hofstede.

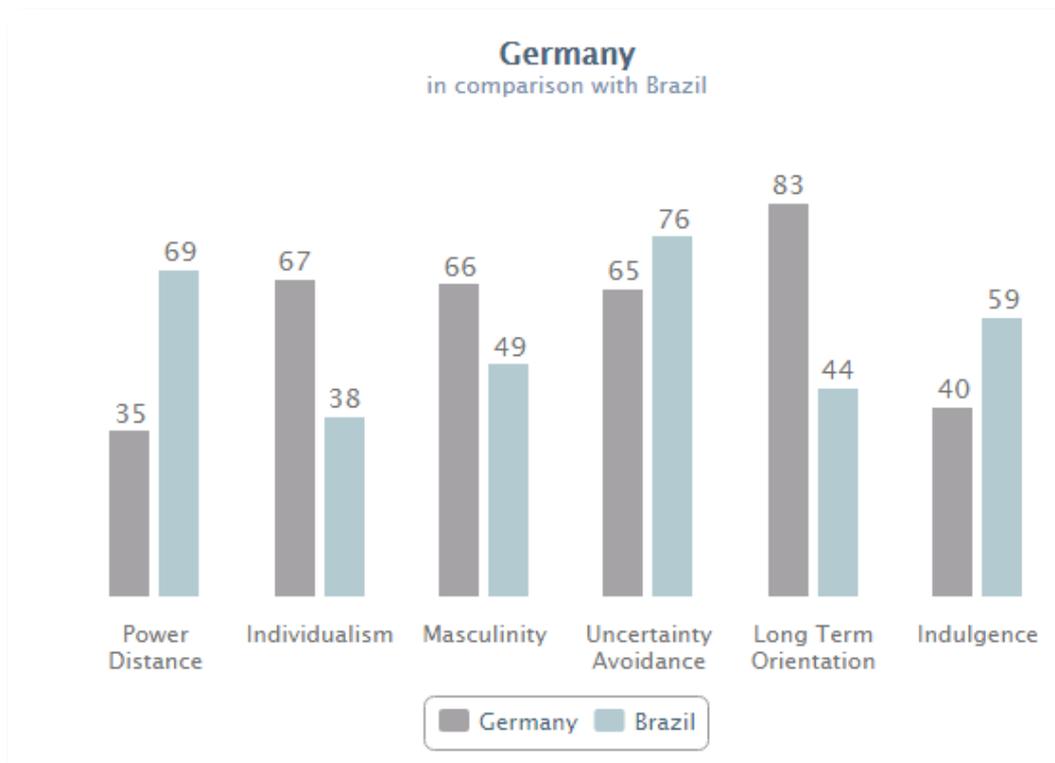
Furthermore, Geert Hofstede conducted a research based on 116,000 questionnaires responded by employees of a multinational company in more than 60 countries in the 1970s (KALE, 1991, p.19). Based on the findings, he developed five dimensions, and added a sixth dimension a few years later: Power Distance, Masculinity, Individualism, Long-term Orientation, Uncertainty Avoidance and Indulgence.

Another cultural researcher is Edward Hall, who defined studied the following dimensions: Time, space and context.

Additionally, the concepts of intercultural communication, such as verbal, non-verbal and paraverbal behavior, have been discussed in the study. Allwood (1985, p.3) defines intercultural communication as “the sharing of information on different levels of awareness and control between people with different cultural backgrounds [...]”.

Another communication researcher is Lewis, who divided people’s behavior into three categories: Linear-active, Multi-active and Reactive. This behavior is formed from learned beliefs and educational socialization (DOESCULTUREMATTER).

FIGURE 1 – Hofstede’s dimensions: Comparison between Germany and Brazil



SOURCE: The Hofstede Centre (2017)

FIG. 1 shows that German and Brazilian culture differ from each other in most of Hofstede’s dimensions. At first glance, we can observe that only in terms of Uncertainty Avoidance the countries behave similarly.

In terms of time, Germany is a monochronic culture whereas Brazil is a polychronic culture. Germans view time as a limited resource, which has to be used efficiently. Comparing both countries’ attitudes towards space, we observe that Germans keep a greater personal distance from other people when compared to Brazilians. According to Hall, people from Northern Europe do not touch each other and if this happens, it requires an apology (Hall, E.; Hall, M.; 1990, p.11 *apud* BANNENBERG, 2011, p. 72). When analyzing the countries’ positioning in terms of context, we observe that Germany belongs to low-context cultures, whereas Brazil is a high-context culture. Germans often express themselves in a direct and explicit way. In their messages, there is no room for interpretations. They also have a great attention span and like to listen to background information (LEWIS, 2006, p.225). On the other hand, Brazilian’s communication style is more implicit. In this culture, part of the message can be conveyed through gestures or facial expression.

The Lewis Model of Crosscultural Communication describes Germany as a linear-active and Brazil as a multi-active culture.

The study also takes place in the context of international marketing and advertising. Cateora and Graham define “International Marketing” as “the performance of business activities designed to plan, price, promote, and direct the flow of a company’s goods and services to consumers or users in more than one nation for a profit” (CATEORA; GRAHAM; GILLY, 2011, p.10). A company that aims at going abroad has to decide about the degree of marketing involvement in another country. Cateora, Graham and Gilly (2011, p.19- 22) distinguish between different stages of involvement, which can occur in a linear sequence or even happen simultaneously.

Another important aspect of international marketing is consumer behavior, where culture can have an important impact on what a person needs and wants to buy.

In the context of advertising, companies make use of advertising in order to communicate messages about the company itself, its products or services. It aims at stimulating a response from the audience. An international marketer faces the challenge of coinciding his advertisement campaign with the local culture. International communication can fail for many reasons, such as language barriers, cultural differences or legal restraints.

When developing a communication strategy, marketers have to decide whether to adapt their advertising to local cultures or not. A company that sells its products in many different markets has to decide to what degree the advertising should be standardized. Standardization means that one or more communication elements are kept the same. These elements include advertising messages and execution of a campaign. This issue has caused a debate among international marketers (KOTABE, 2009, p. 435-436).

2 RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

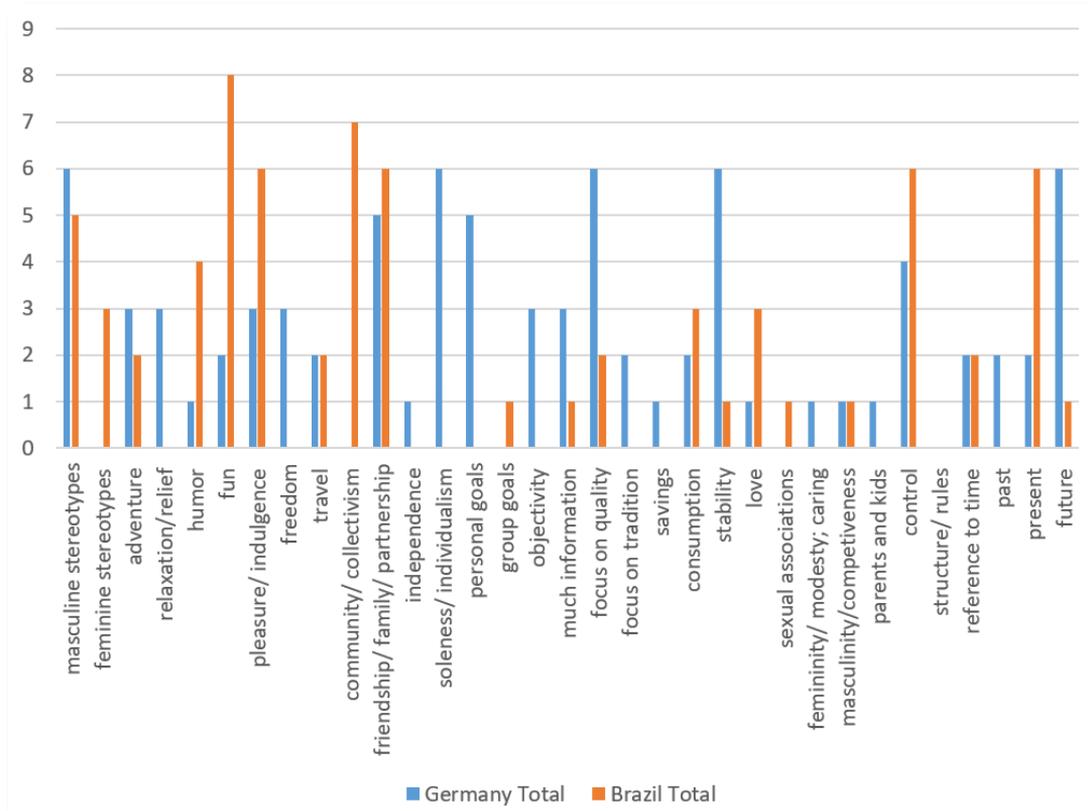
2.1 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The bank and beer commercials have been analyzed based on the cultural theories separately. However, after the analysis, the results have been compared and an overall summary has been drawn.

2.1.1 Hofstede's Dimensions

The results of the most represented contents in all commercials (beer and bank) are illustrated with a graph (GRAPH 1):

GRAPH 1 – Characteristics of content of bank and beer commercials



SOURCE: The author (2017)

NOTE: Numbers show the quantity of characteristics identified

The graph above displays the most represented contents of German commercials: individualism, focus on quality, stability, future and masculine stereotypes. We can relate them to strong individualist values, a need for security and the avoidance of uncertain situations, a long-term oriented way of planning and the prevalence of masculine values. Comparing these findings with the Hofstede's scores, they mostly coincide.

In Hofstede's model, Germany has a high score of Individualism (67), Masculinity (66), Uncertainty Avoidance (65) and Long-term Orientation (83). However, in most commercials we have also found relationships in the form of friendship, family, partnership or community, which means that advertisers still combine individualistic goals and paths with sociable values. Furthermore, especially in the German beer commercials, we also find fun and pleasure/indulgence as a content. That is because

beer is a product, which is strongly related to gratification. However, it is never the main aspect of German commercials (low score of 40 of Indulgence).

When looking at the Brazilian contents shown in all commercials, we can list the following ones: pleasure/ indulgence, fun, community/ collectivism, friendship/ partnership/ family, control, present. Thus, it can be said that Brazilian commercials are strongly influenced by collectivist values, a desire for gratification and fun, a need for avoiding uncertain situations and a focus on the present (short-term oriented). These facts coincide with Hofstede's scores: Brazil has a low score of Individualism (38), a high score of Uncertainty Avoidance (76) and an increased one of Indulgence (59). The score of Long-term Orientation is low (44), which means the society is short-term oriented. Considering all commercials, more masculine stereotypes have been identified, revealing that masculine values influence the Brazilian commercials, despite the country's intermediate score of 49. This can be explained by the fact that advertisers think beer commercials should represent masculinity.

2.1.2 Hall's Dimensions

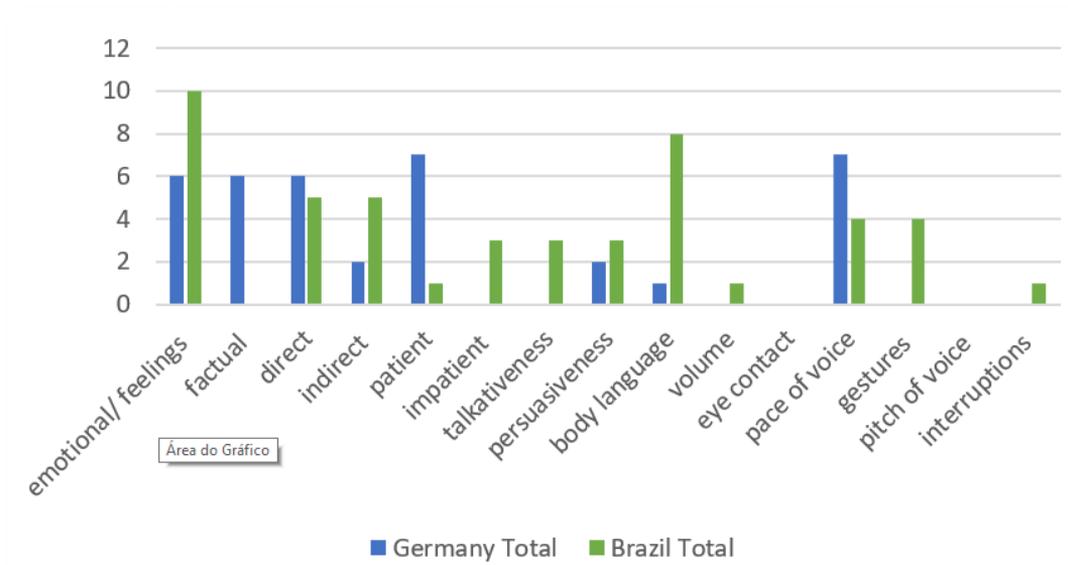
Summarizing all findings, including German and Brazilian beer and bank commercials, it can be said that German ads are influenced by a monochronic understanding of time, represented by linearity and structure. Just in one ad parallel activities have been identified. On the other hand, all Brazilian commercials were influenced by a polychronic concept of time, showing parallel activities and focusing on results.

When it comes to the concept of space, it cannot be confirmed that protagonists in German commercials keep great distances from one another. In the commercials, short distances as well as great distances had been identified. However, in most commercials, the actors did not interact, so the concept of space does not seem to be relevant. On the other hand, in many Brazilian ads, people kept short distances. However, this criterion has not been recognized in all ten commercials.

When comparing contextuality in all commercials, it is noticeable that German commercials are influenced by a low-context culture, sending many explicit messages, whereas Brazilian commercials are influenced by a high-context culture, rather using implicit messages. Nevertheless, both countries directly address the audience.

2.1.3 Aspects of Intercultural Communication

GRAPH 2 – Aspects of Communication in Beer and Bank Commercials as a Total



SOURCE: The author (2017)

NOTE: Numbers show the quantity of characteristics identified

Communication in German commercials is influenced by a linear-active concept. They mostly talk in a direct and factual way, with a patient and calm voice. On the other hand, Brazilian commercials represent a multi-active way of communicating. People make use of their body language and gestures in order to stress their point. Moreover, possible interruptions are tolerated. In many commercials, people are very talkative and do not only say what is necessary, but also point out more details, sometimes even unnecessary things. Communication, despite being identified mostly as direct, presents indirect messages as well, revealing a concern to convey the right messages. In both countries, emotions and feelings have been shown or are appealed to. However, they are more present in Brazilian commercials, a characteristic of multi-active communication. German commercials, on the other hand, display linear-active behavior using facts in a rational way.

2.1.4 Other observations

In the elaboration of the evaluation schema, there has been added a characteristic about the presentation of the product/ service (“is presented”, “is talked about”, “is not mentioned”). During the analysis it was found out that the product/service is most of the time presented and talked about, so it is always mentioned. That is why, this characteristic is not relevant for this study.

When analyzing the context and location of the situations shown in the commercials, we observe that most German ads take place in the context of leisure time (public locations, at home or in nature), and Brazilians in both work and leisure time (at public locations or at home). Thus, both results are similar, and we cannot observe whether one culture values leisure time more than the other one. At least it becomes clear that both cultures place more value on free time than on work, which is influenced by the advertised product (beer).

By analyzing the protagonists, it is observed that in both countries more groups of men than of women are shown. It is a sign of masculinity in both cultures, revealing that beer is still viewed as a “male product”. Furthermore, more groups prevail in Brazilian commercials than in the German ones, a characteristic of high collectivism. The fact that more animals and kids are portrayed in German commercials may explain that Germans try to soften the individualist approach, including collectivist values.

When summarizing the types of messages applied in all commercials, it can be noticed that German commercials use an emotional and moral appeal, whereas Brazilian ads apply mostly emotional appeals; sometimes humoristic appeals. These findings are related to Hofstede’s dimension of Indulgence. German commercials are influenced by a more restrained culture, thus, appealing to rational and moral behaviors. However, the findings reveal that Germans also like emotional appeals, as much as Brazilians do.

Comparing the observable and non-observable values of the Iceberg and Onion Models, it can be observed that Germans openly value enjoyment and fun, relaxation and freedom, quality and tradition, innovation and success of their economy. However, it reflects an indirect observable need for security and control, long-term planning and preserving tradition. Furthermore, Germans value nature, their independence and realization of their personal goals.

On the other hand, it can be observed that Brazilians like fun and joy. Moreover, they engage in actions that are easy and that everyone can perform. They also value technology and innovation. What can be observed directly is that they place great emphasis on enjoying things together with friends or family and living the very moments. When trying something new, they count on help of others, revealing that trust and relationships as well as safety and security are valued characteristics.

Summarizing all other remarkable characteristics of German and Brazilian advertising, it is relevant to say that both countries like to include national features or symbols. For example, a German ad was related to a region within Germany. Further, German advertisers relate to nature and living in harmony with nature, an aspect of their long-term orientation.

Other aspects found in Brazilian commercials were creativity, reference to modern technology and timeliness/ current events. Brazilian advertisers like to include trends, such as modern English words or hashtags. Moreover, many ads display simple language, easy to understand by all viewers.

2.2 CONCLUSION OF THE FINDINGS

In this section, similarities and differences between both countries will be discussed. In the end, a conclusion will be drawn.

As presented in previous sections, most cultural aspects identified in the study, match with the theories by Hofstede, Hall, Lewis and other communication researchers, leading to the conclusion that intercultural aspects influence advertising.

During the study, similarities in terms of Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity could be shown. Commercials of both cultures are influenced by a need for security and masculine stereotypes.

Nevertheless, the study identified differences between both cultures in aspects related to Indulgence, Long-term Orientation, Collectivism and Individualism, attitudes towards space and time, concept of contextuality and communication patterns. Power Distance was not observed as a relevant dimension for both countries, probably due to the selected commercials, which did not reveal remarkable behaviors to be included in the study.

3 DEVELOPMENT OF MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR ADVERTISING FOCUSING ON INTERCULTURAL ASPECTS

In this part, intercultural marketing and advertising strategies will be developed based on the findings. Later, the influence of culture on consumer behavior will be pointed out. Lastly, the importance of adapting the message and the difficulties of creating advertising strategies will be described.

3.1 INTERNATIONAL MARKET INVOLVEMENT AND ADVERTISING STRATEGIES

In the case study, we were able to observe that all commercials have been completely adapted to the national culture of the country, considering that advertising

strategies were mostly developed for national beer and national bank companies, such as Banco do Brasil in Brazil or Krombacher in Germany. However, exceptions include Santander from Spain, Beck's from Brazilian Ambev and Kaiser from the Dutch Heineken group. In this part of the study, we will create hypothetical cases about what would happen if an international bank or beer company were to advertise in Brazil and Germany.

The first consideration refers to the advertising strategy to be applied, which depends on the company's international market involvement. If a bank or beer company does not do any marketing activities in a foreign market (**Involvement: No Direct Foreign Marketing or Domestic Marketing**), it opts for the **ethnocentric** approach and there is no need to develop an intercultural advertising strategy.

In the next scenario, if the beer company sells some of its production in international markets, the approach is still **ethnocentric (Involvement: Infrequent Foreign Marketing or Export Marketing)**. As the development of the product is based on the local customer's need, it will also influence the advertising strategy. In this regard, **standardization in form of export advertising** with a universal appeal is recommended. Thus, the beer company would develop an overall strategy for all countries based on the home country's culture. As an example, an American beer company would sell part of its production to the German and Brazilian market, without considering their local needs. Additionally, if a German beer company would sell its beer to the U.S. or to Brazil, it could choose the country-of-origin ("made in") approach, including the positive stereotypes about German beer (quality, tradition). As banks rarely export their services, this scenario was not considered relevant for them.

In the next scenario (**Involvement: Regular Foreign Marketing**), the beer company focuses more on selling its products abroad. As the sales grow, it may start to **adapt** its advertising strategy focusing on just one market.

During the next stage (**Involvement: International Marketing**), an international beer company establishes subsidiaries or breweries in another country. As an example, an American brand expands to Germany or Brazil and establishes a brewery there. Thus, the advertising strategy is adapted to specific local needs (**geocentric approach**). The advertising strategy is called **adaptation** or Laissez faire when developed by the subsidiary. One commercial would be created for Germany and another one, completely different for Brazil. At this point, all cultural aspects (Hofstede, Hall, Intercultural Communication) can be considered. This also applies to banks.

The involvement reaches the point of **Multinational Marketing** when the beer is sold in many different markets. In order to facilitate the production process, countries tend to be grouped in regions, for example, the European market (**regiocentric approach**).

In this case, an American beer company would choose the advertising strategy of **adaptation**. All commercials would be adapted to one region, but standardized among the countries of that region, for example, by using only one commercial for all German speaking countries in Europe (Germany and Austria). The same can be applied to bank commercials. The regional approach is a combination of standardization and geocentric adaptation (Laissez faire approach). A problem here would be that although both countries speak German and have a similar culture, there are still cultural differences.

During the last stage of involvement (**Global Marketing**), the American beer company would not differentiate between countries. All that matters at this stage are global markets. They are segmented according to income or lifestyle. Thus, the American beer company could develop a **standardized** advertising strategy for all craft beer fans around the world. In this case, the strategy would be the same, but with local adaptations (**geocentric approach**). The difficulty here is that some cultural adaptations and especially language adaptations are necessary. In the area of banking, it would be even more difficult to only segment global markets, as the nature of banking distinguishes among countries. As an example, it would be possible to create only one commercial about a new app for the Brazilian and German market, as long as some small adaptations are made (language, individualism/ collectivism). However, it would be more difficult to create just one commercial for both countries, informing about credits, for example. As discussed before, regarding this kind of service, Germans require more information than Brazilians do.

3.2 CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

As cultural and social factors influence consumer's behavior, adapting advertising strategies is recommendable. All cultural aspects analyzed before (Hofstede, Hall, Intercultural Communication) influence how a person behaves, what he or she needs and expects. Thus, adapting a commercial is important. As an example, because of their culture, Brazilians expect a beer commercial to be funny, emotional and exciting. On the other hand, due to their culture, Germans expect a bank commercial to be more serious and very informative. Additionally, because of their cultural beliefs, Brazilians like to get a credit right away, in order to invest the money right then and then see the immediate results, as in the example of a purchase. As Germans identify themselves with being the nation of brewing beer, advertisers include characteristics that focus on quality and tradition.

When it comes to social factors influencing consumer behavior, Brazilian consumers' behavior may be influenced more by reference groups, such as family and friends, than Germans'.

3.3 TYPES OF MESSAGES

When adapting a commercial to local customs, the message should be adapted. In more indulgent societies like Brazil, it is possible to use emotional, humoristic or sometimes even sexual appeals. However, in little more restrained societies like Germany, people prefer moral appeals. However, emotional appeals are also recommended. Fear appeals may work in both countries, due to their high scores of Uncertainty Avoidance.

3.4 DIFFICULTIES IN INTERNATIONAL ADVERTISING STRATEGIES

Necessary adaptations to be made in commercials for different countries include translations and use of adequate terms of legal restraints and ethical behavior. As observed in the case study, in Germany, people are allowed to drink at the age of 16. Thus, there is no need to avoid teenagers from commercials. To minimize possible legal issues, CONAR has created rules obliging alcoholic beverage ads to include phrases like “Beba com moderação”. Furthermore, people who apparently look younger than 25 cannot be shown in commercials (CONAR, 2008).

CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate the characteristics of German and Brazilian culture and their influence on advertising, especially in the areas of banking and beer. Furthermore, the study seeks to propose the development of appropriate advertising strategies based on the findings in order to avoid intercultural problems.

A bibliographic research was conducted in order to provide a better understanding of all cultural concepts and models. Next, the selected German and Brazilian commercials have been described and analyzed, and the results have been compared. The findings have shown that the theoretical concepts and models defined by culture researchers can be found in the commercials. Consequently, the cultural aspects have an influence on advertising, which means we can confirm the hypothesis presented in the introduction. As the study did not cover the consumers’ reactions, it is difficult to confirm that the ads were actually successful. The findings have confirmed differences (Indulgence, Individualism, Time, Space and Communication) between German and Brazilian culture, as well as some similarities (Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity). Afterwards, advertising strategies have been developed based on these findings. As they include cultural aspects,

such as cultural difficulties and the influence of culture on a consumer's behavior, and consider the different stages of marketing, they intend to prevent marketing failures. As most of the analyzed beer brands and banks were national ones, it was assumed that a hypothetical international bank or beer brand would apply these strategies. The findings have shown that in most cases adapting ads to local culture is the best option. From my point of view, the choice of best advertising strategy depends on the company's goals. If the goal was to become a global company, I would recommend the geocentric approach, standardizing ads among global markets and adapting to local culture.

In a future study, consumers' reaction to ads could be included and compared. Moreover, the sample could be expanded including, a greater number of commercials or ads from other areas, such as from the automotive industry, cosmetics or health.

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