

IMPACT OF CULTURAL VALUES' STABILITY ON STRATEGY OF INTERCULTURAL ADVERTISING

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Abstract

Although phenomenon of advertising is researched for several decades but intercultural advertising is rather new scope of research. One of the key elements that characterise culture is cultural values. The paper proposes two different points of view towards cultural values and their impact on advertising as one of marketing elements. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to reveal how stability of cultural values can impact strategy of advertising.

Cultural values doubtless affect both: customer behaviour and marketing solutions of advertising. Thus cultural values are the crucial element while making decisions concerning with segmentation and positioning. Two different approaches regarding stability of cultural values are represented in scientific literature. Some authors believe that within changing environment mutations of consumption appear, respectively, cultural values undergo changes as well. This means that some values are changed with the other ones. Despite of this, some of scientists highlight that values are basis of culture, so they cannot change. Impact of these two approaches on advertising is revealed in the paper.

Keywords: *culture, cultural values, intercultural advertising, aculturisation, strategy of advertising*

Introduction

Nowadays in the market overfilled with goods and services advertising as mean of communication with consumer becomes one of the contemporary factors. Usually companies strive to influence potential consumers through advertising; therefore it is important to make proper

decisions addressed to the specific target group of consumers. For this reason, today the researchers pay more and more attention to analysis of factors in advertising that affect consumer behaviour.

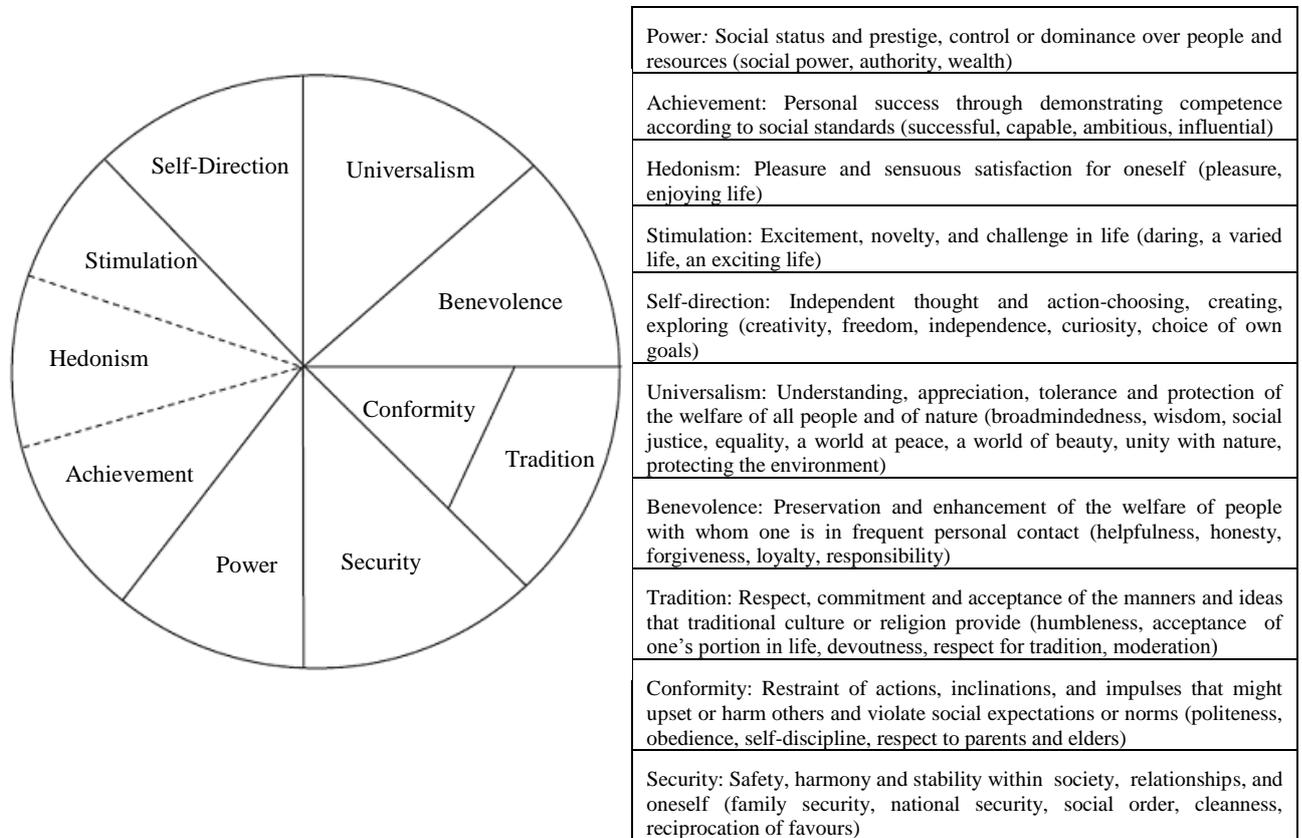
Although phenomenon of advertising has been researched for several decades but intercultural advertising is rather new scope of research. One of the key elements that characterise culture is cultural values. There are two different approaches to cultural values and their impact on advertising as one of marketing elements. Some authors (Mooij, 2005; Watson et al., 2002) maintain that cultural values provide a background of culture and they remain constant over the time. But more and more scientists (Wilk, 2002; Tharp, 2001; Steenkamp, 2001; Richards et al., 2000; Rochon, 2000) state that environment of human being is changing and cultural values change step by step respectively. Referring to these two approaches the following question arises: How does an approach to changing/constant cultural values influence different marketing decisions in advertising? Therefore, the aim of the paper is to reveal how stability of cultural values can impact strategy of advertising.

Essence: impact of cultural values on advertising

According to Tai (2004), advertising is an important mean to stimulate consumers to purchase services or goods, and to decrease perceptible risk in case when tangible objects are advertised and quality is associated with them. Ahmed (2000) states that advertising as a form of social communication is affected by different elements of culture. Although on one hand, cultural values can give different meaning to messages of advertising, but on the other hand, over the time advertising may form and affect values of consumers. Lerman and Callow (2004) confirm that advertising reflects values and beliefs of target group. Cultural values give a background of advertising; therefore usually advertising does not conflict, supports and enables cultural values. Tai (2004) maintains it is proven that advertising reflecting cultural values is more acceptable for a customer than advertising ignoring them.

According to Conway and Swift (2000), cultural values affect people's life-style and decision making. Therefore Bardi and Schwartz (2003) state that values are important for perception of social phenomenon because they are reason of consumer behaviour. Ten universal values spread between different cultures can be defined (see Figure 1). Why do people behave according to their values? Referring to scientists, one of the reasons may be own demand, that beliefs (values) and actions do not conflict each other. Despite of it, Mooij (2005) maintains that paradoxes of values can be found in different cultures. Every culture has its opposite values as well.

For example, in the United States of America, equality is considered as one of the most important



**Figure 1. Universal values in cultures
(modified according to Bardi and Schwartz, 2003)**

values, nevertheless the biggest segregation between wealthy and poor people in the world is namely in the United States. So in common sense, cultural values reflect socially common ideas of what is good and fair, and what is to be sought. The following five features of cultural values may be distinguished (Watson et al., 2002):

- 1) they reflect subjective and emotional beliefs;
- 2) they reveal pursued goals and encourage to reach these goals by certain behaviour;
- 3) they underlie specific actions and situations;
- 4) they act as a guide to evaluate behaviour;
- 5) they are different in their priorities.

According to Mooij (2005), advertising gives value to a product and it becomes a brand. In modern marketing and advertising, values are used to position and differentiate brands from the competitive ones. Values are a background for decision making of segmentation and positioning.

Moon and Chan (2005) stress that it is important to understand cultural values in international marketing and advertising because, as it was mentioned above, cultural values influence characteristics of the country and customer behaviour. Researchers look for universal values characterising and distinguishing cultures. For this purpose, cultural dimensions of Hofstede (2001) are used. According to Hassan et al. (2003), the perception of universal values may be a background for standardisation. However, the majority of researchers uphold the view that advertising should be oriented to cultural differences. Advertising is effective only when it matches values. Usually culture is considered as soft aspect of international marketing. Today even multinational companies consider which strategy – standardisation or localisation – to choose. However, task of marketing specialists is to identify and to meet customer's needs. But aren't customer's needs a result of culture, social expectations of society? In essence, culture provides a guideline for acceptable behaviour in specific situations. Culture affects way of our communication and socialisation in society. It is a strong power forming our motivation, lifestyle and choice of products. For example, people who live in high power distance society expect less responsibility and empathy, and more insurance and flexibility; people living in culture, where uncertainty is highly avoided, value responsibility and faithfulness. The researchers maintain that advertising reflects values of society and that effective advertising and marketing are closely related with culture of target group (Mooij, 2005).

It is proved that advertising reflecting local values of culture is more powerful and more persuadable than advertising not related with the culture. Thus, it is important for marketing specialists to pay attention to values of certain culture, as long as cultural values set norms of behaviour (Nitish et al., 2005). Rawwas (2000) maintains that customers decide what is good and what is wrong according to cultural values. Values influence how customers think or behave. Watchravesringkan (2005) agrees that values are the main incentive factor affecting behaviour related with consumption.

According to Inglehart and Baker (2000), theorists of modernism from Karl Marx to Daniel Bell stated that economical development affects cultural changes. But others from Max Weber to Samuel Huntington pointed out that cultural values are long-term and stable in society. So

there are two approaches. According to one of them, convergence of values is result of modernity as long as economical and political power influences cultural changes. Traditional values are being refused and changed by “modern” values. Scientists who uphold the other approach maintain that traditional values are stable despite of economical and political changes. According to this point of view, values are independent from conditions of economics.

Levitt* states, that despite the fact that globalisation of markets affects cultural values, researches show, that cultural differences still exist. For effective communication we need to know our customers and which factors, including cultural values, affect them.

Stability of cultural values

As it was mentioned above, stability of cultural values, which affect intercultural advertising strategy is object of scientists' disagreement. Thus, two approaches to cultural values have been formed. Some scientists uphold the view that cultural values do not change; others maintain that cultural values change over time.

Cultural values are stable

Mooij (2000) supports stability of cultural values and maintains that although it is proved that economic systems are changing, but there are no proves that human value systems are changing too. Conversely, it is proved that when person's revenue level changes, his/her habits are change too. While revenues increase, people have more freedom to express themselves and to behave according to their own values.

According to Mooij (2000), there are 4 reasons why some researchers and business people do not want to accept that cultural values are stable:

- 1) business people want changes: they mean new tendencies for new business;
- 2) management of most organisations has individualism stimulating universalism; so organisations do not want to accept differences of other cultures;
- 3) it is difficult to prove importance of cultural diversity;
- 4) it is difficult to define cultural values.

* cited by: Watson J., Lysonski S., Gillan T., Raymore L. (2002) Cultural values and important possessions: a cross-cultural analysis. Journal of Business Research, No. 55. p. 923– 931.

Mooij (2005) upholds the opinion, that values as a basis for culture are not intercepted from other cultures, therefore, they do not change. Majority of attitudes and behaviours are based on cultural values, thus they characterise different cultures (Watson et al., 2002).

Maintaining approach that cultural values do not change means recognition that every culture has its own peculiarities and therefore various marketing elements should be presented differently in advertising. As mentioned above, in this case, the most effective advertising is the one oriented to cultural differences.

Are cultural values changing?

According to Hofstede (2001), cultures, especially national ones, are very stable over the time. Tóth and Simányi (2006) agree with him and state that some values are stable and some of them tend to change. Richards et al. (2000), Watson et al. (2002) also agree that cultural values are changing. Wilk (2002) maintains that any change in consumption affects changes of values or beliefs.

Tharp (2001) highlights that changes of values are conditioned by environmental changes and processes of the globalisation, which eliminate more and more borders between different cultures. Environmental changes affect self-perception of customer: individuals evaluate everything according to system of multicultural values that define ideals; and consumption becomes a mean to communicate with other members of multicultural society. Change of consumer's identity is common process in the multicultural society. Differences of changes depend on the new values offered and values accepted. Rochon (2000) distinguishes three types of cultural changes as value conversion, value creation and value connection. These forms of cultural changes differently affect cultural concepts that help to perceive the world.

Value conversion can be perceived as transformation of existing cultural values into the new perception about what is important, true or legal. In the case of value conversion new values deny and change the old ones. Conversion usually is related with *recategorization* of well-known objects into new conceptual packages. The recategorization may influence on how we perceive one or another problem. Value conversion includes evaluation of existing concepts anew. Conversion influences refuse of old behaviour and rules while new ones appear instead of them.

Value creation is development of new perception, new concept or analysis of what to adapt in new situations so that cultural value would be more explicit. Due to value creation effect, some of the problems might become norms of community.

Finally, *value connection* is creation of conceptual relation through elimination of some elements in previous phenomenon and connection of elements in a different way. Value connection is development of new relations between concepts. Although all the above listed forms of value changes shape possible new social powers, especially this is applied for value connection form.

According to Hofstede (2001), changes appear from outside. It may be a natural force or a force from people's life: trade, conquest, economical or political influence and technological achievements. Therefore, Steenkamp (2001) maintains that values may change due to aculturation: when one culture overtakes another culture. Mostly it happens due to migration or other form of intercultural contact (e.g., media or tourism). Tharp (2001), Watson et al. (2002) note that phenomenon of globalisation is reason for aculturation. The scientists distinguish four strategies of aculturation:

- (1) integration (remaining one's own culture and participation in another culture);
- (2) assimilation (participation in another culture, refusing one's own culture);
- (3) separation (remaining one's own culture, refusing another culture);
- (4) marginalisation (refusing both cultures).

Which people participate in aculturation by joining the global culture? Researches show that people, who especially actively participate in aculturation by joining the global culture, are more educated, more affected by media, have been migrated or have been exited by other countries.

Nowadays, scientists pay a great attention to phenomenon of aculturation because its influence on different social phenomenon is more and more evident in the last decades. Traditional marketing complex (product, price, place and promotion) should be extended including other programmes and solutions which more obviously explicit values. Cultural compatibility is the key element of marketing in multicultural society. If products and services correspond to customer's social identity, we need to ensure that marketing goals would be directed to cultural compatibility. Tharp (2001) highlights that leaders in multicultural society are these people and organisations which will be able to communicate with more than one group of subculture at the same moment: they will use values that are universal to all groups of subculture.

Conclusions

Analysis of scientific literature reveals that:

1. Cultural values doubtless affect customer behaviour and marketing solutions, and advertising depends on them as well. Thus values are the main element for decisions of segmentation and positioning. Besides, scientists distinguish ten universal values we can meet almost in all cultures and these universal values make conditions for intercultural advertising.

2. In changing environment, modifications of consumption appear; therefore some of scientists maintain that cultural values change gradually as well: traditional values are changed by "modern" ones. Despite of this, other scientists highlight that values are basis of culture, and therefore, they cannot change. Thus, two approaches were distinguished: cultural values are changing and cultural values are constant over the time.

- According to the second approach, economical systems may change, but not values. Representatives of this approach are convinced that changes of cultural values are beneficial to businessmen, who support universalism of cultures; they also argue that it is difficult to define cultural values and to estimate cultural difference.

- Other scientists state that one of the key factors affecting cultural changes is phenomenon of globalisation. Value conversion, value creation and value connection as forms of cultural changes depend on people, who become more and more mobile or influenced by media. Situation when one culture overtakes values of another culture is called aculturation. Such strategies of aculturation as integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation help people to join global culture.

Although scientists have no unanimous point of approach stability of cultural values, strategy of advertising presentment depends on the approach. If it is assumed that cultures are different and cultural values remain stable, strategy of localisation is recommended. Otherwise, if it is assumed that cultural values are changing and idea of cultural universalism is supported, strategy of standardisation should be chosen. In this case, it is important to ensure cultural compatibility.

We should favour idea of cultural values' change. Off course, due to external environment changes, these cultural value's changes proceed slowly step by step; only few modifications of cultural values could be observed within several generations. Changes in consumption may be noticed rather than changes of cultural values. What strategy of advertising should we choose? It depends on the cultural target groups, which advertising is oriented to. We can deny neither strategy

of standardisation nor strategy of localisation. It may be that step by step strategy of standardisation will overtake strategy of localisation, but it needs time...

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