

The impact of differences in consumer cultural values on the global communication of local brands

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Abstract: This study examines how consumer cultural value differences impact local brands' global communication strategies. Using Hofstede's dimensions and Inglehart–Welzel's cultural map, it reveals cultural variations in responses to brand elements, shaped by identity, ethnocentrism, and proximity. It discusses standardization, localization, and glocalization strategies, highlighting how cultural traits like individualism and uncertainty avoidance moderate their effectiveness. In digital contexts, local brands must adapt messaging for cultural resonance on social media. The study concludes that effective global branding requires cultural sensitivity and strategic flexibility to balance local relevance with global consistency.

Keywords: Consumer cultural values, Local brand globalization, Cultural adaptation, Standardization and, localization strategies, Glocalization

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1 Cross-Cultural Consumer Perceptions and Their Impact on Local Brands' International Expansion

In the ongoing evolution and intensification of globalization, local brands face significant challenges in international market expansion due to cross-cultural consumer perception gaps. Against the backdrop of a paradigm shift in global brand communication from "standardization" to "cultural adaptation," consumer cultural values have emerged as a critical variable influencing brand communication receptivity and effectiveness, attracting substantial scholarly attention. These values not only shape consumers' cognitive patterns and consumption preferences but also profoundly influence their interpretation of brand messaging, emotional expressions, and value propositions.

The role of cultural value differences has become increasingly prominent in information reception and communication pathways, particularly in today's digital media-dominated transnational communication landscape. Existing research demonstrates that when local brands fail to effectively adapt their communication strategies to diverse cultural markets, they frequently encounter issues such as cultural misfit, brand identity deficits, and diminished communication efficacy.

Recent scholarly efforts have sought to integrate cross-cultural theories (e.g., Hofstede, Schwartz, GLOBE) with international brand communication models to examine how cultural congruence can enhance communication performance. However, most studies remain focused on global brands' adaptation to local cultures, leaving a relative paucity of research on how local brands can achieve "effective communication" by addressing cultural differences in target markets. Moreover, as emerging-market brands particularly Chinese brands progress toward internationalization, their cultural strategy choices in global brand communication have become an emerging research focus.

Consequently, a thorough investigation into the impact of consumer cultural value differences on local brands' global communication not only contributes to enriching theoretical frameworks in cross-cultural marketing and brand communication but also provides actionable insights for emerging-market brands seeking viable global communication pathways.

2 Consumer Cultural Values and Local Brand Global Communication

Consumer cultural values represent the deeply held beliefs and preferences that shape individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward brands in different cultural contexts [3]. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory posits that power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint constitute fundamental frameworks for analyzing cross-cultural variations in consumer behavior, which have been widely adopted in international marketing research to examine how deeply embedded cultural values influence consumption patterns across different societies [5]. These values influence how consumers decode brand messages, evaluate authenticity, and form brand loyalty.

The Inglehart–Welzel framework outlines two cultural axes: traditional versus secular–rational values and survival versus self-expression values. Traditional societies prioritize religion and family, often resisting foreign brands, while self-expression cultures favor innovation and global quality. Survival-oriented cultures seek economic security, leading to ethnocentric preferences. Ethnocentric consumers support domestic brands due to perceived moral and economic obligations, viewing foreign purchases as harmful. Country-of-origin effects also influence brand perception, as product quality is linked to national image. Cultural values shape consumer behavior, with collectivist cultures showing stronger group loyalty and reliance on peer endorsements. Long-term oriented and uncertainty-averse cultures exhibit higher brand loyalty and seek detailed product information.

3 Cultural Adaptation in the Global Communication of Local Brands

The process of cultural adaptation represents a critical mechanism through which local brands navigate cross-cultural consumer landscapes during international expansion. Local brands venturing into global markets must engage in cultural adaptation to resonate with diverse consumer segments while retaining authenticity. Cultural adaptation refers to the strategic customization of products, messaging, and communication channels to align with the cultural values, norms, and preferences of target markets. Existing scholarship establishes that successful global communication necessitates strategic alignment between brand messaging and host-market cultural values [2]. This alignment process, termed cultural adaptation, involves the deliberate modification of brand elements including linguistic expressions, visual symbols, and value propositions to achieve cultural resonance with foreign consumers.

Theoretical foundations of cultural adaptation in international marketing are based on Berry's acculturation theory, which includes assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. In brand management, integration, which retains core brand identity while adapting peripheral elements, often leads to better consumer acceptance. Asian brand expansions show that adaptation involves more than translation, requiring deeper semiotic shifts. Xiaomi's European entry, for example, included a repositioning of its brand narrative. Current studies identify three main adaptation dimensions: linguistic, visual, and value-based. Linguistic changes address language barriers, visual adjustments reflect cultural symbolism, and value shifts align with local priorities. Brands targeting both ethnocentric and cosmopolitan consumers may adopt a glocal strategy.

4 The Role of Consumer Cultural Values in Brand Cognition and Communication

The influence of consumer cultural values on brand cognition and communication represents a critical area of inquiry in international marketing research. Cultural dimensions systematically shape consumer responses to various brand elements, including nomenclature, visual symbols, narratives, and advertising content. This section examines three key aspects: (1) cross-cultural variations in brand element reception, (2) the mediating mechanisms of cultural identification and proximity, and (3) differential acceptance patterns between individualistic and collectivistic societies.

Cultural conditioning in consumer interpretation of brand components. Visual symbol reception varies significantly along the uncertainty avoidance dimension, with consumers in high-uncertainty-avoidance cultures exhibiting stronger preferences for conventional symbols and familiar design patterns. Narrative structures in advertising show distinct cultural patterning, where collectivist markets respond more favorably to interdependent storylines featuring group harmony, while individualist markets prefer narratives emphasizing personal achievement. These findings underscore the necessity of culturally calibrated brand communication strategies.

The psychological processes underlying cultural value effects involve two critical mediators. First, cultural identification,

the degree to which consumers perceive brand messages as congruent with their cultural self-concept - significantly predicts brand attitude formation. Second, cultural proximity, defined as the perceived similarity between brand-origin culture and consumer cultural orientation, operates as a key determinant of communication effectiveness. Cultural proximity exceeds threshold levels, it triggers heuristic processing that enhances message persuasiveness. However, recent studies caution against overgeneralization, noting that globalized consumer segments may exhibit attenuated cultural proximity effects ^[1].

Individualism vs collectivism in brand communication acceptance. Individualistic consumers engaged with brand- related content for personal gain, while collectivistic consumers participated to signal group alignment and share affiliation before purchase. Consumers in individualistic cultures readily process abstract brand signals like logos or symbolic imagery, whereas collectivists focus on tangible attributes or concrete person- related cues. This necessitates that globalized local brands adjust their communicative strategy: abstract symbolism appeals to individualists, concrete, personified stories resonate better in collectivist contexts. Collectivist consumers show heightened sensitivity to group identity, a preference for consensus-oriented appeals, and more positive responses to face-saving messages. Emerging research on bicultural consumers suggests that these dichotomies are becoming more nuanced, with hybrid cultural identities generating new patterns of responses.

5 Cultural Challenges and Strategic Responses in Local Brands' Global Expansion

Local brands face cultural challenges like misinterpretation and identity bias when communicating across borders. Misinterpretation occurs when brand elements—names, slogans, or symbols—conflict with local cultural codes, often due to mistranslation. Identity bias arises when foreign brand traits threaten cultural authenticity, reducing consumer acceptance ^[5]. These issues demand strategic choices among standardization, localization, or hybrid “glocal” approaches. Standardization offers consistency and cost-efficiency but suits culturally similar or mature markets. Localization adapts products and messaging to local preferences, proving more effective in emerging or culturally distinct regions. Hybrid strategies blend global consistency with local symbolism—such as Nike’s Chinese Zodiac campaigns—boosting engagement and loyalty. Cultural dimensions, such as individualism vs. collectivism and uncertainty avoidance, moderate these strategies’ effectiveness. High-context, collectivist markets demand localized messaging, while standardized strategies may succeed in low-context or ethnocentric markets only with careful adjustments. In digital spaces, cultural adaptation must extend to social media. Platform-specific norms—emotional tone, timing, and community focus—shape user response. The concept of “franding” (acting as a culturally sensitive brand-friend) enhances brand authenticity and relevance. Cultural proximity also influences content salience: individualist societies prefer identity-driven narratives, while collectivist audiences value community-focused messaging.

Drawing from the literature, successful global communication by local brands requires:

Rigorous cultural audits to identify potential misinterpretation and identity bias.

Selection of appropriate globalization strategy (standardization, localization, or hybrid) based on cultural distance and market characteristics.

Incorporation of local narratives, language transcreation, and culturally salient symbols.

Digital adaptations aligned with platform norms, including franding and community-oriented content strategies.

6 Summary

The paper in this study underscores the profound impact of consumer cultural values on local brands’ global communication strategies. Cultural value systems, rooted in frameworks such as Hofstede’s dimensions and Inglehart’s cultural map, inform consumer attitudes toward branding elements including names, symbols, narratives, and advertising appeals. Moreover, consumer responses are mediated by identity constructs and cultural proximity, which directly influence brand acceptance and word-of-mouth intention. To navigate these cross-cultural dynamics, local brands adopt varying strategies: standardization, localization, or a glocal hybrid. The effectiveness of each approach depends on cultural moderators like individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. Additionally, in today’s digital landscape, the role of culturally adaptive communication, especially on social media platforms, has become crucial for fostering engagement and

authenticity.

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