

An Exploration of Advertising Strategies for Fashion Products from Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract: With globalization developing rapidly, the global fashion sector is expected to reach a market value of \$1.2 trillion by 2029 reference, yet creating effective advertising strategies requires managing cultural quirks. This research examines how advertising strategies for fashion goods in a variety of markets are influenced by cultural aspects, as outlined by Hofstede's (1980) framework and Hall's (1976) theory of high- and low-context communication. After that, this study finds trends in the ways that cultural values impact the visual, verbal, and narrative components of fashion advertisements by examining case studies from China, South Korea, Japan, and the US. Furthermore, this research provides three practical suggestions for brands to create effective advertising strategies for fashion goods.

Key Words: advertisements; fashion goods, intercultural communication; cultural differences; cultural adaptation

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1 Introduction

In today's era of globalization, the whole world is developing as a whole (Ritzer 2007), with cultural, economic, and technological boundaries becoming more porous. The global fashion industry, with its revenue reaching US\$770.9bn in 2024, is projected to reach a market volume of US\$1,183bn by 2029 (Statista 2024), but this rapid expansion is accompanied by challenges, particularly in navigating cultural nuances to create effective advertising strategies. With the electronic commerce market expanding in a rapid way (Aydin & Savrul 2014), borders are becoming increasingly permeable, allowing fashion products to traverse continents and cultures easily. Consequently, the global fashion business has grown into a fiercely competitive field where companies have to deal with local competitors as well as the intricacies of many cultural contexts.

Advertising plays a pivotal role in publicizing products and brand cultures to the public for brands. Many companies have dedicated substantial energy and financial resources to advertising endeavors (Frolova 2014), however, despite these efforts, the correlation between significant advertising investment and conclusive results remains elusive (Valenti et al. 2023). This disparity is especially noticeable in cross-cultural settings, where cultural variations can have a big influence on how well advertising messages are received and work (De Mooij 2019). In academic research, the importance of culture in influencing advertising techniques has been widely demonstrated. To experimentally examine how cultural values impact advertising content and consumer responses, scholars have operationalized Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions (Albers-Miller & Gelb 1996; Taylor 2005) and Hall's (1976) theory of high- and low-context communication. Relevant research shows that culture impacts a lot especially in digital situations (Bai 2016), where social media blurs cultural barriers while increasing the possibility of cultural blunders.

Therefore, this research seeks to address this gap by exploring effective advertising strategies for fashion goods from a cross-cultural perspective. By analyzing advertisements for fashion products, including clothing, accessories, and footwear, disseminated across China, South Korea, Japan, and the US through the lens of intercultural communication theories, the study aims to identify effective advertising patterns and strategies that resonate with local audiences while maintaining global brand consistency.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 The definition of advertising for fashion goods

Fashion items—clothing, accessories, fragrances, and cosmetics—are different from other consumer commodities, due to their symbolic function in conveying identity, status, and cultural affinity (Barnard 2013; Entwistle 2015). For instance, the kimono in Japan is not merely a garment but a symbol of tradition and heritage (Barnard 2013). Therefore, this cultural sensitivity is particularly evident in advertising, where visual and symbolic elements play a crucial role in conveying brand messages and influencing consumer perceptions.

Then, among differentiated representations of advertising in different cultures, the varieties in fashion product advertisements are particularly obvious (Fowler, Reisenwitz & Fowler 2014). For instance, in 2018, H&M was widely criticized for a commercial posted online that showed a black youngster wearing a sweatshirt that stated, "Coolest Monkey in the Jungle". This advertisement was widely criticized for being racially insensitive, particularly in the US, where the term "monkey" has extremely terrible historical overtones when referring to Black people (Campbell 2019). This emphasizes the importance for international companies to balance this conflict by designing their advertising to appeal to a range of consumers while preserving a consistent brand identity.

2.2 Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory provides a framework with six key dimensions that are Power Distance, Individualism and Collectivism, Masculinity and Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint (Hofstede 2011).

Initially developed based on a comprehensive survey of individuals from fifty countries (Hofstede 1983), the theory contains the first four dimensions and it has been widely applied in fields such as marketing, management, and intercultural communication. Over time, Hofstede's framework has been refined and expanded. For instance, Hofstede (1991) introduced an additional dimension, the 'long-term orientation', exploring cultural orientations toward the future and the present. He (Hofstede 2001) revised all relevant publications and studies, and concluded the studies and research of cultural dimensions from 1980 to the early twenty-first century with Minkov (2011). Additionally, researchers, like Harry Triandis (1995), have explored the implications of Hofstede's theories for leadership styles and consumer behavior, providing a more nuanced understanding of cultural differences.

This thesis applies Hofstede's cultural dimensions to analyze the effectiveness of advertising for fashion goods across different cultures. It examines how cultural values impact advertising strategies and customer reactions by concentrating on two crucial dimensions: Power Distance and Masculinity vs. Femininity, intending to offer important insights into developing cultural awareness and advertising strategies for fashion goods that appeal to various audiences by analyzing successful fashion advertising campaigns.

2.3 Edward T. Hall's theory of high- and low-context culture

Edward T. Hall's theory of high- and low-context culture is a foundational framework in intercultural communication, offering critical insights into how communication is influenced by the degree of explicit information in a message (Hall 1976). It serves as a supplement to the analysis of advertisements from the perspective of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and aims to gain a more thorough grasp of how cultural values and communication styles interact to influence consumer behavior and advertising effectiveness by combining Hall's theory with Hofstede's dimensions.

According to Hall (1976), high-context cultures rely heavily on implicit communication, where meaning is embedded in the context, non-verbal cues, and shared experiences. Conversely, low-context cultures prioritize explicit communication, where meaning is conveyed through clear, brief, and direct information and messages. It has been expanded and refined by other scholars. For example, Kim (2001) used Hall's theory to examine global marketing, emphasizing how crucial it is to modify advertising tactics to fit the target audience's cultural background.

In sum, this thesis aims to analyze some advertisements posted in various cultural regions for fashion products with the application of Hall's high- and low-context theory aligning with Hofstede's cultural dimensions, providing further information on words, music, and other elements, to explore comprehensive advertising strategies.

3 Examining Variations in Advertising Across Cultures

3.1 The influence of Masculinity-Femininity on advertising across cultures

The Masculinity-Femininity cultural dimension in Hofstede's cultural framework plays a significant role in affecting advertising strategies, particularly in how gender roles, values, and societal expectations are portrayed.

In masculine cultures, advertisements that emphasize dominance, success, and traditional gender hierarchies often represent the values of societies with a high masculinity index, which place a strong emphasis on competitiveness, performance, and assertiveness (Hofstede 1983). In particular, advertisements in cultures with high levels of masculinity typically highlight themes of competitiveness and achievement while portraying women as inferior to men. For instance, research from Hofstede Insights of The Culture Factor Group (2025) shows that China and the US have a comparatively high motivation for success and accomplishment, scoring 66 and 62 separately. This could be seen in The Year of the Snake with Xiao Zhan and Ni Ni, an advertisement by Gucci targeting the Chinese customer group, which features Xiao Zhan and Ni Ni and emphasizes luxury and power dynamics, fitting in with the male cultural focus on ambition and prestige. Moreover, Xiao Zhan, the male character, appears earlier as the first role in the advertisement, while Ni Ni, the female character, shows up for at least three seconds less than Xiao Zhan as the second key character, in an advertisement of merely 47 seconds. Likewise, the advertisements of fashion goods posted in the US portray bold and confident individuals in competitive settings, reinforcing the cultural preference for achievement and individuality. For instance, an effective illustration of masculinity in advertising is Nike's 2018 commercial, featuring Colin Kaepernick, a former NFL player and civil rights activist. The advertisement features Kaepernick's visage along with the words, 'Believe in something even if it means sacrificing everything.'. This campaign highlights qualities that are essential to traditional male ideals, such as bravery, tenacity, and sticking up for one's convictions. In particular, this advertisement appeals to a manly audience that values action and conviction by presenting Kaepernick as a strong and resilient person, therefore helping Nike align its brand with moral integrity and tenacity.

In contrast, feminine cultures, which prioritize cooperation, care, and equality (Hofstede 1983), tend to create advertisements that highlight relationships, inclusivity, and balanced gender roles. For instance, Cartier's advertisement in France, Cartier Tank Française: Rami Malek and Catherine Deneuve directed by Guy Ritchie, focuses on emotional connections and shared experiences, reflecting the cultural value of harmony and mutual respect. Specifically, five different main female characters, who appear in the advertisement, have unique features in their dressing styles and characteristics, and all of them have a short and even interaction with Rami Malek, the main male character, with mutual respect, as the man is always recording the elegance and graceful bearing of these women with his camera, phone, and drawings. In the same way, brands in cultures with a high index of femininity highlight collaboration and everyday comfort and draw attention to the distribution of male and female characters in terms of time, wearing, and makeup. For example, in UNIQLO LifeWear Spring/Summer 2023, an advertisement posted in Japan, there are characters from different regions and genders, and all of which are jovial and appear with a relatively even frequency and duration. Besides, all of the characters in this advertisement seem to enjoy the comfort provided by the clothes of UNIQLO according to their relaxing and happy facial expressions. The way that all people are treated equally and that everyone shows off their new clothing products by working together is a typical representation of feminine cultures. Hence, these examples illustrate how the Masculinity-Femininity dimension influences the portrayal of gender roles and values in advertising for fashion goods, shaping consumer perceptions and responses across different cultural contexts.

Therefore, the Masculinity-Femininity dimension influences how gender roles are distributed and how their values are portrayed in advertisements for fashion goods. In masculine cultures, advertisements tend to emphasize competitiveness, success, and traditional gender hierarchies, and the time of appearances of male characters is generally longer than the female ones. However, feminine cultures, such as South Korea, prioritize cooperation, care, and gender equality. Marketers must consider these differences when creating advertisement strategies for fashion goods, ensuring that they align with the cultural values and expectations of their target audience.

3.2 The impact of the Power Distance on advertising across cultures

Advertising strategies across cultures are also greatly influenced by Hofstede's Power Distance Index (PDI), which shapes how authority, social hierarchies, and the employment of influencers or celebrities are depicted. While equality and relatability are valued more in low-PDI cultures, authority and status are valued more in high-PDI societies (Hofstede 1983). Therefore, this factor has a significant impact on how celebrities and influencers are used in advertising for fashion goods as how they are portrayed frequently reflects social views on hierarchy and power.

Celebrities, including stars and influencers, are defined as individuals widely recognized for their fame, particularly in the entertainment industry (Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary 2003). They have their influence range in different fields, such as politics, business, and art (Al-Jamoor & Faiq 2022), and they are often perceived as possessing a certain level of authority, status, and expertise that resonates with the target audience (Paek 2005). This means that their influence enables them to be powerful tools for brands to associate with target customer segmentation, particularly in cultures where hierarchical structures are deeply ingrained. In particular, in countries with a high PDI according to the Hofstede Insight of The Culture Factor Group (2025), such as China, Singapore, and South Korea, celebrities are frequently portrayed as aspirational figures, representing authority, power, and achievement. For example, the well-known Chinese brand Bosideng often showcases well-known Chinese stars and powerful athletes, such as Yang Zi and Gu Eileen, the youngest Olympic freestyle ski champion. Yang Zi, the only main character in its advertisement, New Year Down Jacket is Now Available, Offering 48 Years of Warmth with Yang Zi, sends the viewers warm wishes and blessings. This approach enables the advertisement and Bosideng to reach customers in high-PDI societies successfully, which not only upholds the reputation and image of the company but also conforms to the cultural tendency for aspirational and hierarchical messages.

Besides, in South Korea, also a country with high PDI, individuals are often drawn to advertisements that feature celebrities, including idols, as they are more inclined to purchase the products being promoted (Halim & Kiatkawsin 2021). Therefore, brands in South Korea, like Scarlett and Amuse, regularly collaborate with popular K-pop idols and girl groups, such as Jang Wonyoung and TWICE, leveraging their influence to enhance product appeals and credibility. For instance, AMUSE CERAMIC SKIN characterizes Jang Wonyoung's popularity and her milky skin to promote the product's (air cushion) silky texture, safe ingredients, and minimalist packaging. Overall, this example, applying an advertising strategy catering to the high-PDI cultures, addresses the cultural desire for dominant and powerful individuals in South Korea by utilizing the aspirational traits of a popular K-pop idol.

In contrast, low-PDI cultures, such as the US (see Figure 3), tend to use celebrities and influencers less to not reinforce power hierarchies and more to foster relatability and authenticity. Meanwhile, advertisements in these cultures often emphasize shared values or experiences (Paek 2005), showing the product functions and creating a sense of connection between the audience and the brand. For example, in the advertisement of Zara posted in the US, Zara | Behind your click. New York, the characters are not celebrities and the storyline and images mainly concentrate on the procedure behind a click, a purchasing behavior, including designing, producing, packaging, and delivering. Instead of featuring celebrities, this advertisement highlights the effective machines and adept skills of designers in the production chain, aligning with the cultural preference of low-PDI cultures for authenticity and relatability, fostering a deeper emotional connection with its target audience in the US.

In conclusion, the Power Distance Index impacts how celebrities and influencers are used in advertising to some extent. Specifically, advertisements in cultures with high PDI place more value on authority, hierarchy, and aspiration, whereas those in cultures with low PDI prefer to value relatability, equality, and authenticity. In an increasingly interconnected global market, marketers may boost their brands' success in advertising fashion goods by developing more effective strategies that take these cultural dynamics into account and foster cultural awareness.

3.3 The impact of high- and low-context cultures on advertising across cultures

The use of words in advertising for fashion goods is a crucial aspect that can significantly affect the effectiveness of the advertisement. The choice of words plays a vital role in conveying the intended message and establishing an emotional connection with the audience. Two distinct approaches to word usage in advertisements of fashion goods are high-context and low-context (Broeder 2021), catering to different cultural backgrounds and audience knowledge.

In some high-context countries, such as China, storytelling often relies on implicit communication, symbols, and non-verbal cues to create an exclusive image that requires the audience to decode subtle messages (Bai 2016). For example, the Nike advertisement, Lunar New Year: The Great Chase, highlights the function of Nike shoes by depicting a girl running away from a little red envelope given annually by her aunt. This exemplifies high-context advertising because there are no words in the advertisement describing the comfort and functions of the shoes worn by the girl. Instead, the visuals and narrative implicitly showcase the speed and performance of the shoes, allowing the audience to interpret the message based on cultural and contextual knowledge. This approach resonates deeply with high-context audiences who value nuanced and symbolic storytelling.

Conversely, low-context storytelling in advertisements employs explicit communication and assumes less prior knowledge of the product (Bai 2016). This way of storytelling could be observed in countries with low-context cultures, including the US and the UK. For example, Under Armour's advertisement, The Only Way is Through, through giving pictures of people exercising in different scenes with motivating words, such as 'Through the unknown' and 'only one way', tells the audience and its customers directly about its brand culture and gives people a strong sense of motivation to exercise and work out. This direct approach not only explicitly communicates the brand culture of perseverance and determination with the customers, leaving little room for interpretation, but also aligns with the cultural preference for clarity and straightforwardness in low-context societies.

The selection between high-context and low-context storytelling in advertisements for fashion goods depends on the cultural background of the target audience and the desired emotional response. Both approaches have their strengths, and their effectiveness depends on the nature of the product and the audience's contextual knowledge. For example, Nike's Just Do It campaign is an example of an advertising strategy that takes cultural context into account, highlighting the significance of tailoring messaging for a range of audiences from different nations. In the Chinese version of the campaign, the advertisement relies on song lyrics and visuals to convey the 'Just Do It' spirit without explicit words, meeting the high-context communication style of China. In contrast, the versions for the US and Spain use direct language, such as 'Stay that Way.' and 'Be the fastest ever!', and straightforward images, catering to low-context audiences.

In conclusion, developing successful advertising strategies requires an awareness of the differences between high-context and low-context cultures. Low-context cultures favor direct, clear communication, whereas high-context cultures gain from implicit and symbolic storytelling. Marketers can make sure that their advertisements resonate more successfully and forge a stronger emotional bond by tailoring their content to the cultural context of their target audience.

4 Recommendations for Cross-cultural Advertising

According to the analysis and discussion as above, it is essential to comprehend that creating effective advertising strategies for fashion goods requires an awareness of understanding Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Hall's theory of high- and low-context cultures. Brands should use a culturally aware strategy to guarantee cultural appropriateness and optimize effect. Three suggestions for developing successful and culturally relevant advertising campaigns are provided below.

4.1 Research on target culture

First, brands are recommended to thoroughly understand the cultural values, norms, and preferences of their target audience, as well as the cultural differences among various cultures over the world. In particular, they could form a specialized team to conduct relevant research and studies on the cultural attributes of their target audiences. Besides, it is strongly advised that businesses carry out their cultural tests in their targeted nations and cultures to obtain a deeper understanding of the local values, customs, and consumer behavior of their particular target segments, even though existing research, such as Hofstede's cultural dimension scores (1983), offers a helpful beginning point. This guarantees that their fashion product advertising campaigns are both culturally appropriate and appealing to regional consumers.

Except for practicing experiments and studies with complex procedures for a long period, companies are suggested to collaborate with the local governments, the official departments in their targeted countries, and resourceful strategic companies to expedite this process. This is because many countries, such as Singapore (Enterprise Singapore 2024), have

already put laws and programs in place to draw in foreign investment and foster international cooperation. In this way, companies could not only save time and effort on preliminary research, such as gaining access to useful and applicable data and insights but also speed up the cultural audit process to improve the efficiency of getting the results of culture audits.

4.2 Adaptation to target market

After getting the cultural measurement results of target regions, it is highly recommended that brands adapt to the objective market by tailoring visuals, language, and messaging to align with cultural contexts. This is because information spreading, appeals designing, and styles of advertising vary in various nations and cultures (Usunier & Lee 2013). Accordingly, companies could design advertisements referring to four dimensions as follows, including Masculinity and Femininity, Power Distance Index, and high- or low-context.

First, marketers are advised to design factors in advertisements according to the local cultural attributes, including the balance of male and female roles, competitive factors, and cooperative presentation. For example, when creating advertisements for customers in masculine cultures, companies are typically recommended to highlight achievement, competition, and conventional gender roles, while for audiences in feminine societies, it is more important to value and present balanced gender roles, collaboration, and compassion. However, as the world becomes gradually integrated, it is also suggested that brands consider changing elements, such as globalization and the quick spreading of information through the Internet.

Second, customer reflections towards advertisements are also influenced by the Power Distance Index of various cultures, specifically on the application of celebrities and influencers in the advertisements. This means that in the field of leveraging famous and influential people, such as influencers, brands are advised to highlight the role of celebrities and influencers in creating culturally relevant campaigns. For example, whereas companies in low-PDI cultures, like the US, prefer to concentrate on the function and quality of fashion products, those in high-PDI countries, such as South Korea and China, invest more in inviting celebrities to sponsor their products due to the power and the social status of celebrities in the public. However, when selecting the spokesperson, it is also suggested for brands to refer to the local popularity of celebrities, instead of an international one.

Third, brands are suggested to raise their awareness of the high-context and low-context culture theory, as it has an impact on the word choice and narrative in advertisements for fashion goods. In particular, advertisements in high-context cultures, like China and Japan, are suggested to focus more on subtle meanings, symbolism, and implicit communication, such as traditional symbols. For example, red is always seen as the representative color of festivals, family reunions, and celebrations in China, and brands could use it as a background color to set the atmosphere of happiness, enjoyment, and family warmth. However, when designing advertisements for customers in low-context societies, such as the US and Germany, brands are suggested to apply a more straightforward, unambiguous, and clear communication style with simple words and phrases, such as 'Just Do It!'. It is therefore vital for brands to make sure their message is both comprehensible and engaging to their target audience by tailoring their storytelling tactics to the cultural environment.

In conclusion, adjusting to the target market necessitates a thorough comprehension of cultural factors and how they affect advertising. Brands may develop culturally relevant and successful advertising strategies for fashion goods by targeting certain cultural characteristics, utilizing celebrities appropriately, and modifying language, imagery, and messaging to fit cultural settings.

4.3 Testing on advertisements locally

Based on the first two steps of researching and adapting to the target culture, advertising for the target audience is complete, and companies must test it locally. Conducting tests is a tried-and-true method of enhancing outcomes and gaining an edge over competitors (Campbell et al. 2021), helping companies not only grasp general knowledge of the reflection of local customers towards the pre-testing advertisements but also further understand their targeted culture.

First, it is advised that brands use local focus groups to test their advertisements to get feedback and spot any possible problems. This approach also allows brands to reconfirm their target cultural identity and features, helping companies with their next and future marketing actions. Generally, there are numerous methods of pre-testing the advertisements to help

brands measure the effects of advertising (Korotkov 2011). Focus groups, in particular, are made up of members of the target audience who may offer insights on how the advertisement is seen and whether it is consistent with regional cultural norms. Specifically, brands could design questionnaires from the perspectives of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Hall's high- and low-context theories and devise a corresponding interview list to get a complete understanding of their targeted cultures. To make sure the language and graphics appeal to their tastes and cultural norms, a fashion business venturing into the South Korean market, for instance, may test its campaign with a sample of young adults, who make up its target consumer segmentation. In this approach, brands may improve their advertisements to better engage their target demographic by implementing focus group input and adjusting their advertising elements and structure according to the reflection of focus groups from cross-cultural perspectives.

Second, brands are strongly recommended to get ready to make the necessary modifications if the feedback indicates misunderstandings or unfavorable responses among the target audience. This might entail changing the messaging, language, or images to better suit the cultural norms of the area, especially if there are some inevitable errors between theory and realistic circumstances. For example, the company may use more symbolic imagery and nuanced narrative to better connect with the high-context communication style in Japan if a campaign is seen as being too direct or lacking in emotional depth. Therefore, brands may make sure their advertisements are successful and suitable for the target culture by iterating in response to feedback. For instance, in Valentino's Chinese New Year Capsule | Valentino ROSSO, Valentino conveys and renders the mood that the Chinese Lunar New Year advertisement seeks to portray while being loyal to its cultural philosophy. Through Sun Li's elegant motions, the firm not only demonstrated its principles of refinement and elegance but also captured the vibrant Chinese Lunar New Year mood with large areas of red. Nonetheless, if the majority of the comments and assessments are favorable, the commercial may be widely disseminated and promoted, indicating that it has successfully assimilated into the local culture. By using this strategy, companies may steer clear of cultural blunders and misconceptions that can damage their brand or drive away their target market. Besides, brands may gain the target audience's confidence and credibility by proactively resolving any problems and further information and mastery of their targeted cultures.

To sum up, one of the most important steps in making sure that cross-cultural advertising campaigns are successful is testing advertisements locally. This could help brands produce advertisements that connect with their target demographic and accomplish their marketing goals by using focus group testing, iterating depending on input, and avoiding cultural blunders. Furthermore, this could also help companies enhance the understanding of their targeted culture.

5 Conclusion

In summary, the examination of fashion product advertising tactics from a cross-cultural standpoint highlights the significant influence of cultural elements on the efficacy and reception of commercials. The theoretical frameworks of Hall's high- and low-context cultures and Hofstede's cultural dimensions were examined in this study to identify important tactics that might assist marketers in navigating the challenges of global marketplaces, showing that Hall's high- and low-context communication theory and Hofstede's cultural dimensions offer a strong foundation for comprehending how cultural elements influence fashion advertising strategies. Besides, this study confirms that cultural sensitivity is a requirement for global businesses. Iterative testing and cultural audits should be businesses' top priorities going ahead to steer clear of the problems associated with one-size-fits-all advertising.

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