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Hachtmann, Frauke, "Review of Consumer Behavior and Culture: Consequences for Global Marketing and Advertising by Marieke de Mooij" (2004). *Faculty Publications, College of Journalism & Mass Communications.* Paper 15.
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Published in the Journal of Advertising Education (2004) v. 8, no. 2.
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Consumer behavior and culture: Consequences for global marketing and advertising

By Marieke de Mooij

(Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003; 360 pages; paper; $39.95; ISBN: 0761926690)

For those of us teaching a global advertising course, Marieke de Mooij is no stranger. If you are familiar with her previous book *Global Marketing and Advertising,* you are well aware of the theories and models de Mooij uses to help students and practitioners understand the importance of culture in the communication process. In her new book, she discusses one of the most fundamental issues in global advertising: whether to standardize the product/message or to differentiate it.

In the first chapter, she refers to Ted Levitt's famous article published in *Harvard Business Review* in the early '80s, in which he argued that new technology would lead to homogenization of consumer wants. De Mooij quickly refutes Levitt's argument by offering empirical evidence that consumers worldwide are quite different, and that differences in consumer behavior between countries have been increasing instead of decreasing. De Mooij almost appears to be on a crusade to stop advertising standardization altogether. The new book could easily be considered an extension of her previous one, with this volume focusing on consumption and consumer behavior instead of the influence of culture on branding and advertising in general.

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After reviewing Levitt's and other myths of global marketing, De Mooij concludes that regardless of certain groups across countries own the same things, their motives for buying and using the products vary greatly. The book approaches consumer behavior across cultures by reviewing various existing theories and models, and integrating the factor of culture into these theories.

As in her first book, de Mooij makes a strong case for using fellow Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede's "Five Dimensions of Culture" model. She discusses the works of many other researchers as well, including Schwartz's "Seven Value Types of Motivational Domains," and Kahle and Timmer's "List of Values," to name but a few.

Chapter 3 introduces the author's current research, discussing convergence and divergence of consumer behavior at length, and offering a statistical model that measures this dichotomy. She argues that cultural variables—rather than demographic information—should be used to explain consumer behavior. Because consumer behavior is based on the individual, de Mooij discusses personality and identity at length, as these concepts apply to the varied domains of human behavior, consumer product branding and corporate identity formulation.

In the final chapters of the book, de Mooij concentrates on human internal and external functioning and its relation to consumer activity. She approaches the internal aspect via a discussion of human cognitive processes, such as perception and learning. In contrast, she tackles external functioning and influence in terms of human interaction with environmental and cultural stimuli, with supporting statistical results. Cultural values, she argues, are an integrated part of the consumer, not an environmental factor. Finally, a third aspect, combining both internal and external interaction and processes, is addressed via the topic of language usage, formulation and reception.

The majority of the book concentrates on the consumer and how culture influences consumer behavior. de Mooij provides plenty of graphs and charts to explain different theories and models, but an undergraduate student might find the text somewhat dry and rather complex because of the multitude of empirical data contained in each chapter.

Overall, the content of this book is rich and the author does an excellent job of explaining why culture is so important regarding to global advertising. de Mooij focuses her last chapter on applying the theories and models discussed in the book to global marketing and advertising, which is particularly valuable. It reminds us to see the bigger picture, and in this era of globalization, we must understand the consumer first before attempting to communicate with different cultures. Another reason I recommend adding the book to your library is its discussion of theories and models in international advertising and marketing. In my opinion, it's a must for every researcher interested in cross-cultural and international advertising research.

—**Frauke Hachtmann**
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