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The Effects of Culture on International Advertising Appeals: A Cross-Cultural Content Analysis of U.S. and Japanese Global Brands

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A cross-cultural content analysis of U.S. and Japanese global brands

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Introduction

The emergence of international advertising parallels the growth of the global market, and understanding cultural differences is often considered a prerequisite for successful international advertising (Keegan, 1989). Ideally, an international advertising campaign can be standardized in creative strategy, but localized in execution. Therefore, as an integral part of the execution, advertising appeals should be tailored to local culture to maximize the effectiveness of international advertising campaigns while minimizing cost. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether advertising appeals mirror predictable differences in cultural values. A quantitative content analysis with independent samples t-tests is conducted to analyze the variance of sample means.

The analysis of individualism and collectivism, together with high- and low-context communication values, has been most often employed in the research of advertising cultural implications. Individualism and collectivism are concepts developed by Hofstede (1980) to help understand cross-culture value systems. The influential Hofstede model (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede & Muij, 2010) distinguishes cultures according to six dimensions: power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-/short-term orientation, and indulgence/self-restraint.

While individualism and collectivism have been widely discussed in published studies, other dimensions in Hofstede's model that are also important indicators of advertising appeals have not yet been systematically studied. For example, the sixth and new dimension, "indulgence versus restraint," was added to Hofstede's cultural model in 2010. It has been the least studied cultural dimension and has not yet been widely adopted in intercultural studies. Therefore,

another purpose of this study is to scrutinize these cultural dimensions for a better understanding of the interplay of culture and advertising appeals in cross-national settings.

This study pairs the United States and Japan to investigate advertising content across sharply contrasting cultures. The United States is the most individualistic country and the largest advertising market in the world. Likewise, Japan is selected for its cultural uniqueness and influence in the international advertising market. The Japanese advertising market is one of the most mature markets worldwide, ranked the second largest in Asia and the third largest in the world. Furthermore, due to the isolation created by language and geography, Japanese advertising remains relatively less investigated.

Literature Review

International advertising: standardized vs. localized

The advertising industry serves an important purpose in our society by acting as the main source of information for consumers about products. According to its annual Global Advertising Forecast report, research entity Magna Global, saw big brand budgets and cyclical events such as the Olympic Games and U.S. presidential election drive 2016's global advertising revenue growth to \$493 billion.

The prevailing trend of globalization in the marketplace brings a long-standing debate about standardized versus localized advertising. Researchers have identified several key drivers of standardization in advertising. For example, Kanso and Nelson (2002) indicate that nowadays consumers have become more homogeneous, and basic human needs have also become more universal than before, thus standardized approaches in advertising campaigns can be used to in a global context. Specifically, individualism, which emphasizes personal needs and functional

benefits, is a powerful cultural indicator of the universal needs. Furthermore, according to Sacriste (2002), advertising emerges in the space of individualism, and individualism is the prevailing appeal regardless of culture. This is consistent with Pineda's (2015) finding that American and Spanish newspaper advertisements tend to emphasize individualistic appeals, and individualistic values have spread throughout advertising discourse. In their study of advertising appeal effectiveness in Poland and the United States, Lepkowska-White and her colleagues (2013) also find that marketers can standardize advertising appeals since a functional advertising appeal is most popular in both countries regardless of product type.

In addition to the universal needs of consumers, the convergence of global culture is another facilitator of standardization in advertising. In his study, Gould (2014) demonstrates how global cultures merge into one culture and in what way advertising changes the world's cultures. The evidence of merging global culture is identified as "global consumers are less interested in the nationality of the products they consume as they are in matching likes and dislikes; global advertisers are less interested in cultural differences as they are in successful communication of a message; the advertising starts from a Western perspective, then adds what is necessary (Gould, 2014, p. 292)."

Gould's (2014) argument that advertising starts from a Western perspective is supported by various studies, and the influence of Western culture on advertising standardization has drawn researchers' attention. In their work dating back to the early 1990s, Ramaprasad and Hasegawa (1990) analyze 410 Japanese television commercials and find that the commercials attach attributes of Western symbols in terms of characters and language. A majority of the Japanese commercials use spoken and written English, and about a sixth use western music and non-Japanese characters. Similarly, when it comes to celebrity endorsement, Morimoto and Chang

(2009) note that the use of Western models is prominent in advertisements carried in both Japanese and global magazines.

Previous research also reports the merits of a standardized approach, such as cost reductions through the joint conception and execution of an advertising campaign in several countries (De Mooij 2005; Hill 2004). Furthermore, Doole and Lowe (2003) suggest that a standardized campaign can prevent consumers from image confusion and irritation when viewing different advertising campaigns from different countries.

Although standardization in advertising has gained support, a considerable amount of previous research has focused on the cultural uniqueness of a national market. Through an analysis of advertisements in the United States and China, Wei and Jiang (2005) indicate that culture has a greater impact on execution than on creative strategies: “the more culturally different the target market is from the home country, the more localized the execution should be (p. 828).” Ideally, an international advertising campaign can be standardized in creative strategy, but localized in execution. Therefore, as an integral part of the execution, advertising appeals should be tailored to local culture to maximize the effectiveness of international advertising campaigns while minimizing cost.

Cultural characteristics: individualism vs. collectivism

Cultural values are one of the most studied topics in cross-cultural advertising research. Hofstede (1980, p. 19) defines culture as: “the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influences a group’s response to its environment.” Studies show that cultural values are central to understanding differing behavioral patterns between people of various societies (Hofstede, 1980). Essentially, advertising is designed to influence attitudes that a consumer has

toward a brand. Since cultural values have a significant impact on personal attitudes and behaviors and will logically lead to brand beliefs, it is important to investigate the extent to which advertising mirrors cultural values.

The analysis of individualism and collectivism, together with the high- and low-context communication values, has been most often employed in the research of advertising cultural implications. Individualism and collectivism are concepts developed by Hofstede (1980) to help understand cross-culture value systems. The influential Hofstede model (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede & De Mooij, 2010) classifies cultures into six dimensions: power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-/short-term orientation, and indulgence/self-restraint. The model provides scales from 0 to 100 for 76 countries for each dimension, and each country has a position on each scale or index, relative to other countries.

Hofstede (1980) describes individualism-collectivism as the relationship between the individual and the collectivity in a society. Members in individualistic culture tend to focus on their personal goals. They hold an independent view of the self that emphasizes initiative, achievement, independence, and uniqueness of individuals (Tomkins, 1984). On the contrary, members in a collective society act in the interests of the group and not necessarily of themselves. They are focused on group goals, public welfare, and cooperation between members of the public.

According to Hofstede (1980), with a score of 91, the United States is the most individualistic country among the 53 countries analyzed, followed by Australia, United Kingdom, and Canada. Thus, individualism seems to be primarily a cultural dimension of the English-speaking world and Europe (Pineda, 2015). Typical collectivistic countries include most

Asian countries such as China, India, Japan and Korea. Among them, China is the most collectivistic country with a score of 20. This seems to be understandable since Asian cultural contexts are more likely to focus on harmony, family, and individual responsibility to groups.

The United States vs. Japan in global advertising market

This study pairs the United States and Japan to investigate advertising content across sharply contrasting cultures. As indicated above, the United States is the most individualistic country in the world. Other than that, it has been the largest international advertising market. Its advertising revenue reached \$180 billion in 2016 and accounted for 37% of the global advertising revenue (Magna Global, 2016).

Likewise, Japan is selected for its cultural uniqueness and influence in the international advertising market. According to an annual report by research entity Dentsu in 2016, the Japanese advertising market is one of the most mature markets worldwide, ranked the second largest in Asia and the third largest in the world. Japan's advertising expenditures for 2016 totaled \$56 billion, an increase of 1.9% compared with the previous year's figure. Japan is now in its third year of consecutive growth, and Dentsu forecasts it will continue to grow at a steady rate in the next three years. Furthermore, due to the isolation created by language and geography, Japanese advertising remains relatively less investigated.

It is worth noting that following the United States, China is the second largest advertising market in the world, and presents one of the most exciting and challenging media markets. However, this study did not choose China for analysis due to the limited global presence of Chinese brands. China has only two players on Interbrand's Best Global Brands list – Huawei and Lenovo, at No. 70 and No. 100 respectively. The reason is that Interbrand's list requires the

brands to be truly global players, getting at least 30% of revenue outside their home region.

Although there is no shortage of these huge multi-billion Chinese companies, building brands abroad is where China's giants struggle. Some Chinese brands sell well internationally, such as appliance-makers Haier, Hisense, and TCL, but they lack global name recognition compared to Japanese brands such as Toyota, Honda, and Sony.

The role of culture in advertising appeals

A considerable amount of research has tested the adaptation of cultural orientation and its correlation with media effectiveness. In their work dating back to the early 1960s, Singh and Huang (1962) find that US print advertising is not effective in India because the advertising appeals run counter to local cultural values. Through a content analysis of over 1,105 Chinese and US television commercials, Cheng and Schweitzer (1996) are able to identify the shared values of “modernity” and “youth.” However, given the cultural value differences, they find that Chinese TV commercials are more likely to use utilitarian and Eastern cultural values than US advertising. According to Cheng and Schweitzer, Chinese commercials tend to appreciate the values of “family,” “technology,” and “tradition,” while US commercials tend to manifest the values of “enjoyment,” “individualism,” and “economy.” Likewise, Zhang and Gelb (1996) suggest that US consumers prefer a culturally congruent individualistic appeal, while Chinese consumers give more positive responses to collectivistic appeal. These findings are consistent with Hofstede’s demonstration of the cultural differences between China and the United States.

Similar comparisons have been conducted between the United States and other collectivistic countries. For instance, advertisements in the United States are rated as more individualistic and less collectivistic than advertisements in Korea (Han and Shavitt, 1994).

American consumers are more persuaded by advertisements emphasizing individual benefits, personal success, and independence, whereas Korean consumers tend to be more persuaded by advertisements emphasizing collectivistic benefits such as in-group benefits and group dependence. Other than that, respect to social hierarchy is also an important trait in Korean advertisements. A comparison of the United States and Poland also indicate U.S. consumers develop more positive attitudes toward individualistic appeal advertisements than collectivist appeal advertisements (Lepkowska-White, 2013).

With the United States being the most individualistic country with a score of 91, Japan scores only 46 on the individualism dimension. In light of published studies that compared advertising in the United States to collectivistic countries, it is reasonable to assume that:

H1a: In the United States, a culturally congruent individualistic appeal that emphasizes uniqueness of individuals is more frequently employed than a culturally incongruent collectivistic appeal.

H1b: In Japan, a culturally congruent collectivistic appeal that emphasizes the interests of the group is more frequently employed than a culturally incongruent individualistic appeal.

While the impact of individualism and collectivism has been widely discussed in published studies, other dimensions in Hofstede's model that are also important indicators of advertising appeals have generated relatively less attention from the scholars. For example, power distance is defined as the extent to which a culture fosters social inequity, which can be observed in areas such as prestige, status, wealth, and power (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). In large

power distance cultures, one's social status must be clear so that others can show proper respect. Roth (1995) finds that social and sensory needs are emphasized in these countries. In countries that score low on this dimension, on the other hand, functional brand images that de-emphasize social, symbolic and sensory benefits of products are more appropriate.

Both Japan and the United States have a low power distance. The fact is that Japan is not as hierarchical as most of the other Asian cultures. There is a strong notion in the Japanese education system that everybody is born equal and anyone can get ahead if he works hard enough. Since both countries score low in power distance, we expect such cultural value similarity to be reflected in advertising appeals.

H2: In the United States and Japan, advertising appeals emphasize functional benefits but have little focus on social and sensory needs.

Uncertainty avoidance is synonymous with insecurity (Hofstede, 1980). It reflects the extent to which the members of a culture feel anxious and threatened by ambiguous or unknown future, and the dependence on experts (Rubin, 1992). Zandpour and Harich (1996) suggest that members in cultures with high uncertainty avoidance tend to "react more favorably to communication that offers explicit, logical and direct information to reduce perceived uncertainty (p. 327)".

The dimension of uncertainty avoidance may be connected to fear appeal. In their study of antismoking advertising, Chung and Ahn (2013) note fear appeal is effective in promoting self-protective behaviors across a variety of health issues. Some popular messages used in fear appeal are related to "social risk" (social rejection) or "personal/physical risk" (threat to one's

physical body, health and life). It is reasonable to assume that a member of a culture characterized with high uncertainty avoidance may find fear appeal persuasive in order to avoid threats and risks. In the Hofstede model, Japan (scores 92) is one of the most uncertainty avoiding countries, whereas the United States scores as low as 46. In Japan, a lot of time and effort is usually put into feasibility studies and all the risk factors must be worked out before any project can start. This discussion brings the following hypothesis:

H3: Fear advertising appeal is more frequently employed in Japan, whose culture is characterized with high uncertainty avoidance.

The masculinity/femininity dimension can be defined as follows: “The dominant values in a masculine society are achievement and success; the dominant values in a feminine society are caring for others and quality of life” (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2015, p. 89). In masculine societies, role differentiation is clearly distinct: household work is less shared between husband and wife than in feminine cultures. Men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women should be gentle and nurturing. In feminine cultures, gender roles and norms overlap. Men do more household shopping, and are allowed to be gentle, feminine, and weak; women are nurturing but also competitive (Nelson, Brunel, Supphellen, & Manchanda, 2006).

In this regard, the dimension of masculinity and femininity may be linked to gender representation in advertising. In an analysis of characteristics of celebrities in Korean and U.S. celebrity endorsement, Um (2013) finds that female celebrities are employed more often than males in both countries. Female celebrities account for 47% and 61% in Korea and the United

States respectively. Gender representations are also highly stereotypical in Asian countries such as China (Hong Kong), Japan, and South Korea. Although Hong Kong is more gender-egalitarian than Japan and South Korea, females in TV advertising in all three cultures are depicted as “younger, wear less clothing, and are more frequently used in advertisements of cosmetics/toiletries than males” (Prieler, Ivanov & Hagiwara, 2014, p. 36). This accords with the statement in the Hofstede model that Japan is one of the most masculine societies in the world with a score as high as 95. The United States, on the other hand, has a lower masculinity score of 62. This discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

H4a: Advertising in the United States is more likely to feature overlapping gender roles and focus on caring for others and quality of life.

H4b: Advertising in Japan is more likely to feature competition, achievement, success, and gender role differentiation.

In addition to the dimensions analyzed above, the sixth and new dimension, “indulgence versus restraint,” was added to Hofstede’s cultural model in 2010. It has been the least studied cultural dimension and has not yet been widely adopted in intercultural studies.

This dimension is essentially a measure of happiness – whether or not simple joys are fulfilled. Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms (Hofstede, 2010). Michael Minkov (2001) focused on sub-dimensions to further explain the core of this

dimension. The three sub-dimensions include: happiness and pleasure in life, importance of leisure and friendship, and life control.

The United States is an indulgent society with a relatively high score of 68 on this dimension. Japan, with a low score of 42, is shown to have a culture of restraint. Based on cultural research assumptions, this dimension could be attributed to the liberty of individuals and wealth of the country. For example, drug addiction is higher in the United States compared to other wealthy countries, and customer service representatives in the United States visibly demonstrate their “happiness” with a smile and friendly demeanor. However, in more restrained cultures such as Russia or eastern European countries, this would be considered inappropriate and unnatural (Maclachlan, 2013). Based on these observations, this study hypothesizes that:

H5a: Advertising in the United States is more likely to feature an indulgent culture, which represents leisure ethic, personal life control, freedom of speech, optimism, active participation in sports, more extraverted personalities, and looser sexual mores.

H5b: Advertising in Japan is more likely to feature a restrained culture, which represents work ethic, helplessness, self-discipline, cynicism, less sports participation, more introverted personalities, and stricter sexual mores.

Methods

The selection of samples: product categories, brands, and media platforms

A content analysis is conducted in order to investigate the effects of culture on U.S. and Japanese advertising appeals. With 100 advertisements selected for each country, the analysis is

based on 200 advertisements of a variety of U.S. and Japanese brands that fill the four product categories of FCB matrix (Vaughn, 1980).

As one of the most employed product typologies, the FCB matrix shows that decisions about product purchases can be based on either thinking or feelings, which are related to utilitarian and/or expressive needs that these products satisfy. Another dimension is involvement, which reflects a consumer's perception of the level of importance of a product. Based on the thinking, feeling, and involvement dimensions, Vaughn (1980) divided products into informative, affective, habit-forming, and self-satisfaction types. Informative products have high-involvement level and are very important to consumers and satisfy utilitarian needs of consumption (Ratchford, 1987). On the other hand, affective products, such as jewelry and clothing, are characterized with self-expression and social motives of consumption. Habit-forming products include products that satisfy utilitarian needs and are of low importance to consumers. Self-satisfactory goods include products such as cigarettes, snack foods, and soft drinks, which have limited importance to consumers and satisfy emotional needs. Both United States and Japan had various brands selected to represent each product category.

The selection of brands is also based on Forbes' 2017 ranking of the world's most valuable brands to ensure the brands are influential and representative. As a result, selected U.S. brands included Apple, Nike, Ralph Lauren, P&G, Coca-Cola, and McDonald's. Typical Japanese brands included Toyota, Uniqlo, Earth Music, Shiseido, Pocky, and Meiji. As a leading technology company, Apple ranked number one on Forbes' 2016 world's most valuable brands. Toyota is the world's most valuable automotive brands. The products of these companies are very important to consumers and have high-involvement level, which fall into the informative product category. Nike/Ralph Lauren and Uniqlo/Earth Music are both famous apparel brands

that fulfill ego-gratification and social motives of consumption. Their products fall into the affective product category that satisfies emotional needs. P&G and Shiseido represent habit-forming products, as their personal care products satisfy utilitarian needs for daily use. Finally, as companies that provide soft drinks and snack foods, Coca-Cola/McDonald's and Pocky/Meiji are selected for self-satisfactory brands that have limited importance to consumers.

Selection of media aims to accommodate a wide range of online, print, and electronic media platforms over a period of 24 months. Online advertisements include website advertisements, banners, and posts shared on the brand's social media account. Print advertisements include newspaper and magazine promotions. Advertisements on electronic media mainly include television commercials. The samples are randomly selected to avoid sampling bias.

The coding system

Following the selection of the advertisements, a coding system is set up. The category system is constructed on the influential Hofstede model (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede & Mooij, 2010). Using a priori coding method, each advertisement is coded into a set of categories: individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity/femininity. The subcategories include the following: individualistic/collectivistic appeal; openness to change and innovation/fear appeal; functional benefits/social and sensory needs; competition, achievement, success and gender role differentiation/caring for others and quality of life.

Analysis is carried out by two well-trained bi-lingual coders. Before the data is collected, the category boundaries are defined with maximum detail, and training sessions in using the coding instrument and the category system are conducted.

A pilot study is also conducted to assess the inter-coder reliability. Two coders independently code a randomly selected subsample of 20 % (n = 40) of the items, checking in with one another to compare results, discuss discrepancies, and refine coding instructions. Inter-coder reliability of the subsample is tested using Scott's pi, a popular coefficient in mass communication research. Although there is no standardized minimum level for the reliability coefficients, Neuendorf (2002) suggests that .75+ is excellent agreement and .40 to .75 indicates fair to good agreement beyond chance. The average Scott's pi index of this study is .86, exceeds the suggested guideline and indicated a strong reliability.

After confirming inter-coder reliability, each coder independently codes 100 randomly assigned advertisements. The advertisements are coded into each category by using an interval scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being most negative and 5 being most positive. Independent samples t-tests are conducted to analyze the variance of sample means. The coded data are then used to identify the advertising appeals carried in different cultures.

Results

Individualism and collectivism

Hypotheses H1a and H1b predict that U.S. advertisements frequently employ individualistic appeal that emphasizes uniqueness of individuals, whereas Japanese advertisements utilize collectivistic appeal that emphasizes the interests of the group. With a scale from 1 to 5, the 200 sample U.S. and Japanese advertisements are rated based on the level of each ad reflecting individualistic and collectivistic appeals.

Independent samples t-tests show that there is strong evidence to support the hypotheses. As illustrated in Table 1, the mean differences on the two dimensions are statistically significant,

which exhibited a pattern that U.S. advertisements have higher prevalence on individualistic appeal ($M=3.36$, $SD=1.61$) than Japanese advertisements ($M=2.42$, $SD=1.61$), $t=4.14$, $p < .05$. On the other hand, Japanese advertisements are more frequently associated with collectivism indicators ($M=2.67$, $SD=1.71$) than U.S. advertisements ($M=1.65$, $SD=1.27$), $t=-4.78$, $p < .05$.

Assume that an ad with a score of 4 or higher represents a strong indicator of a certain ad appeal, the frequency of each country utilizing individualistic or collectivistic appeal demonstrated a significant difference. Of the total 100 sample U.S. advertisements, more than half (59%, or 59 out of 100) are found to feature individualism, whereas individualism appears in only 30% (30 out of 100) of the Japanese commercials. In contrast, the Japanese advertisements appear to use collectivism (44%) far more frequently than their U.S. counterparts (15%). On a broader scale, the descriptive statistics show that the overall mean value of individualistic appeal is 2.89 ($SD=1.67$) and that of collectivistic appeal is 2.16 ($SD=1.59$), which indicates individualistic appeal is more popular regardless of cultural differences.

Table 1

Presence of Individualistic and Collectivistic Appeals

| Individualistic Appeal ($t=4.14$, $p < .05$) | | |
|---|------|-------|
| | U.S. | Japan |
| Mean | 3.36 | 2.42 |
| SD | 1.61 | 1.61 |
| Frequency | 59% | 30% |

| Collectivistic Appeal ($t=-4.78, p <.05$) | | |
|---|------|-------|
| | U.S. | Japan |
| Mean | 1.65 | 2.67 |
| SD | 1.27 | 1.74 |
| Frequency | 15% | 44% |

Note: Higher mean indicates greater score of a certain ad appeal.

Power distance

As demonstrated in Hofstede's model, both the United States and Japan have a low power distance, thus H2 proposes that advertisements in the two countries feature functional or utilitarian benefits of the product, rather than emotional benefits that satisfy consumers' social and sensory needs. On the basis of independent samples t-tests, H2 is tentatively not confirmed. Although U.S. advertisements have a higher mean score on functional benefits, the difference is not statistically significant ($t=.291, p >.05$). The presence of functional benefits in the U.S. advertisements ($M=2.90, SD=1.67$) is convergent to the presence in Japanese advertisements ($M=2.83, SD=1.74$). Additionally, 44% of U.S. advertisements and 43% of Japanese advertisements are identified with strong indicators of functional benefits (advertisements with scores 4 or higher). Descriptive statistics indicate that functional benefits appeal ($M=2.87, SD=1.70$) is more prevalent than social and sensory appeal ($M=2.00, SD=1.43$) among the two countries.

In contrast, the mean difference on social and sensory appeal exhibits a significant pattern ($t=-2.813, p <.05$). The result indicates that Japanese advertisements ($M=2.28, SD=1.54$) are more likely to highlight social, symbolic and sensory benefits of products than U.S.

advertisements ($M=1.72$, $SD=1.26$), which is not predicted in the hypothesis. Granted that both the United States and Japan are categorized as low power distance countries, Japan's score is still slightly higher than the United States (54 compared to 40), which might lead to the statistical difference on social and sensory appeal between two countries.

Table 2

Presence of power distance in advertising

| Functional benefits ($t=.291$, $p >.05$, n.s.) | | |
|--|------|-------|
| | U.S. | Japan |
| Mean | 2.90 | 2.83 |
| SD | 1.67 | 1.74 |
| Frequency | 44% | 43% |
| Social and sensory needs ($t=-2.813$, $p <.05$) | | |
| | U.S. | Japan |
| Mean | 1.72 | 2.28 |
| SD | 1.26 | 1.54 |
| Frequency | 16% | 28% |

Note: n.s. - not significant.

Uncertainty avoidance

H3 suggests that as one of the most uncertainty avoiding countries, Japan is more likely to use fear appeals to persuade consumers to avoid threats and risks, and is more frequently demonstrates rules and formality to structure life. On the other hand, since the United States

scores low on this dimension, its advertising emphasizes openness to change and innovation. Independent samples t-tests on the two types of appeals provide evidence for this hypothesis. The mean difference on fear and rules/formality appeal is statistically significant, $t=-8.491$, $p < .05$. As expected, Japanese advertisements are more likely to be associated with fear and rules/formality ($M=2.98$, $SD=1.63$) than U.S. advertisements ($M=1.38$, $SD=0.94$). The overall cases using fear and rules/formality appeal in Japan account for 48%, well above their U.S. counterparts (8%).

When it comes to openness to change and innovation, the United States and Japan demonstrate disparate results ($t=6.44$, $p < .05$). U.S. advertisements more frequently feature adoption of innovations and challenges in life ($M=3.15$, $SD=1.74$) than their Japanese counterparts ($M=1.74$, $SD=1.32$).

Table 3
Presence of uncertainty avoidance in advertising

| Fear and rules/formality ($t=-8.491$, $p < .05$) | | |
|--|------|-------|
| | U.S. | Japan |
| Mean | 1.38 | 2.98 |
| SD | 0.94 | 1.63 |
| Frequency | 8% | 48% |
| Openness to change and innovation ($t=6.44$, $p < .05$) | | |
| | U.S. | Japan |
| Mean | 3.15 | 1.74 |
| SD | 1.74 | 1.32 |
| Frequency | 49% | 18% |

Masculinity and femininity

With Japan being one of the most masculine societies in the world, H4a and H4b state that advertising in Japan is more likely to show competition, achievement and gender role differentiation. Advertisements in the United States, on the other hand, tend to show overlapping gender roles and focus on caring for others. This hypothesis is supported by independent samples t-tests results. A significantly different pattern between the two countries emerges regarding the competition, achievement and gender role differentiation dimension, $t=-2.44$, $p < .05$. More than half (52%) of the Japanese advertisements ($M=3.30$, $SD=1.69$) portray competition and gender role differentiation, while U.S. advertisements ($M=2.70$, $SD=1.79$) have fewer cases (39%) in this dimension.

Similar analysis is conducted using the variable of femininity. The results are in the expected direction, $t=3.087$, $p < .05$, indicating that U.S. advertisements ($Mean=2.76$, $SD=1.74$) feature “caring for others” more often than Japanese advertisements ($M=2.07$, $SD=1.40$). This is consistent with the frequency of femininity ad appeal, that 42% of U.S. advertisements are associated with “caring for others” whereas only 24% of Japanese advertisements portray femininity appeal.

Table 4
Presence of masculinity and femininity in advertising

| Caring for others ($t=3.087$, $p < .05$) | | |
|---|------|-------|
| | U.S. | Japan |
| Mean | 2.76 | 2.07 |
| SD | 1.74 | 1.40 |
| Frequency | 42% | 24% |

| Competition, achievement and gender role differentiation ($t=-2.44, p <.05$) | | |
|---|------|-------|
| | U.S. | Japan |
| Mean | 2.70 | 3.30 |
| SD | 1.79 | 1.69 |
| Frequency | 39% | 52% |

Indulgence and self-restraint

H5 suggests that advertising in the United States is more likely to feature an indulgent culture, whereas advertising in Japan often highlights a relatively restrained culture. This hypothesis is supported by the independent samples t-tests. As illustrated in Table 5, U.S. advertisements have higher prevalence of indulgence ($M=2.03, SD=1.34$) than Japanese advertisements ($M=1.55, SD=1.06$), $t=2.80, p <.05$. On the other hand, Japanese advertisements are more frequently associated with self-restraint ($M=1.47, SD=1.01$) than U.S. advertisements ($M=1.01, SD=.10$), $t=-4.49, p <.05$.

It is worth noting that although the differences between sample means are tested as statistically significant, neither indulgence nor self-restraint appeal is popular in the United States and Japan. Only 15% of the U.S. advertisements portray strong indicators of indulgence such as personal life control, freedom of speech, and optimism. Similarly, of the total 100 sample Japanese advertisements, only 7% are found to feature helplessness, self-discipline, cynicism, and more introverted personalities. This seems to be understandable since the indicators of self-restraint are rather negative and contradict the universal brand personality.

Table 5

Presence of Indulgence and Self-Restraint Appeals

| Indulgence ($t=2.80, p < .05$) | | |
|---------------------------------------|------|-------|
| | U.S. | Japan |
| Mean | 2.03 | 1.55 |
| SD | 1.34 | 1.06 |
| Frequency | 15% | 9% |
| Self-Restraint ($t=-4.49, p < .05$) | | |
| | U.S. | Japan |
| Mean | 1.01 | 1.47 |
| SD | .10 | 1.01 |
| Frequency | 0% | 7% |

Discussion**Findings and implications**

Individualism and collectivism. With regard to the individualism–collectivism dimension, this study shows that U.S. advertisements tend to emphasize individualistic appeals, whereas Japanese advertisements are more likely to feature collectivism. These findings are consistent with the notion that a culturally congruent appeal is more frequently employed in each country.

To be more specific, U.S. advertisements usually focus on the uniqueness of each individual; the key message of a considerable amount of advertisements is to encourage viewers

to stand out and break limitations or stereotypes, to pursue their personal goals and ultimately achieve success. This is amply demonstrated in a 2017 commercial of Toyota Corolla USA, “You don’t own me.” The ad features youth culture and expresses the message as “you don’t own me, don’t try to change me in any way ... I’m free and I love to be free, to live my life the way I want, to say and do whatever I please.” Independence, freedom, and personal goals are manifested in this advertisement. Similarly, Nike is a brand that often features personal charisma, perseverance, and success. For example, Nike’s 2016 campaign “Out of nowhere” is aimed to feature “those who are strong enough to believe, strong enough to pick themselves up off the ground, strong enough to do what the doubters say can’t be done.” The key message of this campaign is that each individual is independent from others. One’s circumstances do not determine his or her outcome; it is the efforts and bravery of breaking limitations and chains that lead to personal success. Overall, “standing out” seems to be the most popular message of U.S. advertisements.

As anticipated, Japanese advertisements often portray collectivistic appeal. While U.S. advertisements emphasize personal enjoyment, goals and success, Japanese advertisements tend to illustrate these appeals in group settings. The scenarios include team collaboration at a work place, reunion with friends, and victory of the community or country. A fine example could be McDonald’s 2016 Japanese commercial “My future.” This one-minute animated commercial features a girl making progress in the work place thanks to generous help from co-workers. Similarly, one of Uniqlo’s 2016 commercials highlights how Uniqlo makes proper daily wear for working women to make their days smart and fashionable. The key message is also conveyed through a team spirit, that a girl unconditionally helps her colleague and eventually achieves accomplishment through teamwork. Another Uniqlo commercial “Fluffy room wear” features

the enjoyment of being with friends. In the commercial, Uniqlo sleep wear product is integrated into the delightful and relaxed scenario of friendship. Meiji Chocolate's 2016 commercial builds a connection between the product and Japan's Olympic team, indicating that Meiji Chocolate provides power to the athletes and audiences and facilitates the victory of the country. In these advertisements, individual uniqueness is eliminated. Instead, each individual is affiliated with a group and it is the team collaboration that lead to success. The appeals of achievement and enjoyment are not featured on a personal level, but rather in the context of being part of a group and sharing with others.

Despite the fact that Japanese advertising is a reflection of its cultural characteristics, it is important to investigate the degree to which Japan approaches individualism and collectivism. In fact, Japan's mean scores on individualistic appeal and collectivistic appeal are rather close (2.42 vs. 2.67), indicating that these appeals actually have similar presence in Japanese advertisements.

Descriptive statistics also show that the overall mean score of individualistic appeal in the two countries is higher than that of collectivistic appeal, which implies that individualistic appeal is more frequently used regardless of culture. This finding shed light on the new landscape of the advertising industry: brands nowadays tend to build a personal connection with consumers to maintain a good consumer-brand relationship. Tailoring the message to individuals in a specific target market also helps improve the effectiveness of a campaign. From a global perspective, the development of democracy greatly facilitates the liberation of personality and increases people's awareness of privacy. Each individual's value is measured higher than ever before. These factors lead to the result that even in a highly group-oriented country like Japan, advertising appeals still skew towards individualism.

Power distance. As the quantitative analysis reveals, there is no significant difference on the functional benefit dimension between the United States and Japan, indicating that functional benefit has similar presence in the two countries. However, Japanese advertisements are more likely to highlight social, symbolic and sensory benefits of products than U.S. advertisements.

The self-expressive benefit is more frequently employed in affective goods and products with high involvement level. It adds richness and depth to the experience of owning and using the brand. For example, informative products such as cars have self-expressive function that demonstrates values such as prestige, status, wealth, and power. Affective goods such as jewelry and clothing demonstrate a person's taste, preference and personality.

On the other hand, both U.S. and Japanese advertisements tend to feature functional benefits, and the discrepancy between the two countries is less defined. This could be attributed to the increasingly fierce competition between global brands. First of all, a dominating function benefit upholds a brand on a leadership position in its product category. Functional benefit is based on a product attribute, and is the most visible and common basis for a brand's value proposition. According to Aaker (1996), "functional benefits, especially those based upon attributes, have direct links to customer decisions and use experiences. If a brand can dominate a key functional benefit, it can dominate a category" (p. 95). This explains why the advertisements in the United States and Japan tend to focus on long-term quality and innovation. Automobile brands such as Toyota and Honda feature the technology implemented in cars. The technology includes anything from car Wi-Fi, auto censored truck lift, and entertainment apps, to advanced and innovative engine technology. Electronics companies such as Apple undoubtedly highlight the innovation applied to their newest products. Once one of these functional benefits becomes

dominating in the product category, the brand generates a distinct image and the basis for a loyal relationship with consumers.

Furthermore, functional benefit is directly linked to the perceived quality of products and could become the defining point of differentiation of brands. Regardless of the origin country, many brands explicitly consider quality to be one of their primary values and include it in their mission statement. For many brands, perceived quality defines the competitive milieu and their own position within that milieu. Some brands are price brands, and others are prestige or premium brands. Within those categories, the perceived quality position is often the defining point of differentiation (Aaker, 1996). On the other hand, self-expressive benefit that satisfies social and sensory needs is less concrete and is less powerful in establishing a defining point of differentiation.

Uncertainty avoidance. The findings lend support to the hypothesis that Japan is more likely to use fear appeals to persuade consumers to avoid threats and risks, and more frequently demonstrates rules and formality to structure life. In contrast, U.S. advertisements more frequently emphasizes openness to change and innovation.

In Japan, rules and formality largely come from the social forces of work, thus workplace and office scenarios are frequently featured in Japanese advertisements. Often times, these advertisements highlight the regular routine of these employees, which implies rules and formality, and then introduce how the product helps them relieve pressure and enhance work efficiency. For example, a 2016 commercial of Yogur Stand, a Japanese dairy brand, demonstrates how its yogurt helps a female employee get refreshed. SK-II's 2016 campaign "Dream again" portrays the situation where adults often tie themselves by rules and social norms and become afraid of dreaming; however, children are full of creativity and are not afraid of

having big dreams. Although this campaign is designated to encourage people to make breakthroughs, it is actually a reflection of Japan's rule-oriented culture.

In contrast, U.S. advertisements tend to portray the adventurous spirit and encourage people to take risks. A good example is Toyota USA's 2016 commercial "Wolf Pack." In this ad, the male character drives his Toyota car into the frozen wilderness, and the scent of his turkey attracts a hungry wolf pack behind him. The character remains fearless, and even hunts with the wolf pack and helps expand their territory. Other examples include Toyota USA's "The New Possible" commercial and Gap's "The New Generation" commercial. These advertisements closely tie to prevalent cultural orientations in the United States and hold positive attitude to uncertainties.

Masculinity and femininity. In the analysis of the presence of masculinity and femininity in advertising, this study finds that Japanese advertisements are more likely to feature the predominance of men while women's role is in nurturing and care for family. The key message in many Japanese advertisements is that winners of competitions should be admired. In contrast, U.S. advertisements tend to show sympathy, and demonstrate equality between the sexes for education, commerce and family. The boundary between gender roles is also blurry in US advertisements.

Competition is frequently featured in Japanese advertisements. For example, a 2016 commercial of Japanese casual wear retailer G.U. features an argument between two groups regarding the pronunciation of "cardigan." A similar storytelling method can also be found in Japanese beverage brand Strong Zero's 2016 commercial. Granted that these "arguments" are illustrated in a fun and relaxing way, the form of the story essentially demonstrates contest and achievement. Additionally, Japanese advertisements tend to show significant gender role

differentiation. Men are usually portrayed as strong as tough (e.g. deodorant brand DeOu's 2016 commercial, and Shiseido's "Cream Perfection" and "Hot Gel Cleans" commercials). On the other hand, females are usually portrayed as housewives that are subservient and dependent to their husbands. A great example of gender role differentiation is Glico Giant Cone's 2016 commercial that features different lifestyles of a housewife and husband. Housewife usually stays at home doing housework and caring for children, while husband works hard to support the family.

Historically, the masculinity in Japanese advertisements derives from traditional Japanese culture. Japan has upheld rigid traditional gender roles in its culture. These traditional gender role values are still alive in today's Japanese culture, although they have been shifting in the direction of egalitarianism. Furthermore, the spirit of samurai plays an important role in Japan's gender representations. The Samurai, members of a powerful military caste in feudal Japan, are fearsome warriors with enduring tradition of masculinity. The traditional samurai code of honor, discipline and morality known as bushido, or "the way of the warrior," has revived and made the basic code of conduct for much of Japanese society. With regard to its masculine distinction, the samurai morality exerts a powerful influence on the content of Japanese advertisements.

To summarize, matching advertising appeals to culture is advisable for advertising professionals, especially in the case of sharply contrasting cultures, such as the United States and Japan. The study results suggest that advertisers should seek to align message with culture in order to enhance campaign effectiveness.

Limitations and future research

The ever-changing culture. It is important to note that the findings of this study should be viewed in light of the study's limitations. One issue in this regard is that culture is never set in stone. Instead, it is ever-changing, diverse, fluid and plural. Hofstede's cultural model was first introduced in 1984, which brings possibilities of changes on cultural values throughout the years. For example, the development of society brings more opportunity for individuals to discover and pursue their own passions, purpose and value, thus masculinity in Japan is undergoing dynamic changes. Today, being a man is not a set definition cemented into the expectations of society and family, but evolving into a personal assessment. Japanese men are now defining themselves through their actions instead of articulating their emerging identities in words. In this regard, masculinity is becoming more diverse with multiple meanings.

The moderating factors. The findings of this study also yield insights into the moderating factors that might influence the values expressed in advertising. Advertising appeal and its corresponding cultural value may not match due to these factors.

The first moderating factor is product characteristics. Lepkowska-White and her colleagues indicate that Polish consumers react to different ad appeals in a uniform manner, and product characteristics are better predictors of consumer responses to advertisements than cultural characteristics or appeal types. Likewise, Zhang and Gelb (1996) note that when the advertising appeal matches the product use condition, employing a culturally incongruent appeal may not be a problem. Consistent with these findings, this study suggests that some similarities appear to exist for the ad appeals pertaining to specific product categories. For example, advertisements of habit-forming products tend to feature utilitarian benefit regardless of country of origin, and advertisements of affective goods usually focus on self-expressive benefit of the

products. Future study should take product characteristics into account and investigate how ad appeal differs by product category.

The second possible moderating factor is communication styles. Hall (1984) identifies cultures according to the degree of context in their communication styles, noting that in high-context cultures, messages are conveyed in an abstract, implicit, and indirect manner. In contrast, communication in low-context cultures is more straightforward, explicit, and direct. It is understandable that communication styles impact advertising appeal in certain ways. Previous studies reported that advertising in low-context cultures is often information-oriented and typically employs hard-sell approaches. Conversely, advertising in high-context cultures tends to be more emotional and symbolic, with more frequent use of soft-sell approaches (Lin, 1993; Miracle, Chang, and Taylor 1992). Therefore, communication styles can be another influencer of advertising appeal in addition to cultural characteristics.

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