

Multilingualism Doctoral School

Faculty of Humanities

University of Pannonia



**CAR ADVERTISING ACROSS CULTURES:
SEMIOTIC APPROACH**

Ph.D. Dissertation

by

Alisa Kasianova

Supervisor:

Dr. habil. László Kovács

Veszprém

2025

ABSTRACT

Global advertising presents a challenge for international companies, as they must create effective messages for audiences with different languages and cultural values. This dissertation explores cross-cultural advertising on Facebook from the semiotic perspective, focusing on Volkswagen and Fiat posts targeting German, Italian, and Hungarian customers.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (1980; 2010) serves as the main theoretical framework for this research. Due to the limitations of this model, the study took into consideration the flexible nature of culture and the influence of macro-level processes, such as globalization and economic shifts, evolving gender roles, and growing environmental concern. The study examines how Hofstede's values are represented in Facebook posts through both verbal and visual semiotics. A netnographic approach (Kozinets, 1999) is also used to capture the audience's responses to the advertising strategies.

The mixed-method approach includes semiotic analysis of advertisements, a quantitative survey exploring consumer product expectations and brand associations, and qualitative in-depth interviews with 13 participants (4 German, 4 Italian, 5 Hungarian). The questionnaire data from 76 German, 71 Italian and 100 Hungarian participants was analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the thematic analysis was used to analyze interviewees' responses.

The semiotic analysis reveals both similarities and differences in cross-cultural advertising strategies of Volkswagen and Fiat. Both companies maintain their brand image and appeal to similar most frequent values across the three cultures – Masculinity and Long-Term Orientation for Volkswagen and Indulgence and Long-Term Orientation for Fiat. However, Volkswagen adapted its language and communication style to local cultures, while Fiat Facebook advertising was more standardized. The study confirms the importance of both verbal and visual elements in shaping brand messaging.

Consumer responses show that advertisements aligning with product expectations – such as safety, quality, and enjoyment – were the most effective. Masculinity and Indulgence resonated across cultures, while the reactions towards other values varied. German and Hungarian consumers prioritized quality and security, whereas Italian participants valued aesthetics and human connections. The study also shows that macro-level societal changes influence both advertising language and consumer responses.

In conclusion, this research highlights the complexity of cross-cultural advertising on social media, emphasizing the need for international companies to consider both cultural values and evolving societal trends to create effective and engaging marketing strategies.

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1. Introduction

This dissertation explores the impact of cross-cultural differences on social media advertising, focusing on Facebook posts from two international automobile brands – Volkswagen and Fiat – targeting German, Italian, and Hungarian audiences. The research analyzes how brands adapt their messaging linguistically and culturally using verbal and visual semiotic signs. Additionally, by considering the peculiarities of Facebook, advertising trends, and cultural contexts, the research provides insights into the interplay of culture and language in contemporary marketing and examines customer reactions through quantitative and qualitative analysis.

2. Literature review

2.1. Advertising and culture. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory

Advertising serves as a key tool for brand communication, evolving from traditional mass media to interactive digital platforms such as social media. This shift allows brands to use personalized, engaging formats like influencer content and user-generated material (Clow & Baak, 2010; Lee & Cho, 2019). Culture plays a crucial role in how advertising is created and interpreted, with cultural values shaping consumer behavior, product preferences, and message perception (De Mooij, 2021).

In global advertising, companies typically choose between two strategies: standardization, which involves using uniform messaging across markets, and adaptation, which tailors content to specific cultural contexts (De Mooij, 2021; Gülmez, 2019). The debate over which strategy is more persuasive remains ongoing. While some scholars advocate for adaptation (De Mooij, 2021; Gülmez, 2019), the increasing cultural convergence in today's world suggests that consumers may share similar fundamental needs. As a result, standardization can enable brands to use universally appealing themes and ideas (Pagani et al., 2015).

In order to explore culture in different context, such as advertising, scholars tend to use cultural dimensions models like Hofstede's (1980), Trompenaars's (1993), and the GLOBE (House et al., 2004). Hofstede's model was selected for this research due to being widely known and frequently applied in cross-cultural studies. His model outlines six dimensions that reflect cultural differences across countries, helping to explain variations in behavior, communication, and business practices:

Power Distance – the extent to which less powerful members of society accept unequal power distribution.

- Individualism vs. Collectivism – whether people prefer a loosely-knit social framework or a tightly-knit one.

- Masculinity vs. Femininity – the preference for achievement, competition, and material success (masculine) versus cooperation, quality of life, and care for others (feminine).
- Uncertainty Avoidance – the degree to which a culture feels uncomfortable with ambiguity and unstructured situations.
- Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation – the focus on future rewards (long-term) versus respect for traditions and fulfilling social obligations (short-term).
- Indulgence vs. Restraint – the degree to which societies allow free gratification of basic human desires related to enjoying life and having fun.

Based on the identified dimensions, Hofstede described more than 70 cultures. Figure 1 demonstrates the up-to-date scores of Germany, Italy and Hungary on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, as of 2023.

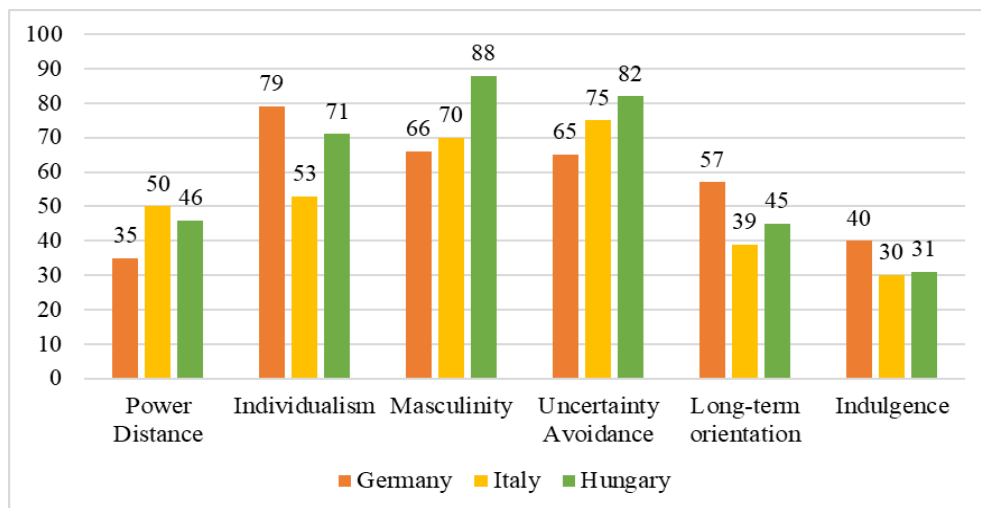


Figure 1. Cross-Cultural Comparison of Germany, Italy and Hungary (The Culture Factor, 2023).

Despite the frequent application of Hofstede’s theory in academic and business contexts, the model has faced significant criticism concerning its relevance in a rapidly changing world (McSweeney, 2002), the rigid understanding of culture (Spencer-Oatey, 2000) and methodological limitations (McSweeney, 2002; Signorini et al., 2009). To address these limitations, I integrate insights gathered through semi-structured interviews with representatives of the three cultures under study. Furthermore, contextualizing the findings allows me to connect the results of our semiotic analysis and interview responses with globalization processes and the contextual realities of the cultures in question. Therefore, while Hofstede’s dimensions serve as a valuable foundation, they are complemented by more nuanced, context-sensitive methods.

2.2. Semiotic approach

This study uses a semiotic approach to analyze both visual and verbal elements in advertising, aiming to connect them with Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Semiotics, the study of signs and meanings, is especially useful for uncovering culturally significant messages in advertisements. This method is especially applicable for social media content, where text and visuals work together to deliver a unified message. This research primarily follows de Saussure's dyadic model (1966), according to which a sign is viewed as the representation of the relationship between the signifier (word, image, gesture, or any other form of the idea) and the signified (the concept or content behind the signifier).

In this dissertation, emojis and hashtags are examined as semiotic signs – visual and verbal, respectively. Emojis add emotional tone and enhance engagement (Das et al., 2019), while hashtags help categorize content, build communities, and boost brand visibility (Zappavigna, 2018). By analyzing how people from different cultures interpret these signs, the study evaluates their role in shaping advertising messages and their effectiveness across diverse audiences.

2.3. Marketing concepts

This research analyzes the linguistic and cultural differences in Volkswagen and Fiat's Facebook advertising from the perspective of key marketing strategies used in social media. Compared to traditional advertising, social media enables personalized, engaging, and interactive advertising solutions. Among various strategies, this study examines green advertising, celebrity endorsement, interactive marketing, user-generated content, and hashtag campaigns – each selected for their relevance to modern digital advertising and their role in shaping consumer perceptions:

- Green advertising highlights a product's environmental benefits, appealing to eco-conscious consumers (Alamsyah et al., 2020).
- Celebrity endorsement leverages famous personalities to enhance brand credibility and engagement (Sufian et al., 2021).
- Interactive marketing fosters direct interaction with consumers through questions, calls to action, games and challenges (Thorpe & Roper, 2019).
- User-generated content increases trust and authenticity by encouraging customers to share their own experiences (Kurian & John, 2017).
- Hashtag campaigns boost brand visibility and community engagement by prompting users to contribute to brand-related conversations (Zappavigna, 2018).

This dissertation examines how Volkswagen and Fiat employ these strategies linguistically and culturally in their Facebook posts, considering their effectiveness in different cultural contexts.

2.4. Netnography and broader context

The netnographic approach is ideal for this dissertation as it enables the study of online communities' cultural practices and reactions to advertising (Kozinets, 1999). Netnography offers insights into how consumers engage with advertising and how cultural elements influence their perceptions and behaviors. This approach allows for a deep understanding of how language, symbols, and marketing strategies (e.g., emojis, hashtags, and celebrity endorsements) shape consumer attitudes across different cultures.

Additionally, this research considers the contemporary context by capturing broader societal trends and their influence on the language of advertising:

- **Globalization:** Globalization leads to the convergence of consumer behavior, resulting in similar values and practices across cultures. In advertising, this convergence allows marketers to use universal themes, like success and happiness, to appeal to a global audience, although some cultures still prioritize preserving their unique identities, influencing how advertising reflects cultural nuances (De Mooij, 2021).
- **Economic processes:** Wealthier countries favor messages about quality and self-expression, while less affluent markets value practicality and price (Shavitt & Cho, 2016).
- **Shift in gender roles and values:** Advertising increasingly features inclusive, diverse portrayals that challenge traditional gender stereotypes (Iacoviello et al., 2021).
- **Environmental concern:** Brands increasingly use "green" language and eco-friendly visuals to connect with environmentally conscious consumers (Johannessen et al., 2010).

Understanding these social processes is crucial in cross-cultural advertising studies because they shape consumer values, preferences, and responses to marketing messages. By analyzing these factors, advertisers can create more effective, culturally relevant campaigns that resonate with consumers and align with societal trends.

2.5. Research questions and hypotheses

Based on the existing research gaps, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: How are Hofstede's cultural dimensions reflected in German, Italian and Hungarian Facebook advertisements of Volkswagen and Fiat through verbal and visual semiotic signs?

RQ2: How does the effect of Facebook advertisements representing different cultural values vary across potential customer groups in Germany, Italy, and Hungary?

RQ3: How does the language of advertising and customers' attitudes to Facebook advertisements reflect current social processes taking place in the cultures in question?

RQ4: Which linguistic and marketing solutions contribute to the effect of Facebook advertising across cultures?

The previous research works allow formulating the following hypotheses:

H1: Both verbal and visual semiotic signs contribute to the creation of values and ideas associated with Hofstede's cultural dimensions in Facebook posts.

H2: Facebook advertisements representing the values of a particular culture are expected to evoke positive response among the representatives of this culture.

H3: Facebook advertisements reflecting the customers' needs and expectations from a brand are expected to evoke positive response from potential buyers.

H4: Particular linguistic and advertising tools, such as green advertising, interactive language, hashtag campaigns, celebrity endorsement and user-generated content are expected to attract the audience's attention and increase their interest in the product.

H5: The language of Facebook advertising in Germany, Italy, and Hungary will reflect the specific social processes and transformations occurring in each country, existing societal norms and values.

3. Methods

This research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining semiotic analysis, online questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews to investigate cultural patterns in Volkswagen and Fiat's social media advertising.

3.1. Data collection

The advertising samples for the semiotic and cultural analysis were collected from the official German, Italian and Hungarian pages of Volkswagen and Fiat on Facebook. The data collection was based on the continuous sampling method: each advertisement submitted within a particular period was included in a digital database.

In the case of Volkswagen, all advertisements published from January 1st, 2022 to June 30th 2022 (6 months) were included for the analysis: 96 German, 57 Italian and 117 Hungarian posts.

In the case of Fiat, I collected 50 Italian and 38 German advertisements published within 6 months, from January 1st, 2022 to June 30th, 2022. In the case of Hungarian-language posts, the 6-month period was extended to 18 months due to irregular content update in 2022. As a result, I collected 99 Hungarian advertisements of Fiat.

The 457 advertisements were gathered into a digital database and grouped according to the company and target audience.

3.2. Semiotic analysis

For the coding of the collected posts, I identified 12 categories representing each pair of the dimensions of Hofstede: High power distance/Low power distance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, High Uncertainty avoidance/Low uncertainty avoidance, Long-term orientation/Short-term orientation, Indulgence/Restraint. Based on the semiotic signs used in each post, each of the collected advertisements were assigned a category reflecting different cultural values of Hofstede. If the posts did not contain culture-related signs, they were not assigned any category. During the coding process, the assistance of a second coder was required to ensure the reliability of the analysis.

The following parts of the posts were considered for the analysis:

- Caption (text of the post): post captions were analyzed from the point of verbal semiotic signs related to culture of the target audience and cultural dimensions of Hofstede. The text within images (if any) was also analyzed in a similar way.
- Visual elements: photos and videos used in the posts were analyzed from the point of visual semiotic signs related to the target culture and Hofstede's cultural dimensions.
- Emojis (if applicable) were treated as visual semiotic signs.
- Hashtags (if applicable) were treated as verbal semiotic signs.

Considering these elements together, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of how the two brands communicate with potential customers and conveys particular messages and meanings through advertising.

3.3. Questionnaires

Three surveys were distributed among German, Italian, and Hungarian participants to explore cultural values, brand perception, and reactions to selected Facebook posts. In total, I collected responses from 76 German, 71 Italian and 100 Hungarian respondents.

The questionnaires were created in order to analyze the following aspects:

- The expectations of the potential buyers from a car as a product and Volkswagen and Fiat as brands
- Most common cultural values in each target culture
- The attitude of people towards different cultural dimensions of Hofstede present in the posts.

The results of the questionnaire were analyzed through descriptive statistics and keyword analysis. The mean scores and standard deviations were defined in the case of Likert scale

questions (culture-related statements, product values and advertising effectiveness). Keyword analysis was used to analyze the responses to brand and culture association tasks.

3.4. Semi-structured in-depth interviews

Fifteen in-depth interviews (423 minutes total) were conducted with 4 German, 4 Italian and 5 Hungarian participants. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) identified recurring themes related to cultural values, brand perception, and responses to semiotic elements. The following aspects were explored through interviews:

- Interviewees' expectations from a car as a product
- The attitude and emotional response of the participants towards the brands under study
- The attitude of the respondents towards different cultural values (based on Hofstede's model) represented in Facebook advertising
- The effect of particular verbal or visual semiotic signs (hashtags, emojis, culturally-sensitive symbols (e.g. flags))
- The attitude towards different marketing strategies used in Facebook advertising: green advertising, the use of cultural symbols, celebrity endorsement, UGC.

To conclude, the use of different research tools allowed for comprehensive analysis of the companies' linguistic and advertising strategies and the audience's responses.

4. Results

4.1. Semiotic analysis of advertising

The collected Facebook posts were analyzed semiotically in order to identify cultural dimensions they represent. Each post was examined for verbal and visual signs, including word choice, emojis, hashtags, and imagery. These signs were then interpreted through the lens of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. For example, the frequent use of words like "success", metaphors comparing cars to people ("unusual personality"), and visuals of cars in motion conveyed Masculinity across all three markets. Long-Term Orientation appeared in references to sustainability and innovation, while Indulgence was expressed through messages about freedom, pleasure, and vibrant visuals. Posts without clear cultural cues (minimalist or purely informative) were also noted and excluded from interpretation.

Figure 2 below demonstrates the distribution of dimensions in Volkswagen's Facebook advertising.

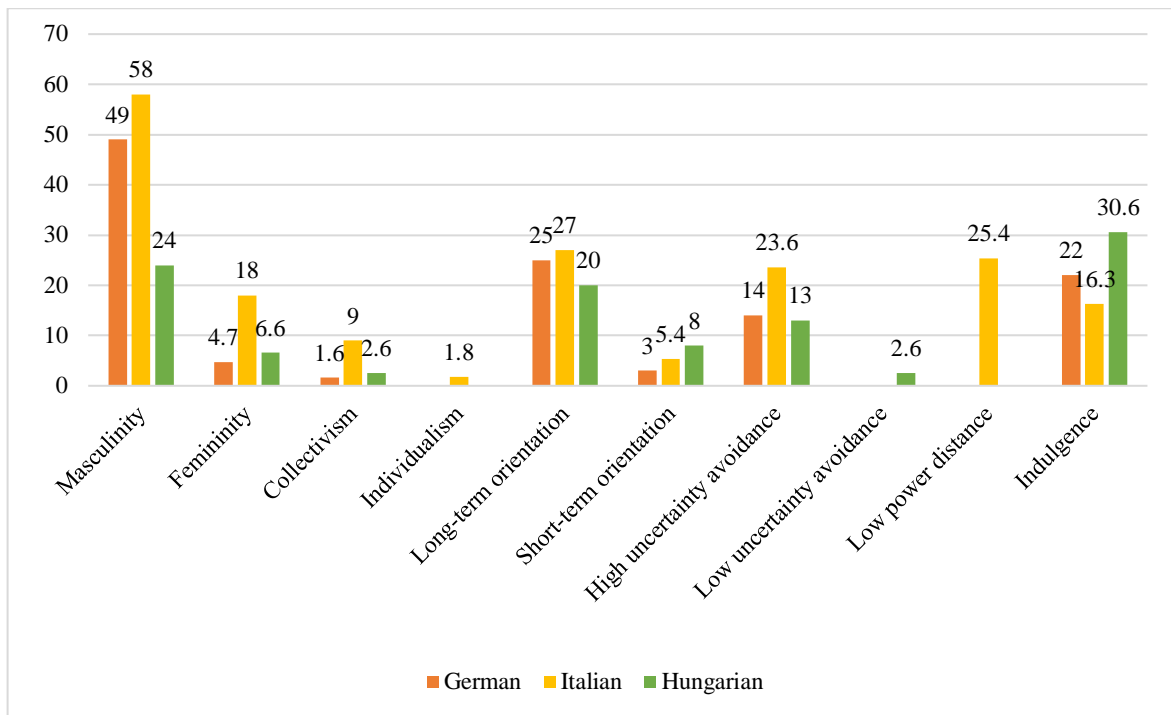
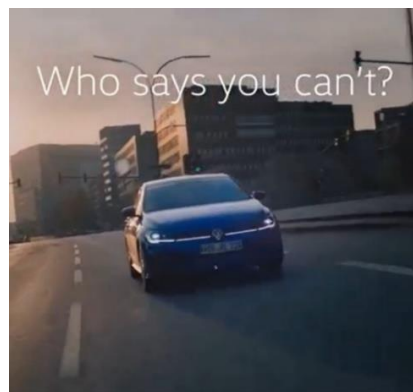


Figure 2. The percentage of Volkswagen advertisements representing different cultural values

Image 1 shows a car in the middle of an empty road, in motion, accompanied by the caption *Who says you can't?*, reinforcing the idea of power and overcoming obstacles.

Image 1. Speed and motion as visual representation of Masculinity

(Source: see Appendix 2, Example 6; 0:08)



Despite a shared emphasis on values like Masculinity and Long-Term Orientation, certain cultural nuances emerged. Italian and Hungarian ads more often included emotional appeals and home-related metaphors, reflecting Femininity and Collectivism. Hashtags like *#VolkswagenWayToZero* and celebrity ambassador campaigns (e.g. Francesco Totti in Italy) highlighted different dimensions such as High Uncertainty Avoidance and Low Power Distance. These findings suggest that while Volkswagen maintains a consistent brand identity, its messaging adapts subtly to cultural expectations, confirming an adaptation strategy within a unified visual and verbal framework.

Similar analysis was conducted for Fiat advertising. Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of Fiat posts referring to different cultural values of Hofstede.

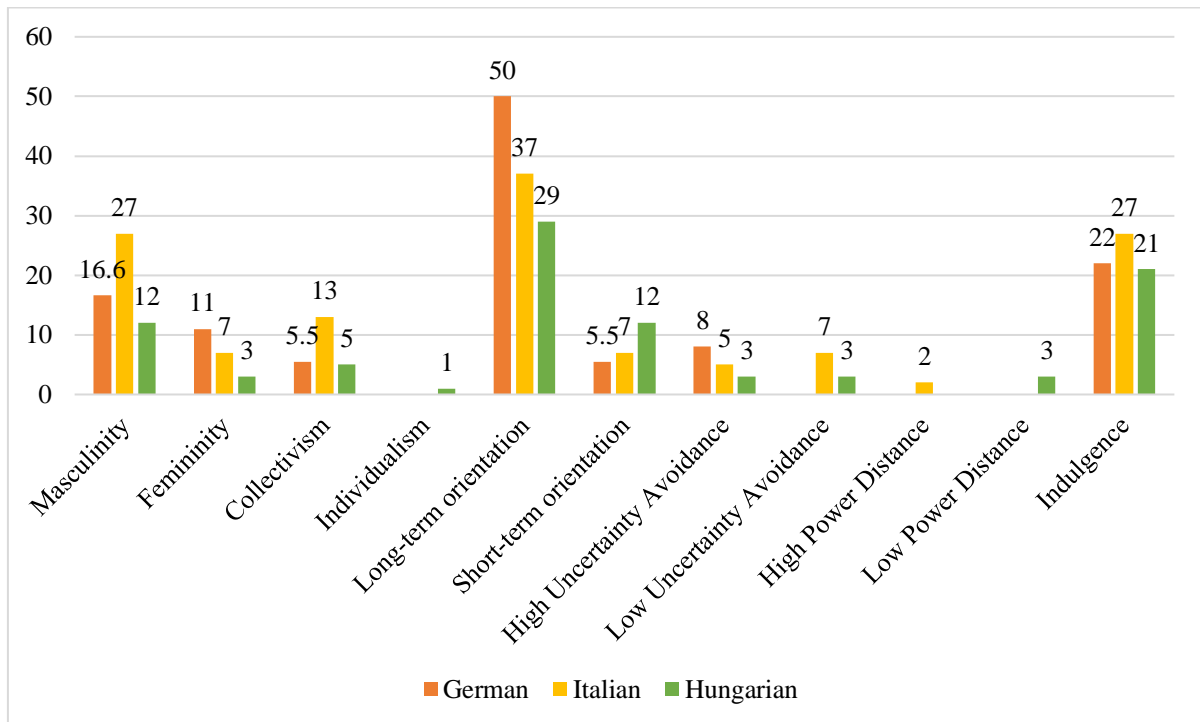


Figure 3. The Percentage of Fiat advertisements representing different cultural values

Fiat’s Facebook advertising emphasizes sustainability and a better future, aligning with Long-Term Orientation, highlighting the brand’s eco-friendly technologies and commitment to a better future. The brand also incorporated emojis, such as “Lightning” (⚡) and “Planet” (🌍), to emphasize green technology. In terms of Indulgence, Fiat promoted the relaxed Italian lifestyle with phrases like “Enjoy the freedom!” (Hungarian) and “Enjoy your life to the fullest” (German), often paired with scenic landscapes and bright color schemes. Visually, the company reflected the idea of freedom, enjoyment and adventure through depicting Fiat cars among picturesque landscapes and using bright color schemes (Image 6).

Image 2. The representation of indulgence in Fiat advertising

(Source: see Appendix 5, Example 38)



Cross-cultural differences within one company’s advertising campaign appear more evident in Volkswagen’s advertising, as Fiat posts were more standardized.

4.2. Customers' perspective: descriptive statistics of advertising effectiveness

4.2.1. Car as a product: customers' expectations

The respondents were provided 12 values, 8 benefits and 10 attributes of a car as a product, based on Rokeach's values (1973), which were adapted by De Mooij (2021) for the context of automobile advertising. The participants were asked to evaluate them on 1-5 Likert scale (where 1 stands for "not important", and 5 – "very important").

The results demonstrate that despite minor differences, customers across cultures prioritize similar features of a car as a product. Safety, Quality and Price were the most important attributes of a car. Among the values of a car as a product, Family security was the most important aspect across the three cultures. Additionally, German respondents underlined the importance of Achievement and Performance; Italian and Hungarian participants – Independence and Performance. As for the benefits of a car, responsibility and protecting family and the driver were chosen as the most important aspects.

It is possible to conclude that despite minor culture-related differences, customers from Germany, Italy and Hungary share similar fundamental expectations from a car as a product, which confirms the idea about the convergence of consumers' preferences.

4.2.2. Brand image: association task

Respondents from all cultures associated Volkswagen with Germany, high quality, and reliability. Fiat was associated with Italy and small-sized cars. German respondents also associated Volkswagen with family cars (particularly the Golf model), while Hungarian respondents connected it to the brand's slogan "Das Auto." For Fiat, Italian respondents linked it to the Panda model, and Hungarians associated it with the Punto model. These associations reveal that brand perceptions, while largely consistent, show cultural variation.

4.2.3. Cultural image

German respondents emphasized Achievement, Security, and Pragmatism, aligning with Masculinity, Individualism, and Uncertainty Avoidance. Italians valued tradition, leisure, and comfort, supporting Short-Term Orientation and Indulgence. Hungarians highlighted security, tradition, and High Power Distance, deviating from Hofstede's classifications of Hungary as a low Power Distance culture. While cultural descriptions mostly align with Hofstede's model, there were inconsistencies, suggesting evolving cultural perceptions.

4.2.4. The influence of Facebook advertising: customers' reactions

In the final part of the questionnaire, respondents rated Volkswagen and Fiat posts on a scale from 1 (“not convincing”) to 5 (“very convincing”). The posts contained a variety of verbal and visual semiotic signs rendering different cultural values. To ensure the feasibility of the task, 5 advertisements from each company’s Facebook page were presented for rating, totaling 10 posts per culture. The posts were selected based on the most frequent cultural values in the case of each company and each language (identified during the semiotic analysis).

The results demonstrate common patterns in Facebook advertising effect. Regardless of the target culture, posts representing Masculinity (focused on power, performance, and achievement) and Indulgence (particularly, the laid-back Italian lifestyle) received the highest evaluations for Volkswagen and Fiat, respectively.

4.3. Interviews: thematic analysis

The interviews, conducted online and offline, explored customers’ expectations of Volkswagen and Fiat, and their attitudes toward Facebook advertisements featuring different cultural values. The semi-structured interviews allowed participants to provide detailed responses about their impressions, emotions, and cultural relatability to the posts. Below, I demonstrate the key findings of the thematic analysis of interviews.

- Masculinity: Varied reactions; some found “masculine” ideas motivating (e.g., slogans), others were unaffected by them.
- Femininity & Collectivism: Evoked positive emotions, with younger and female audiences seen as the target for posts focusing on bonds and feelings.
- Long-Term Orientation: Environmental focus was appreciated, especially in light of current global issues, though Italian participants noted the importance of electric driving.
- Short-Term Orientation: Nostalgic reactions, with visuals like black-and-white photos and old fonts enhancing the nostalgic feel.
- Uncertainty Avoidance: Advertisements targeting High Uncertainty Avoidance emphasized safety and reliability, focusing on features like car safety and technical details. While German and Hungarian participants valued clarity and directness in these posts, Italian participants preferred more subtle, engaging messaging.
- Indulgence: Indulgence was a key theme in Volkswagen and Fiat advertising, symbolizing a relaxed lifestyle and enjoyment. While most Italians connected “dolce vita” with a stereotyped lifestyle, some noted it did not fully align with their reality. Overall, the

concept of indulgence was widely appealing, with “dolce vita” being especially memorable to participants.

- **Celebrity endorsement:** Across all three cultures, celebrity endorsement is seen as an effective marketing tool to capture attention and influence consumer perceptions. However, German participants are more critical, focusing on the risks and need for personal connection, Italians are generally positive, and Hungarians emphasize the importance of credibility and alignment with brand values.
- **Interactive language:** across all three cultures, participants agree that interactive language in Facebook advertising effectively captures attention and encourages active engagement with the brand.
- **Emojis & Hashtags:** German interviewees were skeptical of emojis, while Italians embraced them for emotional connections. Hungarian interviewees acknowledged their impact, but preferred the thoughtful use. All groups saw hashtags as useful for searches but had different preferences for their use.
- **Cultural Symbols:** Mixed reactions: some interviewees felt strong emotional ties to symbols like the Colosseum or the flag of the country, while others preferred more subtle references.
- **Language & UGC:** Italian campaigns with English phrases were less accessible to older generations. UGC was appreciated, but concerns about moderation and celebrity endorsements were raised.

5. Discussion

5.1. RQ1

The semiotic analysis of Volkswagen and Fiat’s Facebook advertisements in Germany, Italy, and Hungary reveals that both companies use verbal and visual semiotic signs to reflect Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. The most frequently represented values include Masculinity/Femininity, Long-Term Orientation, Indulgence, and Uncertainty Avoidance, while others, such as Collectivism, Short-Term Orientation, and Low Power Distance, appear less often. Masculinity is conveyed through the ideas of power and confidence, while Femininity and Collectivism emphasize emotions and shared experiences. Long-Term Orientation is reflected in sustainability messaging, and Uncertainty Avoidance is particularly evident in German posts through detailed technical descriptions and the focus on safety and reliability. Indulgence is expressed via themes of adventure and enjoyment, especially in Fiat’s “dolce vita” concept. Unique semiotic patterns include the frequent use of personification (e.g., describing cars as “confident” or “companions”)

and the symbolic use of colors like red for sustainability in Fiat advertisements. Overall, the findings confirm that both verbal and visual semiotic signs contribute to the cultural positioning of advertisements, aligning with multimodal advertising theories and audience preferences on social media (Li & Xie, 2020).

5.2. RQ2

Results confirm that consumers across all three cultures highly value safety, quality, affordability, performance, and driving pleasure – features aligned with Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity, Long-Term Orientation, and Indulgence. Volkswagen’s “masculine” posts emphasizing power and confidence and Fiat’s indulgence-focused content featuring the “dolce vita” theme appeared the most positively perceived. While Hofstede’s dimensions provided a useful framework, deviations emerged – Italians associated their culture with optimism and openness rather than restraint, and Hungarian respondents showed mixed attitudes toward Power Distance. Additionally, German and Hungarian consumers favored sustainability and technology-driven posts (high LTO and UAI), while Italians focused more on aesthetics. The findings confirm that while cultural dimensions influence advertising responses, universal values like enjoyment and emotional appeal also play a crucial role, demonstrating the fluid and evolving nature of cultural preferences in marketing (Schwartz, 2012).

5.3. RQ3

The findings confirm Hypothesis 5, demonstrating that advertising language in Germany, Italy, and Hungary reflects ongoing social transformations. Advertisements incorporate elements of globalization, economic concerns, environmental awareness, and evolving gender roles, aligning with broader societal shifts while also reinforcing emerging cultural trends:

- **Globalization and cultural convergence/divergence:** The study confirms that while global branding promotes convergence in consumer expectations, cultural nuances persist in language and stylistic choices, necessitating localized advertising strategies.
- **Economic influence on advertising language:** The balance between indulgence and financial security in advertising reflects economic priorities across cultures, with German and Hungarian posts emphasizing affordability and reliability, while Italian posts lean toward aesthetics and lifestyle aspirations.
- **Green advertising and sustainability:** Environmental consciousness is a growing concern across all three cultures, though financial considerations affect attitudes toward green car technologies, highlighting the need for region-specific marketing strategies.

- Shifting gender roles: Advertising reflects changing perceptions of masculinity and femininity, showing confidence and power as gender-neutral values. Family-oriented and emotional appeals remain universally well-received.

5.4. RQ4

The study found that certain advertising strategies, such as celebrity endorsement, green advertising, user-generated content, interactive marketing, emojis, and hashtags – effectively attract attention and engage audiences. However, their success varies across cultures. Italians responded most positively to celebrity endorsements, while Hungarians valued authenticity, and Germans were more skeptical. Interactive marketing was widely accepted but interpreted differently: Italians appreciated playfulness, Hungarians preferred immersive experiences, and Germans associated it with younger audiences. Emojis and hashtags were generally effective but required moderation, with Germans being the most critical. Green advertising was well-received, but attitudes toward sustainable technologies varied due to infrastructure and personal preferences. Cultural symbols and foreign language use in advertising received mixed reactions – overt cultural references were less effective, and Italian respondents preferred localized language over English slogans. These findings confirm that while key advertising strategies enhance engagement, their impact depends on careful cultural adaptation.

6. Conclusion

This research explored cross-cultural advertising from the semiotic perspective, focusing on Volkswagen's and Fiat's Facebook posts targeting Germany, Italy, and Hungary. It examined how linguistic and marketing strategies shape consumer perceptions, considering cultural, contextual, and demographic factors. The study revealed both similarities and differences in the companies' approaches. Consumer responses indicated that posts reflecting product expectations like safety, quality, and driving pleasure, were most effective. Additionally, Hofstede's cultural dimensions were reassessed, with the study acknowledging the evolving nature of these values in the modern context.

The research emphasizes the complexity of cross-cultural advertising, highlighting the importance of understanding communication styles, cultural values, and consumer expectations. It also demonstrates that both verbal and visual elements contribute to brand messaging, confirming the multimodal nature of advertising. By incorporating a mixed-methods approach, the study provides valuable insights into effective cross-cultural advertising for both academic and business spheres.

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