

# The Cultural Dimension of the Philippine Magazine Advertisements

Asia Pacific Journal of  
Multidisciplinary Research  
Vol. 5 No.1, 65-71  
February 2017  
P-ISSN 2350-7756  
E-ISSN 2350-8442  
www.apjmr.com

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Date Received: September 28, 2016; Date Revised: December 6, 2016

**Abstract** - Culture and media as one is a reflection of society. As culture being the characteristics of a group's identity, media on the other hand either reflects ideas in the society. It is the main goal of media to get the attention of the audience. Advertisements, as one of the platforms of media intend to fit into what the consumers' wants and desires because most of the consumers' attitudes, awareness and behaviors are according on the framework of their culture. The idea of culture reflecting on the magazine advertisements emerged since there are different types of how products and services were advertised. To find out the relevance of the claim, the researchers aimed to explore the Cultural Dimensions reflected in the magazine advertisements of FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan Magazine using the Hofstede's Five Dimensions of Culture. This includes Femininity, Masculinity, Power Distance, Individualism, Collectivism and Power Distance. General results show majority of the magazine advertisements reflects Uncertainty Avoidance. This implies that advertisers tend to provide advertisements that appeal to the reader's prevention on taking risk on uncertain circumstances. Overall, advertisers of the three magazines focused more on the person's avoidance on taking the risks that he/she might have foreseen and what he/she might experience in the future. Since the result of the study shows Uncertainty Avoidance as the dominant Dimension of Culture reflected, the researchers suggests to conduct a study on how social processes, interpersonal and mass communication relates to the Uncertainty Avoidance Dimension of Culture reflected in advertisements.

**Keywords** - culture, cultural dimensions, advertisements, comparative analysis, magazine

## INTRODUCTION

Culture is the way of life of a certain group of people. It involves their behaviors, beliefs, values and symbols that they generally accept and passed along from one generation to another. Overall, it distinguishes the members of one group from the others. Culture as defined by Carey[1], is somewhat a common characteristic of a group. The physical environment, tools, religion, customs, and practices or their whole way of life, it can also be a text and symbolic artifacts (e.g. works of art and architecture) encrypted with specific meanings by and for people with particular cultural identification.

People create, express, and transfer knowledge and attitudes toward reality through the construction of a variation of symbols. To understand cultural differences, several models have been developed, and the Hofstede model is the most used. Geert Hofstede is the author who developed a model to define different cultural dimensions or problem areas and

studied issues associated with cultural differences. He classified five dimensions that characterize differences among national cultures. These five dimensions include power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism or collectivism, masculinity or femininity and long-term orientation [2]. According to Hofstede, masculinity represents cultures with distinct gender roles where men focus on success, competition and rewards while women focus on tender values such as quality of life and modesty. Femininity represents cultures where gender roles overlap. In masculine cultures, managers are defined as more assertive and decisive, whereas feminine cultures breed more intuitive managers who negotiate disputes and encourage participation in decisions.

Power distance defines how social inequality is perceived and accepted in different cultures. Hofstede (1997) explains how in high power distance cultures children are raised with a great emphasis on respecting elders, which is carried through to

adulthood. Therefore, organizations are more centralized, employees prefer a more autocratic leadership style where subordinates are expected to be told what to do and there are wide wage gaps in the hierarchical structure. On the other hand, in low power distance cultures inequality is not desired, employees prefer to be consulted with regards to decision making and thus prefer a more resourceful and democratic leader.

Uncertainty avoidance is the degree to which members of a culture feel threatened or uncertain in unfamiliar situations. Thus in high uncertainty avoidance cultures, people prefer a structured environment with rules and policies in place. Hard work is embraced, and there is a greater sense of anxiety amongst the workforce. In contrast, in weak uncertainty avoidance cultures rules create discomfort, almost fear, and exist only where absolutely necessary. People tend to be more relaxed in these cultures, and work at a slower pace.

Following Hofstede, a subsequent study based on Chinese Confucian Theory revealed a fifth dimension referred to as long-term orientation. This describes the extent to which people have a dynamic, future-oriented perspective (long-term orientation – LTO) rather than a focus on the past and present (short-term orientation – STO).

Moreover, culture is also reflected on the way the dominant media molded people and societies. Media includes radio, film, television, newspapers, internet and advertisements. It influences the way the brain works and how it processes information to create new patterns of thought and behavior.

Advertising as one of the platforms of media expresses diverse interpersonal communication styles across cultures. It is unique to people's desires and necessity based on their values, beliefs, and lifestyle. Recent studies point to the need of adapting advertising strategies to the culture of the consumer.

The researchers came up with the idea of how the culture was manifested on the advertisements from magazines. The researchers believed that the types of products and services advertised and how they have presented an idea of "Culture".

Since media and culture shape each other around the globe, the study of culture for developing global advertising is therefore needed to understand what consumers want for them. The Hofstede model of national culture has proved to be a useful instrument

for understanding consumer behavior differences across cultures.

A study conducted by Morris & Waldman [3] showed the cultural messages presented in the Time Magazine advertisements. It discussed how the language and metaphors used in the magazine advertisements varied in five countries. This involves France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United States. Using Geert Hofstede's Five Dimension of National Culture, they identified the differences and similarities in culture among five countries based on the language, metaphors and product categories present in the magazine advertisements.

Jhally [4] claimed that in modern society, advertising seems to be the most influential institution of socialization. It molds mass media content, plays an important part in the creation of gender identity, and gives an impact on the relation between children and parents. It also dominates strategy in political campaigns and shapes some of our most significant cultural institutions such as sports and popular music and it has become a favorite topic of everyday conversation.

The extent to which advertisements contain explanations and use numerous words, or are predominantly picture-based, varies. It is not only a matter of taste or professional viewpoint; it often has to do with culture[5]. There are many aspects of culture which influence consumer behavior, usually several operate at the same time to influence behavior. Culture includes personality, how people express themselves and show emotion, the way they think, how they move, how problems are solved, how cities are built, and how economics and government functions.

Several studies have shown that advertisement correlates culture. Advertising affects the behavior of consumers or the target audiences. And because of these, the researchers came up with the idea of knowing how advertisements from magazines reflect culture.

The researchers believe that the types of products and services that were advertised and how the products were shown might give the researchers an idea of culture they are presenting. Since these products and services will not be advertised in the first place if it is not used and patronized by the people.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In order to provide better results of this study, the following are set as objectives: First is to compare the number of advertisements presented on FHM, YES!, and Cosmopolitan Magazines from January to December 2014. It is also necessary to classify and compare the advertisements presented on FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan Magazines into the following categories: Food and Beverages, Automobiles, Gadgets, Financial Institution/ Real Estate, Apparels, shoes, bags, and accessories, Media and entertainment, Personal Care, Health Care, Household Products, Sports and Fitness/ Recreation. And lastly, to compare and analyze the cultural dimensions present in the advertisements of FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan Magazines using Hofstede's Five Dimension of National Culture: Femininity, Masculinity, Power Distance, Individualism, Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long Term Orientation

## METHODS

A comparative content analysis was conducted to examine how the three magazines differ in the dimensions of culture presented in their advertisements, and also to answer the subsequent objectives of the study. This method is a research technique for systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics within a text [6]. This is, therefore, a method for studying the content of human communication through comparing, categorizing, arranging, and evaluating the fundamental signs and subjects to find out the sense.

The primary data needed were collected from the published FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan Magazines last January to December 2014, and the secondary data necessary were obtained from various sources such as books, related literature and studies, and from the internet. All in all, 12 magazines from FHM, 12 from Yes! and 12 from Cosmopolitan, a total of 36 magazines that was published from January to December 2014 were collected and analyzed. Altogether, the unit of analysis or the sample consists of 1,607 advertisements presented from January up to December 2014 from the magazines of FHM, YES! And Cosmopolitan. This study used the said magazines as the medium of advertisements issued from January to December 2014 distributed by Summit Media Inc., because according to the survey conducted by TNS Philippines [7], Summit Media is

one of the most popular leading magazine publishing companies in the Philippines. Moreover, the top three most widely read magazines under its publication are FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan Magazines. With its vast array of publication, the researchers' decision to use FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan magazines are based on its readership rate and the large range of audience.

The coding sheet and coding guide were used to carry out the classification process. The coding sheet includes the variables such as frequency of advertisements, classification of advertisements and classification of cultural dimensions presented in the ads. A coding guide was developed to analyze and classify the unit of analysis. These research instruments are helpful in analyzing the advertisement content of FHM, Yes! and Cosmopolitan magazines from January to December 2014.

In this study, the researchers decided to use the Top 3 most-read magazine for 2014 published by Summit Media. It includes Cosmopolitan, YES! and FHM Magazine issued from January to December 2014. The researchers chose the following magazines since they have the most number of readers according to the Synovate Media Atlas Survey. Also, the three magazines have different themes in line with their individual target readers.

Since the three were the most read magazine, it provides variety of audiences who were the primary target of the advertisements. The purpose of comparing the three magazines is to see the differences on dimensions of culture presented by advertisements based on their target audience and their respective themes.

The classification of the product categories was based on study conducted by Morris & Waldman [3], and Kramolis and Drabkova [8]. The type of product categories that are commonly identified among the result of the pre-test on the three magazine issues include: (a.) food and beverages including products that can be eaten or drunk; (b.) automobiles consists of vehicle-related products such as cars, tools, trucks; (c.) gadgets like mobile phones and computers etc.; (d.) financial Institution and real estate involves banks, insurance companies, loans, condominiums and house and lot; (e.) apparel, shoes, bags and accessories includes products like, clothing lines, watches, jewelry, and department stores etc.; (f.) media & entertainment includes television shows, movies, and books; (g.) personal care items are

products like perfumes, cosmetics and hygiene products; (h.) health care products includes medicines, vitamins, sanitation products; (i.) household products refers to detergents, dishwashing items, kitchen tools, bedroom items, furniture, television; and (j.) sports, fitness & recreation related products refers to resorts and fun run events.

On the other hand, classification of dimensions of culture was based on the theory conducted by Geert Hofstede [9]. The dimensions of culture that were commonly identified among the result of the pre-test on the three magazine issues include: (a.) femininity which refers to advertisements that show sincere personal connections and caring for others; (b.) masculinity which refers to advertisements that show success and achievements; (c.) power distance which refers to the advertisements that shows the inequity level between the people belonging to a society; (d.) individualism which refers to the advertisements that shows the level to which individuals learn to perform as individual than as participants of a society; (e.) collectivism which refers to advertisements that show affiliation with a group or society; and (f.) uncertainty avoidance and (g.) long term orientation which refers to the advertisements that show the level to which individuals have a preference of organized than to shapeless circumstances.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

From September 1-5, 2015 data gathering drew a total number of 1,607 advertisements presented from January up to December 2014 from the magazines of FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan. In line with that, the following are the specific findings of this study:

**Advertisements present in Philippine Magazines**

According to Arens[10], advertising is a structured and composed non-personal communication sent through various media usually paid by identified sponsor. Advertisements are the medium used to persuasive and tackles about different products such as goods, services, and ideas.

There are different types of Advertisements defined by the kind of medium used. Print Media Advertising are consists of newspapers, magazines, journals, handbills, etc. On the other hand, Electronic or Broadcast Media Advertising consists of (i) radio, (ii) television, (iii) motion pictures, (iv) video, and (v) the internet. Moreover, Outdoor Media include posters, neon signs, transit, point of purchase (POP),

etc. While, Other Media includes direct mail, handbills, calendars, diaries, cinema advertising, and the internet and so on.

**Table 1. Distribution of Advertisements in Philippine Magazines**

Months	Name of Magazine							
	FHM		YES!		COSM		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Jan	16	3.4	31	5.8	19	3.1	66	4.1
Feb	32	6.8	30	5.7	30	5.0	92	5.7
Marc	44	9.3	38	7.2	58	9.6	14	8.7
April	43	9.1	52	9.8	51	8.4	14	9.1
May	32	6.8	50	9.4	70	11.1	15	9.5
June	31	6.6	42	7.9	42	6.9	11	7.2
July	50	10.0	37	7.0	44	7.3	13	8.2
Aug	35	7.4	76	14.0	42	6.9	15	9.5
Sept	42	8.9	45	8.5	67	11.1	15	9.6
Oct	44	9.3	42	7.9	55	9.1	14	8.8
Nov	45	9.6	56	10.0	60	9.9	16	10.0
Dec	57	12.0	31	5.8	68	11.1	15	9.7
<b>TOT</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>

There are 1,607 advertisements present in 2014 FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan Magazine. Among three magazines, Cosmopolitan Magazine has the greatest number of advertisements with 606 or 37.7% of the total number of advertisements in the three magazines. While YES! Magazine has 530 or 33% of the total ads, and FHM has the least number of advertisements with 29.3% of the total number of gathered advertisements from FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan Magazine.

**Product Categories of Advertisements in Philippine Magazines**

The research conducted by Morris & Waldman [3] categorized the advertisements into four. It includes food and beverages, automobile, personal care, and insurance or financial ads. They considered the categorization of advertisements as culture-bound since it has the leading advertising spending and the products under those categories are both for men and women.

In this study, product category pertains to different services and products being advertised. The

product categories are based on the Coding Guide that the researchers used. It includes Food & Beverage; Automobile; Gadgets; Financial Institution & Real Estate; Apparels/Shoes/Bags/Accessories; Media & Entertainment; Personal Care; Health Care; Household Products and Sports / Fitness / Recreation.

**Table 2. Product Categories of Advertisements Philippine Magazines**

Product Categories	Name of Magazine			
	FHM	YES!	COSMO	TOTAL
	%	%	%	%
Food &	8.9	15.5	5.8	9.9
Automobile	7.0	1.5	3.0	3.7
Gadgets	1.7	4.2	3.0	3.0
FI& Real Estate	0.2	6.6	4.5	3.9
Apparels/ Accessories	36.9	11.1	26.4	24.5
Media & Entertainment	22.1	7.9	9.4	12.6
Personal Care	14.0	30.9	36.1	27.9
Health Care	8.7	13.6	8.1	10.1
Household	-	8.3	0.8	3.0
Sports / Fitness /	0.4	0.4	3.0	1.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Chi-Square: 347.170*

*P-value: <0.001; Level of Significance:0.05*

Products and services under the personal care category made up the greatest number of the advertisements collected by the researchers among the three magazines of 2014. 27.9% or almost 30% of the total number of the advertisements present among the three magazines published on 2014 were products and services that are related to personal care such as cosmetics, perfumes, personal hygiene etc.

The results show that the product categories vary with each magazine. Given that these three magazines are different in nature, this implies that the advertisements in the magazines has a significant difference between the magazines and the product categories of their advertisements since the obtained P-value is <0.001.

This implies that the variation of advertisements in each of the three magazines is significantly different for every product category. Results show that Personal Care category gathered the highest percentage of advertisements from Yes! and Cosmopolitan magazine, while only placing third for

FHM. Which means Yes! and Cosmopolitan magazine highly promotes personal care to its readers while Apparels/Accessories for the readers of FHM.

This means that the audience of these magazines have a big impact on what products should be present and advertised in the magazines.

***Cultural Dimensions present in the Philippine Magazines***

Geert Hofstede has studied different dimensions of national cultures [11] in sixty-four IBM subsidiaries by analyzing an enormous record of value scores of the employees. He administered one of the most wide-ranging researches of how culture predisposes standards in the place of work. The Dimensions of Culture includes Femininity, Masculinity, Power Distance, Individualism, Collectivism, Long-term Orientation and Uncertainty Avoidance.

**Table 3. The Cultural Dimensions present in Philippine Magazines (With N/A)**

Hofstede's Dimension of Culture	Name of Magazine				p-value
	FHM	YES!	Cosmo	Total	
	%	%	%	%	
Femininity	9.4	47.5	41.6	34.6	<0.001
Masculinity	28.8	5.1	6.8	12.4	<0.001
Power Distance	0.8	0.5	2.7	1.4	0.002
Individualism	12.7	10.6	20.2	14.6	<0.001
Collectivism	13.8	3.5	5.5	7.1	<0.001
Uncertainty Avoidance	19.3	14.1	13.4	15.3	0.020
Long Term Orientation	0.8	3.7	3.8	2.9	0.002
Not Applicable	14.4	15.2	6.1	11.7	<0.001
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	

*Level of significance: 0.05*

The leading dimension of culture found in the advertisements of FHM is Masculinity with a total of 28.8%. On the other hand, YES! Magazine has greatest number of ads that shows Femininity culture with 47.5%. While on Cosmopolitan Magazine, Femininity is also the prevailing dimension of culture that is reflected in the advertisements with a total of 34.6%.

Based on the data gathered, advertisers tend to provide advertisements that appeal to the target audience interest and the focus of their magazines. Since the target audiences of the FHM Magazine are

18 to 35 years old and predominantly males who belong to classes A, B, C of the society, Masculinity is represented in the advertisements. On the other hand, YES! Magazine is an entertainment magazine under the Summit Media that targets 25-40 years old females and Cosmopolitan Magazine is known for featuring information on anything about women's fashion, beauty and health, therefore Femininity is the dominant culture reflected in their advertisements.

### **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION**

This study provided comparison of the cultural dimensions present on the print ads in Philippine magazines. The magazines that were utilized are FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan magazine whose issues were from January 2014 to December 2014. The results show that among the three magazines, the researchers gathered the highest number of advertisements from Cosmopolitan magazine. This is implied to what Encanto [12] emphasized on how magazine publishing started in the Philippines, that it highly relied on advertisements for financial support and subscription.

#### *Product categories*

Moreover, product categories were also used to classify the gathered print advertisements from the magazines. Product category pertains to different services and/or products that are being advertised. The product categories are based on the Coding Guide that the researchers used which includes Food & Beverage; Automobile; Gadgets; Financial Institution & Real Estate; Apparels/Shoes/Bags/Accessories; Media & Entertainment; Personal Care; Health Care; Household Products and Sports / Fitness / Recreation.

While Vivian [13], said that advertising is key to the consumer economy. Through advertising, people become aware of what products and services are available. It is an essential to prosperous society and also the financial basis of significant contemporary mass media.

#### *Culture and Advertising*

Culture manifests the way people live and notice differences in each other's beliefs. It involves the way of dressing, food and cooking, courtship and love, marriage practices, ways of worshiping God and many other beliefs as we go from a place to another. These behavior patterns odd to a group of people are called *culture*.

The dimensions of culture used in this study include Femininity, Masculinity, Power Distance, Individualism, Collectivism, Long-term Orientation and Uncertainty Avoidance that are manifested on the print advertisements in the magazines of FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan from January to December 2014. Print ads that were utilized vary from text or pictures presented. However, some of the advertisements present in one magazine may be present or not to another.

The focus on the relationship of Culture to Advertising and vice versa was shown. Several standards, customs, and stereotypes of the audiences was reinforced and reflected by Advertising. On the other hand, there are many aspects of culture which influence consumer behavior, usually several operate simultaneously to influence behavior. To sum it up, analysis of advertising and cross-cultural can classify particular similarities and differences in advertising strategies, expressions, and manifest cultural values, norms and stereotypes of the target audience and the greater culture.

According to Panopio and Raymundo [14], culture is the total of human creations- intellectual, technical, artistic, physical, and moral. It is the means of life communal to a group of people which allows them to share ideas and patterns of behavior that differentiate them from others.

Culture shaped the buying behavior of an individual [15]. As old patterns gradually give way to the new ones, cultural influences do change as time passes by. Culture itself undergoes cultural changes as society develops. Advertising management should be alert to these changing patterns so that they can adjust their advertising techniques and methods. It is in this sense that advertisers should be persistent of cultural changes that further affect the different segments of their markets.

Advertising in a way, is a public announcement to inform and persuade people to patronize a certain product, service or idea. It is an also important element of culture as it reflects or attempts to change one's lifestyle. Moreover, looking back at the results, Cosmopolitan magazine, which has the highest number of advertisements in the three magazines, manifested Femininity. Wherein the advertisements present on the said magazine are products under the Personal Care category that features women's fashion, beauty and health. While FHM presented advertisements of apparel products such as clothes,

shoes, bags and accessories that showed Masculinity. Moreover, Yes! magazine, on the other hand, reflected Femininity as the dominant dimension of culture, the same way advertisements in Cosmopolitan magazine did.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Since this study is limited to the advertisements of FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan Magazines that was published on 2014, a study comparing other elements of culture, or using different publication timeline of magazine issues may be considered in pursuing future studies. And the result of the study shows Femininity as the dominant Dimension of Culture reflected, the researchers suggests to conduct a study on how social processes, interpersonal and mass communication relates to the Femininity Dimension of Culture reflected in advertisements.

The result also showed advertisements reflect femininity culture, that's why the researchers recommend to the readers to find out how cultural uniqueness is taken into account as companies and advertisers captures consumer's interests.

Furthermore, the researchers would like to recommend this to various advertising companies in the Philippines, for them to be more critical on the presentation on various forms of the advertisements that may show or reflect cultural messages since most of time, the communication style is decisive for consumers' acceptance of advertising.

The researchers limit this study only to the advertisements presented in FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan Magazines because they have different varieties of readers such as men, women and general public. These magazines were published by Summit Media Inc. that reaches a wide range of audiences because it is well-circulated all over the Philippines.

The researchers analyzed all advertisements presented in FHM, YES! and Cosmopolitan Magazines published by Summit Media Inc. only from January to December 2014, because these are the latest advertisements. Therefore, researchers recommend a study on how advertisements from magazines changes in a span of 5-10 years to reflect also the cultural changes if there are any.

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