

# Marketing in East Asia: A Cross-Cultural Perspective

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As the East Asia market becomes bigger and bigger, its influence on the world economy becomes more significant. It is therefore important to understand the characteristics of consumer behavior in this area. The six articles in this special issue of *Psychology & Marketing* include cross-cultural studies of marketing practice, marketing environment in the region, the influence of Confucianism that lie behind the East Asian phenomenon of consumption, and challenges and opportunities facing marketing managers. However, the main focus of the articles is cross-cultural differences in consumer behavior.

The potential usefulness of Edward T. Hall's concept of high- versus low-context cultures to international marketing has been discussed widely. However, implications of this concept in marketing have largely been discussed descriptively, and little attempt has been made to empirically compare various cultures in a real setting. Kim, Pan, and Park report the findings from a cross-cultural study that attempts to show whether Hall's description of the characteristics of high- and low-context cultures can indeed be empirically confirmed. With the use of a survey consisting of 16 items, subjects from three different countries—China, Korea, and the U.S.—representing both high- and low-context cultures, are studied. Overall, the results show that the three cultures differ in a way that is consistent with Hall's conceptualization. Specifically, the Chinese and Korean subjects are shown to exhibit tendencies that are consistent with high-context cultures, and the American subjects are shown to exhibit tendencies that are consistent with low-context cultures. For example, it is found that the subjects from China and Korea are more socially oriented, more confrontation avoiding, and have more trouble dealing with new situations.

International marketers are increasingly advocating the practice of incorporating cultural aspects in advertising. However, little is known about how these culturally relevant aspects are interpreted by the intended audience, or if their impact is universal for all members of the target culture. Leach and Liu propose that when a norm is incorporated in an advertisement, members whose self-concept is congruent with the norms of their culture will use normative rules to evaluate an advertised brand. Conversely, among members whose self-concept is deviant from their culture, advertisements incorporating norms will stimulate cognitive elaboration. For an empirical example, with the use of norms pertaining to group affiliation, they investigate the use of cultural norms in advertising across two divergent cultures (the collective culture of Taiwan, and the individualist culture of the United States).

In Moore's study, a computer simulation was used as the setting to investigate judgments by Chinese and American business school students. Subjects were asked to make a series of decisions and give judgments about expected levels of competition for a new market opportunity in the simulation world. Decisions were compared across the groups based on the decision structure and content. The results confirm previous research as the American participants generated significantly more responses overall, and especially judgment-consistent responses, than the Chinese participants. Analysis of the content of the decision representations shows that the relative proportion of singular to distributional information in the responses was similar for both American and Chinese individuals they were making decisions about their own teams, but the Chinese participants focused more heavily on distributional information when they were making judgments about the behavior of others. This implies that American and Chinese individuals focus on different aspects of similar information, and this may influence subsequent judgments.

Na, Son, and Marshall examined spousal influence in family decision-making situations in Korea. Five thousand five hundred responses were collected nationwide across a spectrum of age groups and genders. Results were consistent with expectations, in that the strong, cultural tradition of patriarchal dominance is overriding the increasing level of economic development that might have been expected to lead to far higher levels of spousal decision equalitarianism. However, children and women do appear to have an increasing influence in family purchase decisions.

In an effort to understand diverse, multicultural consumer behavior, Park compares Korean and American gift-giving behavior. Park aims to illustrate how gift-giving behavior differs across cultural values; specifically, in the Confucian collectivistic nature of the Far East (Korea), and the individualistic nature of the West (United States). Focus groups and in-depth interviews are conducted for initial issue exploration, and mail surveys are then utilized for testing the proposed hypotheses.

Results reveal that Confucian collectivistic and individualistic values are significant in explaining cross-cultural differences in gift-giving behavior.

The Republic of Korea recently became one of the member countries of the OECD. Such developed-nation status requires Korea to open its consumer goods and financial markets. As the more open Korean market becomes increasingly attractive to foreign manufacturers and investors, it is critical for foreign marketers to understand how Korean consumers perceive and evaluate imported goods. Ulgado and Lee examine how Koreans in comparison with Americans react to foreign-made products. The results of the study show that both Korean and U.S. consumers, in general, rely heavily on specific intrinsic attributes of products as the basis for their evaluations of the product quality. Interestingly, Koreans considered country-of-manufacture information as equally important in this situation. However, when they determined their purchase intentions, neither Koreans nor Americans valued country labels of the products; they again used product attribute information.

In conclusion, one special issue cannot cover everything that deserves coverage. At the very least, however, this special issue focuses on cultural differences, and thus it should be somewhat revealing to practicing marketing managers as well as to researchers in the field.