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Cross-cultural differences in Persuasion Knowledge

The effect of the individualist/collectivist cultural dimension on the recognition
of persuasion intent

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Abstract

This study investigated cross-cultural differences in persuasion knowledge by looking at discrepancies in inferences of manipulative intent between an individualistic and a collectivistic culture that either saw an advertisement with a congruent persuasion tactic or a non-congruent persuasion tactic. The research question that was investigated was: “What is the difference in persuasion knowledge between a collectivistic and an individualistic culture in response to advertisements that use congruent and non-congruent persuasion tactics?”. It was relevant to investigate this topic because there was little research on the interaction of persuasion knowledge and cross-cultural differences. It contributes to the field of marketing as it helps to improve effectiveness in persuasion and to select appropriate persuasion strategies and tactics. The method consisted of an experiment between Dutch (individualistic culture) and Vietnamese (collectivistic culture) participants. Two questionnaires were made, one for each country. The participants were exposed to either an advertisement containing a scarcity tactic, reciprocity tactic, or a neutral tactic. The results showed that the Dutch participants overall had lower inferences of manipulative intent for all ad types which means they found the tactics more appropriate and less manipulative than the Vietnamese participants. Furthermore, it was found that IMI has a negative relation with attitude toward the ad and purchase intentions, which means that attitude toward the ad and purchase intentions increased when inferences of manipulative intent decreased. All in all, it can be concluded that in this experiment congruency of tactics did not play a significant role in differences in persuasion knowledge.

Keywords: Persuasion knowledge, IMI, individualism/collectivism, scarcity & reciprocity

Introduction

Nowadays people are increasingly exposed to advertisements that try to influence their behavior and to persuade them to buy new products. In the streets with MUPI, on the television with commercials, and on the laptop and mobile phones with advertisements displayed on the screen. One could not escape advertising as it is present almost everywhere. The creators try to influence the way of thinking by using images because visual memory is better than verbal memory (Erdelyi & Becker, 1974). Persuasion is best described as human communication designed to influence the independent judgments and actions of others, as it is a form of attempted influence in the way that it seeks to alter the way people think, act and feel (Simons, 1976).

According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model “ELM” of Petty and Cacioppo (1986), there are two routes that explain how people behave when tried to be persuaded: the central route and the peripheral route. With the central route, people think deeply about their own choices. With the peripheral route, decisions are influenced by peripheral cues. Peripheral cues include every possible element of a persuasive message that is capable of influencing people without them analyzing the message arguments in the advertisement (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). However, Friestad and Wright (1994) argued that the ELM explanation of peripheral cues is vague and proposed in their Persuasion Knowledge Model that the ELM needs a concentrated analysis of why and how certain types of cues come to play. This is in line with the findings of Eagly and Chaiken (1993), who said that the ELM’s peripheral route lacks theoretical precision and depth because it does not explain why particular peripheral cues will operate nor why peripheral cues of various sorts are ignored completely when message arguments are being reflected.

The aforementioned Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) shows how people’s persuasion knowledge influences their responses to persuasion attempts. Friestad and Wright (1994) discussed in depth the nature and development of persuasion knowledge and how people use it to interpret, evaluate and respond to influence attempts from advertisers and salespeople. The PKM is based on 2 concepts: targets and agents. Targets are people for whom a persuasion attempt is meant and agents are people whomever a target identifies as being responsible for making a persuasion attempt. A persuasion attempt describes a target’s perception of an agent’s strategic behavior in presenting information to influence someone’s beliefs, attitudes, or decisions (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Over time, people develop their own knowledge about persuasion attempts in advertisements as they are more and more exposed to them. Persuasion knowledge continues to develop throughout people’s lives and helps to cope with persuasion attempts and to identify when they are targeted. Persuasion coping behavior not only includes people’s reasoning and physical actions, but also any thinking about an agent’s persuasion attempt. Furthermore, in the case of the consumers and targeted individuals, the PKM developed three knowledge structures that interact to shape and determine the outcomes of the persuasion attempts: persuasion knowledge, agent knowledge, and topic knowledge (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Persuasion knowledge is, as mentioned before, the knowledge people have about persuasion attempts and includes beliefs about strategies and tactics. Agent knowledge refers to the beliefs about traits and goals of the persuasion agent and topic knowledge are the beliefs about the topic of the message. In

addition to persuasion knowledge, Friestad and Wright (1994) claimed that folk knowledge, which is described as the shared beliefs about persuasion during any period of time, changes over time and influences persuasion knowledge (Friestad & Wright, 1999). This is in line with the findings of Churchland (1991) who said that folk knowledge strongly influences people's perceptions of ambiguous complex phenomena such as persuasion. Friestad and Wright (1999) explained that folk knowledge about persuasion consists of shared beliefs about underlying aspects of the persuasion process as it occurs across the persuasion contexts that are important in the lives of a culture's members. Folk knowledge about persuasion provides members with a model that resides in the memory. Members can access this model to generate situationally relevant beliefs about marketers, agents, and advertisement messages they encounter. Furthermore, Friestad and Wright (1994) suggested that each culture's thinking may differ from other cultures since the folk knowledge on persuasion is different and changes over time.

As persuasion knowledge might vary between cultures because of their respective folk knowledge and overtime changes, it is worthy to look at how cultures might differ. Hofstede (1984) subdivided cultures into 5 cultural dimensions: high power distance – low power distance, individualism - collectivism, masculinity – femininity, high uncertainty avoidance – low uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation – short-term orientation. Accordingly, the individualism-collectivistic dimension reflects the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups, the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members (Hofstede, 2001). More specifically, members of an individualistic culture define their self-image as “I” and are more self-orientated, while members of the collectivistic culture define their self-image as “We” and are more group-orientated. This cultural dimension, in relationship with persuasion, was further investigated in a cross-cultural study by Han and Shavitt (1994). In their first study, they found that magazine advertisements in an individualistic culture, the United States, appealed to individual benefits and personal success. On the contrary, in a collectivistic culture being Korea, the magazine advertisements appealed to ingroup benefits and harmony. Study 2 proved that in the United States advertisements emphasizing individualistic benefits were more persuasive and advertisements emphasizing families and groups were less persuasive than they were in Korea (Han & Shavitt, 1994). Though, the product characteristics played a role as the cultural differences became more visible when the advertised product was a product used collectively and was less visible when the advertised product was a product that is used individually (Han & Shavitt, 1994). In line

with these findings is the study of Zhang and Neelankavil (1996), who likewise had a cross-cultural study regarding persuasion and the same cultural dimensions. They also found that the individualistic culture, the United States, preferred an advertisement congruent to the individualistic appeal. The collectivistic culture, China, preferred an advertisement congruent to the collectivistic appeal. Similar to the study by Han and Shavitt (1994), they studied the influence of personal and non-personal products on culture. What they found was that for non-personal products, appeals in accordance with the cultural values were more persuasive and that there was no difference for personal products. Another cross-cultural study by Shavitt and Nelson (1997) between the United States (individualistic) and Taiwan (collectivistic) found that the participants from the U.S. focused more on product-related items in advertisements whereas Taiwanese participants were more persuaded by their own advertisement evaluation than by the product judgments. This implies that persuasion may be mediated by different cognitive processes across cultures. The cognitive responses refer to the thoughts a consumer has in response to a persuasive message (Shavitt & Nelson, 1997).

Since the aforementioned studies showed that persuasion is different across cultures and that appeals consistent with cultural values generate favorable attitudes, it is interesting to look into more detail at how individualistic and collectivistic are exactly persuaded (Zhang & Gelb, 1996). An important factor in persuasion is the use of tactics that influence consumers' thoughts and behavior. Cialdini (2001) developed six principles of social influence: reciprocity, scarcity, authority, commitment and consistency, liking, and consensus. Orji (2016), studied susceptibility to persuasion with the 6 persuasion tactics in a cross-cultural context between the individualist and collectivist culture. It was found that culture is an important factor when selecting the appropriate persuasive strategy for advertisements. Generally, the collectivistic culture was more persuaded by all the tactics except for scarcity, which implies that the collectivistic culture is more persuadable than the individualistic culture. Regarding the scarcity tactic, it appeared that it was the only tactic that the individualistic culture perceived as more persuasive than the collectivistic culture. Orji (2016) described scarcity as an appeal that convinces people that rare or low-stock products are more valuable. Another tactic that is worth mentioning is the reciprocity tactic, as it was one of the most persuasive tactics for the collectivistic culture. Orji (2016) described reciprocity as an appeal that makes people feel obligated to return a favor (Cialdini, 2001). In line with these definitions are Andrews, van Leeuwen and van Baaren (2013), who described scarcity as a technique that influences people to buy a product before the opportunity is gone. They add

that if something is hard to get, more people want it. Also, they described reciprocity as a technique that lets us feel obligated to do a favor back when we receive something. As mentioned, scarcity was the only tactic that people from individualistic cultures were more susceptible to in terms of persuasion (Orji, 2016). The underlying reason for that is that the individualists value things that make them feel different and unique. Having that one scarce product makes them feel exclusive. This is in line with Earley and Gibson (1998), who found that individualists see diversity within a group as a way of bringing uniqueness. Similarly, Schimmack, Oishi and Diener (2005) found that one of the core values of individualism is uniqueness. Regarding the reciprocity tactic, it is persuasive for collectivists because they have a “we” and “group” identity so they feel more obligated to return a favor.

Previous research investigated how cultures differ, which tactic works best for which culture, and how cultures respond to persuasion in general. To know which persuasion tactics work best for which culture is useful for marketing agencies, but persuasiveness and persuasion tactics are not the same as previously mentioned persuasion knowledge from the PKM (Friestad & Wright, 1994). In interaction with the tactics of Cialdini (2001), Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013) found that supply-related scarcity is less likely to activate persuasion knowledge than demand-related scarcity. Also, supply-related scarcity is rather informative whereas demand-related scarcity is more persuasive.

Still, there remains a research gap as there is little research on the interaction of persuasion knowledge and cross-cultural differences (Campbell & Kirmani, 2009). But to elaborate on the persuasion knowledge and how it differs across cultures, it is essential to know how to measure it. Ham, Nelson, and Das (2015) reviewed how the PKM was measured, conceptualized, and operationalized in leading journals in the advertising fields. In total, 89 articles were investigated and found that experiment was the dominant method in examining and measuring persuasion knowledge. In their research, the study of Campbell (1995) is present. It focused on situational persuasion knowledge, which indicated that persuasion knowledge is not always consistent but rather dependent on certain situations as some could activate high or low persuasion knowledge which causes an alternation in how participants cope with situations. Furthermore, Campbell (1995) developed a six-item scale to measure the Inferences of Manipulative Intent (IMI) which shows the appropriateness of persuasion attempts and indicates whether the participants perceived the advertisement as manipulative. Through IMI, attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intentions were measured. However, it was found that the more participants perceive something as

manipulative, the more it will negatively affect the attitudes. Ham et al. (2015) argue that IMI appears to be a proper measurement scale to assess consumers' persuasion knowledge in response to a specific persuasion tactic. Moreover, they argued that the IMI scale is developed for advertising, hence it is more appropriate to measure consumers' attitudes to advertising persuasion tactics rather than assessing the recognition of hidden persuasive intent.

However, regarding the IMI scale, the findings of Campbell (1995) and Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013) contradict each other. On the one hand, Campbell (1995) claimed that inferences of manipulative intent were lower when an advertisement is seen as persuasive. On the other hand, Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013) found that inferences of manipulative intent were higher when an advertisement was seen as persuasive. Therefore, it is not known if IMI and persuasiveness have a positive or negative relation. In addition to cultural differences regarding persuasiveness, Orji (2016) found that the individualistic culture was better persuaded by the scarcity tactic and the collectivist culture better by the reciprocity tactic. Though in the case of persuasion knowledge, little research was done on its interaction with culture. Consequently, this proposed study wants to investigate how members of individualistic and collectivistic cultures differ in their persuasion knowledge. This will be done by measuring IMI responses to advertisements containing appeals that are congruent and non-congruent to their cultures. In the case of the scarcity tactic, the focus will lay on demand-related scarcity as it was found to be more persuasive (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2013).

This results in the research question: What is the difference in persuasion knowledge between a collectivistic and an individualistic culture in response to advertisements that use congruent and non-congruent persuasion tactics?

Since it is not known if persuasiveness and persuasion knowledge have a positive or negative relation as the findings of Campbell (1995) and Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013) contradict each other, directional hypotheses are difficult to make and cause the following hypotheses in terms of persuasion knowledge:

H1: There will be a difference in IMI between Dutch and Vietnamese participants in response to the advertisement that contains reciprocity appeal

H2: There will be a difference in IMI between Dutch and Vietnamese participants in response to the advertisement that contains demand-related scarcity appeal.

H3: The neutral tactic will not cause differences in IMI between both cultures.

Lastly, the Campbell (1995) paper suggests that IMI affects the underlying attitudes: attitude toward ad and purchase intentions. This causes the following hypotheses:

H4: The IMI scores will have an effect on the attitude towards the ad.

H5: The IMI scores will have an effect on the purchase intentions.

Methodology

Materials

In this research, three advertisements were containing orange juice. It is an everyday and universal product, that is not owned or preferred by a specific culture. The brand present in the advertisements is non-existing so that it could not influence the participants.

The first operationalized independent variable was “cultural dimension” and was subdivided into two levels (1= individualistic culture, 2 = collectivistic culture) based on Hofstede (1984). The country that represented the individualistic culture was the Netherlands and for the collectivistic culture, it was Vietnam.

The second operationalized independent variable was “persuasion tactic” and was subdivided into three levels (1 = scarcity, 2 = reciprocity, 3 = neutral). The three advertisements that were manipulated, each contained a persuasion tactic. The photo of the advertised product, orange juice, was the same for each tactic but only the text differed. The text was modified according to the belonging tactics. For the control tactic, this was a neutral text that does not apply any persuasive principle of Cialdini (2001). The reason for using a neutral control tactic is because there might be other potential predictors of cross-cultural differences other than the tactic itself. The 3 advertisements were shown in the participants’ mother language.

A pre-test was conducted to assess whether the manipulation of the advertisements was effective and to choose the advertisements that best applied the tactics (demand-related scarcity appeal, reciprocity appeal). The pre-test was open for 3 days and was based on the research by Gaube, Fischer, Windl, and Lermer (2020), who pre-tested the tactics scarcity and reciprocity among others. Bachelor students of International Business Communication at Radboud University made 10 advertisements in total, so 5 for each tactic. Before the survey was sent to international students of the Radboud University that were neither Dutch nor Vietnamese, the advertisements were checked by experts. Then the participants were recruited in English via social media. In total, 53 participants took part in the pre-test. After excluding the participants that did not finish it, 22 were left. Of those, there were more females (N = 12)

than males ($N = 9$). Furthermore, the educational level was ranging between “high school” and “other”. The most frequent educational level was a University Bachelor’s degree ($N = 14$). Regarding the age, it was decided to exclude one participant that filled in their age as 1. Overall the average age was ($M = 24.43$, $SD = 8.58$) ranging between “20” and “59”. After the participants were recruited, they received explanations about the definition of the two tactics. In the attached survey, 5 advertisements per condition were displayed. This made the total of advertisements in the pre-test 10 since the neutral tactic was excluded. The participants rated whether the text in the advertisement was consistent and compatible with Cialdini’s tactics (2001). The rating was done with a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*completely inconsistent*) to 7 (*completely consistent*). The outcome of this pre-test determined which 2 advertisements were going to be used in the questionnaire. Regarding scarcity, the second advertisement was chosen ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.66$) and in the case of reciprocity, the first advertisement ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 3.91$) was chosen.

Participants

In total, 230 participants took part in the experiment. They were recruited in their language. Each of the 9 researchers was entrusted to engage participants through social media platforms, such as Facebook groups, Twitter and Instagram. E-mails were also sent to universities to recruit participants. In the final dataset, there were a total of 230 participants of which 115 were Dutch and 115 were Vietnamese. The randomly assigned participants were distributed as equally as possible among the ad types. In total, 76 participants were paired to the reciprocity ad, 78 to the scarcity ad, and 76 to the neutral ad.

Regarding the educational level, the most frequent level of education for all participants was a Bachelor’s degree with ($N = 48$) for the Dutch participants and ($N = 75$) for the Vietnamese participants. It ranged between “compulsory education” and “Ph.D.”, for both the Dutch and the Vietnamese participants.

Regarding the age, the total mean of all participants was ($M = 26.73$, $SD = 9.93$). Overall, the Dutch participants were younger ($M = 25.96$, $SD = 11.21$) than the Vietnamese participants ($M = 27.50$, $SD = 8.43$). The range for the Dutch participants was between “18” and “66”, and for the Vietnamese participants it was between “18 and “51”.

Regarding gender, in this experiment there were more females involved ($N = 154$) than males ($N = 75$).

Design

The study is a 2 (individualistic – collectivistic) x 3 (scarcity- reciprocity - neutral) between-subject design. One of the ad types contains a neutral tactic, where the participants were not shown a manipulated appeal, but rather a neutral message with the advertisement image. As mentioned, the participants were randomly and equally divided into the three subgroups so that they only had to observe one of the three ad types.

Instruments

The first dependent variable (interval level) was “inferences of manipulative intent” (IMI) scale (Campbell, 1995). The participants responded to a six-item scale that contains attribution statements with responses ranging from 1 (*completely agree*) to 7 (*completely disagree*) and one 7-point semantic differential scale anchored by *fair* and *unfair* (Campbell, 1995). In SPSS, IMI questions 1, 4, and 5 were reversed so that all IMI questions were equally rated. This IMI scale demonstrated the appropriateness of persuasion attempts and indicated whether the participants perceived the ad as manipulative. The reliability of “IMI” comprising six items was good $\alpha = .87$. Consequently, the mean of all six items was used to calculate the compound variable “IMI Total”, which was used in the further analyses.

The second dependent variable (interval level) was “attitude toward the ad” (Aad) (Campbell, 1995). The participants responded to three 7-point semantic differential scales anchored by *pleasant* and *unpleasant*, *bad* and *good*, and *awful* and *nice*. The reliability of “Aad” comprising three items was good $\alpha = .90$. Consequently, the mean of all three items was used to calculate the compound variable “Aad Total”, which was used in the further analyses.

The third dependent variable (interval level) is purchase intentions (Campbell, 1995). The participants responded to the question *how likely would you be to choose the brand?* Rated from 1 (*extremely unlikely*) to 7 (*extremely likely*).

To test whether the participants recognized the scarcity tactic as a scarcity technique and the reciprocity tactic as a reciprocity technique, two manipulation checks were done. A one-way analysis of variance showed a significant effect of ad type on the scarcity manipulation check ($F(2, 227) = 3.84, p = .023$). Participants that saw the advertisement containing the scarcity tactic ($M = 4.35, SD = 2.03$) scored statistically significantly higher on the scarcity manipulation check than participants that saw the advertisement containing the neutral tactic ($p = .020$, Bonferroni-correction; $M = 3.46, SD = 1.85$). However, there was no difference in

the scarcity manipulation check between participants that saw the advertisement containing the scarcity tactic and the participants that saw the advertisement containing the reciprocity tactic ($p = .295$, Bonferroni-correction). Consequently, the participants that saw the scarcity tactic only partially recognized it.

Regarding the reciprocity manipulation check, a one-way analysis of variance showed a significant effect of ad type on the reciprocity manipulation check ($F(2, 227) = 5.11, p = .007$). Participants that saw the advertisement containing the reciprocity tactic ($M = 4.26, SD = 1.82$) scored statistically significantly higher on the reciprocity manipulation check than participants that saw the advertisement containing the neutral tactic ($p = .013$, Bonferroni-correction; $M = 3.43, SD = 1.72$) and the scarcity tactic ($p = .025$, Bonferroni-correction; $M = 3.50, SD = 1.79$). Thus the participants that saw the advertisement containing the reciprocity tactic fully recognized it.

Procedure

After the results from the pre-test were taken into account, the advertisements with the highest mean scores were translated from English into Dutch and Vietnamese. The questionnaire questions were based on Campbell (1995) and consisted of an IMI scale, attitude toward the ad scale, and a purchase intentions question. These questions together with the manipulation check were translated from English into Dutch and Vietnamese according to the method of Brislin (1976). First, there was a forward translation that translated the questions and the messages from English to Dutch and Vietnamese. The second step was the expert panel back-translation in which a bilingual expert checked the translation and another independent expert translated the document back to the original language, which was English. Finally, the final version was released and it was used. Then, two different questionnaires were created in the program “Qualtrics”, one for the Dutch participants and one for the Vietnamese participants. After the translated advertisements and questions were inserted in their respective questionnaire, Dutch and Vietnamese participants were contacted in their mother language via e-mail and social media to participate in the experiment. Before they started, the participants received instructions about their task and were informed that their answers would only be used for research purposes so that their privacy was guaranteed. The first section consisted of demographic questions about their age, gender, and educational level. The second section consisted of one of the three pre-tested advertisements and the translated questions. Lastly, the manipulation check question was asked after the dependent variables were already measured. The manipulation check was to assess whether the participants understood the tactic. The

participants were assigned randomly to one advertisement by the program “Qualtrics”. Once the questionnaire was completed, the participants would see a screen that thanked them for their participation. After collecting the data of 244 participants, it was discovered that the question regarding attitude toward ad had only 6 points instead of 7. Also, question 13 glitched and sometimes gave an option to answer and sometimes not. Therefore the questionnaire was changed, improved, and re-sent among Dutch and Vietnamese people. The new data collection had 260 participants. After excluding the participants that did not finish and who were under the age of 18, 246 participants were left. Of those 246 participants, 116 were Dutch and 130 were Vietnamese. This difference caused discrepancies in distribution so random Vietnamese participants were deleted to have an equal number of participants for both nationalities. Eventually, each cultural dimension had 115 participants and the necessary statistical tests were conducted.

Statistical treatment

The main statistical test that was used was a two-way ANOVA. This because there were two independent nominal variables, with 2 and 3 levels, and dependent variables with interval levels. A Tukey post hoc test was applied after conducting the two-way ANOVA. Furthermore, two correlation tests were conducted to see the relation between two interval variables.

Results

Differences in IMI

To answer the first three hypotheses, a two-way analysis of variance was conducted. This two-way analysis of variance with nationality and ad type as factors showed a significant main effect of nationality on IMI ($F(1, 224) = 45.88, p < .001$). Ad type also showed a significant main effect on IMI ($F(2, 224) = 9.86, p < .001$). The interaction effect between nationality and ad type was non statistically significant ($F(2, 224) = 1.76, p = .175$). Regardless of nationality, a Tukey post hoc test for ad type revealed that the IMI score for the neutral advertisement was statistically significantly higher ($M = 5.37, SD = 0.91$) than the IMI score for the reciprocity advertisement ($p = .001$, Tukey correction; $M = 4.74, SD = 1.19$) and scarcity advertisement ($p < .001$, Tukey correction; $M = 4.72, SD = 1.26$). There was no statistically significant difference between the IMI scores for the reciprocity advertisement and the scarcity advertisement ($p = .989$, Tukey correction).

Regarding the cultural differences, the Dutch participants showed a higher IMI score for the ad containing the reciprocity tactic ($M = 5.31, SD = 0.94$) than the Vietnamese participants ($M = 4.17, SD = 1.14$). Furthermore, the Dutch participants showed a higher IMI score for the ad containing the scarcity tactic ($M = 5.25, SD = 0.91$) than the Vietnamese participants ($M = 4.18, SD = 1.35$). This was also the case for the ad containing the neutral tactic ($M = 5.65, SD = 0.84$) in comparison with the Vietnamese participants ($M = 5.09, SD = 0.91$). Table 1 shows the exact means for each ad type per country.

Table 1: Mean scores and standard deviations for IMI regarding each ad type.

		Ad type			
		Reciprocity	Scarcity	Neutral	Total
		$M (SD)$	$M (SD)$	$M (SD)$	$M (SD)$
Nationality					
Dutch	n = 115	5.31 (0.94)	5.25 (0.91)	5.65 (0.84)	5.40 (0.91)
Vietnamese	n = 115	4.17 (1.14)	4.18 (1.35)	5.09 (0.91)	4.48 (1.22)
Total	n = 230	4.74 (1.19)	4.72 (1.26)	5.37 (0.91)	4.94 (1.17)

IMI and correlations

To answer H4, a correlation test was conducted. A significant positive correlation was found between IMI and attitude toward the ad ($r (230) = .60, p < .001$). The IMI scores increased with the attitude toward the ad.

To answer H5, a correlation test was conducted. A significant positive correlation was found between IMI and purchase intentions ($r (230) = .41, p < .001$). The IMI scores increased with the purchase intentions.

Conclusion

The research aimed to investigate cross-cultural differences in persuasion knowledge. This was done by measuring inferences of manipulative intent and looking at the differences between an individualistic and a collectivistic culture that saw either an advertisement congruent or non-congruent to their respective culture. To be able to answer the research question “What is the difference in persuasion knowledge between a collectivistic and an individualistic culture in response to advertisements that use congruent and non-congruent persuasion tactics?”, five hypotheses were statistically examined.

Firstly, the high IMI scores in this experiment indicate that the inferences of manipulative intent were low since the IMI variable was reversed. Regarding cultural differences, significant discrepancies in IMI scores were found between Dutch and Vietnamese participants. Dutch participants had a significantly higher IMI score than Vietnamese participants for all advertisements (scarcity, reciprocity, and neutral), which means that the Dutch participants had significantly lower inferences of manipulative intent for all advertisements. This signifies that the first two hypotheses are accepted as significant differences were found. However, hypothesis 3 cannot be accepted because of the significant difference. What is more, regardless of nationality, significant differences between ad types were found. The reason for these discrepancies was the fact that the neutral advertisement caused a significantly higher IMI score than the reciprocity and scarcity advertisement. Those tactics did not differ significantly.

Secondly, a significant positive correlation was found between the total IMI score and attitude toward the ad and the total IMI score and purchase intentions. This implies a negative relation between IMI and attitude toward the ad and IMI and purchase intentions since the IMI score was reversed. When IMI increased, attitude toward the ad as well as purchase intentions decreased, and vice versa. So, hypotheses 4 and 5 are accepted.

The answer to the research question is that overall, the Dutch participants showed a higher IMI score for all advertisements, which means lower inferences of manipulative intent. This means that they found the advertisements more appropriate and less manipulative than the Vietnamese participants. This suggests that congruency of tactics to the cultures in the advertisements did not play a significant role in differences in IMI and thus persuasion knowledge. Possible explanations for this will be discussed in the discussion section.

Discussion

Friestad and Wright (1984) already suggested that people belonging to different cultures might differ in their persuasion knowledge as they have different knowledge about persuasion and subsequently differ in their recognition. In this experiment, there were differences in IMI between Dutch and Vietnamese participants as Dutch participants overall had lower inferences of manipulative intent for all advertisements. This means that the Dutch participants generally found the advertisements more appropriate and less manipulative. Regarding the scarcity advertisement, that was congruent to the individual culture, the findings of this experiment are in line with Zhang and Neelankavil (1996) and Orji (2016). They also found that the individualistic culture was better persuaded by a congruent tactic. Earley and Gibson (1998) and Schimmack, Oishi, and Diener (2005) explained that the reason for that is because individualists value things that make them feel unique and scarce products make individualists feel exclusive as they have something limited.

However, in the case of the reciprocity and the neutral advertisement, Dutch participants also showed lower inferences of manipulative intent. This contradicts previous findings by Orji (2016), who said that the collectivistic culture was more persuaded by all tactics except for scarcity. This was found not to be true in this experiment since the individualistic culture found all tactics more appropriate. Also, Zhang and Neelankavil (1996) found that the collectivistic culture preferred an advertisement with a congruent tactic, but in this case, the collectivistic culture did not show any preferences for the congruent advertisement in comparison to the individualistic culture. Possible explanations for these differences are the fact that the study of Zhang and Neelankavil (1996) compared American participants with Chinese participants, and Orji (2016) compared North Americans to Asians. These countries are bigger than the Netherlands and Vietnam, and members might also differ more in their persuasion knowledge and their persuasion preferences. Not every collectivistic/individualistic culture has the same responses. Another explanation could be the fact that the significant differences in IMI were caused by the neutral tactic instead of the scarcity and reciprocity tactic.

Furthermore, the findings of the negative relation with IMI and attitude toward the ad and IMI and purchase intentions are in line with the findings of Campbell (1995). She found that the more participants perceive something as manipulative, the more it negatively affect the attitudes. This was also the case for this experiment as attitude toward the ad and purchase

intentions decreased when IMI increased. This finding contradicts the conclusion of Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013), who claimed that when a tactic is perceived as persuasive, IMI is also high.

Possible limitations could be that the mistake in the first data collection could have caused prior knowledge and therefore biased responses in the second data collection as some participants knew what the purpose of the study was. The participants that took part in the study for the second time had foreknowledge that potentially caused them to react differently. They knew the meaning of the tactics and could respond accordingly in the questionnaire. Additionally, the manipulation check showed that the scarcity tactic was only partially understood among participants. This could mean that the scarcity tactic in the scarcity advertisement was not completely recognized, and thus possibly caused differences. Moreover, the study of Hofstede (1984) might be less relevant as cultures might not differ as much as they did, and perhaps are melting together more and more.

As the findings of this experiment were not all in line with previous research, possibly because of limitations, a suggestion for future research is not to only look at one specific individualistic/collectivistic culture but to rather look at multiple countries that all can be categorized as individualistic/collectivistic. This prevents a possible impact that one single individualistic/collectivistic could have, as individualistic/collectivistic countries also differ from each other. Furthermore, the questionnaire was sent online, so if participants had questions regarding the questionnaire, the researchers could not help.

All in all, there was little research on the interaction of persuasion knowledge and cross-cultural differences. This study shed light on the appropriateness of congruent and non-congruent tactics in interaction with persuasion knowledge and it can be helpful for the field of advertising and marketing, especially when it comes down to digital native generations. Understanding the basics of persuasion knowledge, cross-cultural differences and their preferences in persuasion episodes helps advertisers, marketers, and communication specialists to improve their effectiveness in persuasion and to select appropriate persuasion strategies.

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Appendices

Appendix A: The advertisements used in the questionnaire

English advertisements

Scarcity



Reciprocity



Neutral



Dutch advertisements

Scarcity



Reciprocity



Neutral



Vietnamese advertisements

Scarcity



Reciprocity



Neutral



Appendix B: The questionnaires

Questionnaire in English

Thank you very much for your participation!

This experiment is conducted as a part of the International Business Communication Bachelor at Radboud University. The study will examine your responses to a given advertisement.

There are no right or wrong answers. The process will take approximately 5-10 minutes.

During the study, you have the right to stop the questionnaire at any point without having to give a reason for doing so. The information collected will remain completely anonymous. If you wish to be informed about the results of this study, then please leave your email at the end of this survey.

Please indicate below that you want to participate in the study. By signing this form, you declare that you have been sufficiently informed about the study and that you want to voluntarily participate.

IMI Scale

1. The way this ad tries to persuade people seems acceptable to me.

- 1 – Completely agree
- 2 – Agree
- 3 – Somewhat agree
- 4 – Neither agree nor disagree
- 5 – Somewhat disagree
- 6 – Disagree
- 7 – Completely disagree

2. The advertiser tried to manipulate the audience in ways that I don't like.

- 1 – Completely agree
- 2 – Agree
- 3 – Somewhat agree
- 4 – Neither agree nor disagree
- 5 – Somewhat disagree
- 6 – Disagree
- 7 – Completely disagree

3. I was annoyed by this ad because the advertiser seemed to be trying to inappropriately manage or control the consumer audience.

- 1 – Completely agree
- 2 – Agree
- 3 – Somewhat agree
- 4 – Neither agree nor disagree

- 5 – Somewhat disagree
- 6 – Disagree
- 7 – Completely disagree

4. I didn't mind this ad; the advertiser tried to be persuasive without being excessively manipulative.

- 1 – Completely agree
- 2 – Agree
- 3 – Somewhat agree
- 4 – Neither agree nor disagree
- 5 – Somewhat disagree
- 6 – Disagree
- 7 – Completely disagree

5. This ad was fair in what was said and shown.

- 1 – Completely agree
- 2 – Agree
- 3 – Somewhat agree
- 4 – Neither agree nor disagree
- 5 – Somewhat disagree
- 6 – Disagree
- 7 – Completely disagree

6. I think that this advertisement is
 fair X X X X X X X X unfair

AAd scale

Unpleasant		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Pleasant
Bad		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Good
Awful		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Nice

PI scale
 how likely would you be to choose the brand? Rated from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely)

Extremely unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely Likely

Manipulation check question

What tactic did you see?

Scarcity
 consistent X X X X X X X inconsistent

Reciprocity
 Consistent X X X X X X X inconsistent

Explanation of the tactics:

Reciprocity: People by their nature feel obliged to return a favor and to pay back others. Thus when a persuasive request is made by a person the receiver feels indebted to, the receiver is more inclined to adhere to the request.

Scarcity: People tend to place more value on things that are in short supply. This is due to the popular belief that less available options are of higher quality.

Questionnaire in Dutch

Beste participant,

Bedankt dat je mee wilt helpen in ons onderzoek! Dit experiment wordt uitgevoerd als deel van de Bacheloropleiding International Business Communication aan de Radboud Universiteit.

Dit onderzoek kijkt naar jouw reacties op een gegeven advertentie. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden. Het invullen van deze vragenlijst zal ongeveer 5 tot 10 minuten in beslag nemen. Je kan op elk gegeven moment stoppen zonder hier reden voor op te geven. De informatie die wordt verzameld blijft volledig anoniem, en alleen voor onderzoeksdoeleinden worden gebruikt.

Als je geïnformeerd wil worden over de resultaten van dit onderzoek, laat dan je emailadres achter aan het einde van de vragenlijst.

IMI scale

1. De manier waarop deze advertentie mensen probeert te overtuigen lijkt mij acceptabel.

- 1 – Helemaal mee eens
- 2 – Eens
- 3 – Enigszins mee eens
- 4 – Neutraal
- 5 – Enigszins mee oneens
- 6 – Oneens
- 7 – Helemaal niet mee eens

2. De adverteerder probeert de doelgroep te manipuleren op manieren die mij niet bevallen.

- 1 – Helemaal mee eens
- 2 – Eens
- 3 – Enigszins mee eens
- 4 – Neutraal
- 5 – Enigszins mee oneens
- 6 – Oneens
- 7 – Helemaal niet mee eens

3. Ik vind de advertentie storend omdat het er de schijn van heeft dat de adverteerder de doelgroep op ongepaste wijze probeert te beïnvloeden of te sturen.

- 1 – Helemaal mee eens
- 2 – Eens

- 3 – Enigszins mee eens
- 4 – Neutraal
- 5 – Enigszins mee oneens
- 6 – Oneens
- 7 – Helemaal niet mee eens

4. Ik vind deze advertentie niet bezwaarlijk; de adverteerder probeert overtuigend te zijn zonder overdreven manipulatief te zijn.

- 1 – Helemaal mee eens
- 2 – Eens
- 3 – Enigszins mee eens
- 4 – Neutraal
- 5 – Enigszins mee oneens
- 6 – Oneens
- 7 – Helemaal niet mee eens

5. Wat er in deze advertentie gezegd en getoond wordt is eerlijk.

- 1 – Helemaal mee eens
- 2 – Eens
- 3 – Enigszins mee eens
- 4 – Neutraal
- 5 – Enigszins mee oneens
- 6 – Oneens
- 7 – Helemaal niet mee eens

6. Ik vind de advertentie

Eerlijk	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		Oneerlijk
AAd scale									
Onaangenaam		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Aangenaam
Slecht		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Goed
Vreselijk		X	X	X	X	X	X	x	Prettig

PI scale

Hoe waarschijnlijk is het dat jij dit merk zult kiezen? Op een schaal van 1 (heel onwaarschijnlijk) tot 7 (heel waarschijnlijk)

Heel onwaarschijnlijk 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Heel waarschijnlijk

Manipulation check question
Welke tactiek was zichtbaar?

Schaarste
Duidelijk X X X X X Nauwelijks

Reciprociteit
Duidelijk X X X X X Nauwelijks

Questionnaire in Vietnamese

Cảm ơn bạn vì đã tham gia hoàn thành khảo sát này! Thí nghiệm này là 1 phần của chương trình Cử nhân Truyền Thông Doanh Nghiệp Quốc Tế của trường đại học Radboud tại Hà Lan. Nghiên cứu này sẽ khảo sát phản hồi của bạn đối với 1 quảng cáo nhất định. Không có câu trả lời nào là đúng và sai. Do hạn chế kỹ thuật của phần mềm, nếu cần thiết, bạn có thể bấm nút quay lại để xem lại quảng cáo. Thời gian ước tính để hoàn thành bản khảo sát là 5 phút.

Trong quá trình trả lời, bạn có quyền dừng lại tại bất cứ thời điểm nào mà không phải giải thích lý do. Những thông tin được thu thập trong quá trình này sẽ hoàn toàn ẩn danh. Nếu bạn muốn được thông báo về kết quả của nghiên cứu này, vui lòng để lại email của bạn ở cuối khảo sát này.

Vui lòng cho biết phía dưới rằng bạn muốn tham gia vào nghiên cứu. Bằng việc đồng ý, bạn đã hoàn toàn nắm được đầy đủ thông tin về nghiên cứu này, và bạn muốn tự nguyện tham gia.

1. Quảng cáo này thể hiện sự thuyết phục 1 cách hợp lý.

- 1 – Hoàn toàn đồng ý
- 2 – Đồng ý
- 3 – Hơi đồng ý
- 4 – Không đồng ý cũng không phản đối
- 5 – Hơi không đồng ý
- 6 – Không đồng ý
- 7 – Hoàn toàn không đồng ý

2. Tôi không thích phương pháp mà nhà quảng cáo sử dụng để tác động lên người xem

- 1 – Hoàn toàn đồng ý
- 2 – Đồng ý
- 3 – Hơi đồng ý
- 4 – Không đồng ý cũng không phản đối

5 – Hơi không đồng ý

6 – Không đồng ý

7 – Hoàn toàn không đồng ý

3. Tôi cảm thấy khó chịu với quảng cáo này bởi vì nhà quảng cáo dường như đang cố gắng kiểm soát đối tượng người tiêu dùng 1 cách không phù hợp

1 – Hoàn toàn đồng ý

2 – Đồng ý

3 – Hơi đồng ý

4 – Không đồng ý cũng không phản đối

5 – Hơi không đồng ý

6 – Không đồng ý

7 – Hoàn toàn không đồng ý

4. Tôi không cảm thấy khó chịu với quảng cáo này. Nhà quảng cáo cố gắng có tính thuyết phục và không thao túng quá độ.

1 – Hoàn toàn đồng ý

2 – Đồng ý

3 – Hơi đồng ý

4 – Không đồng ý cũng không phản đối

5 – Hơi không đồng ý

6 – Không đồng ý

7 – Hoàn toàn không đồng ý

5. Nội dung hiển thị của quảng cáo này là chính xác và hợp lý.

1 – Hoàn toàn đồng ý

2 – Đồng ý

3 – Hơi đồng ý

4 – Không đồng ý cũng không phản đối

5 – Hơi không đồng ý

6 – Không đồng ý

7 – Hoàn toàn không đồng ý

6. Tôi nghĩ quảng cáo này:

Hợp lý X X X X X X X X Bất hợp lý

Thái độ đối với quảng cáo

Người tham gia sẽ trả lời 3 câu hỏi đánh giá thái độ với quảng cáo trên thang điểm 7 với 2 chiều là khó chịu/ dễ chịu, dở / hay và tệ hại/ tử tế.

Khó chịu X X X X X X X Dễ chịu

Dở X X X X X X X Hay

Tệ hại X X X X X X X Tử tế

Ý định mua hàng

Bạn có khả năng sẽ lựa chọn thương hiệu này không? Đánh giá từ 1 (Cực kỳ không có khả năng) đến 7 (Cực kì có khả năng)

Cực kỳ không có khả năng 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Cực kì có khả năng

Manipulation check

Theo bạn, chiến lược nào đã được sử dụng trong quảng cáo trên?

Sự khan hiếm

Nhất quán X X X X X Không nhất quán

Sự đáp lại

Nhất quán X X X X X Không nhất quán

Giải thích chiến thuật quảng cáo

Scarcity (sự khan hiếm) = chiến thuật đánh vào tâm lý xem trọng những mặt hàng/ dịch vụ có giới hạn hoặc khan hiếm của người xem/ tiêu dùng

Reciprocity (sự đáp lại/ có qua có lại) = chiến thuật khiến người xem/ tiêu dùng cảm thấy có nghĩa vụ phải mua hàng/ sử dụng dịch vụ như 1 cách đáp lễ/ đáp lại với nhãn hàng (hai bên cùng có lợi)

Appendix C: Statement of own work

Sign this *Statement of own work* form and add it as the last appendix in the final version of the Bachelor's thesis that is submitted as to the first supervisor.

Student name: Maximiliaan Marc Bruno Speeckaert

Student number: s1024711

PLAGIARISM is the presentation by a student of an assignment or piece of work which has in fact been copied in whole or in part from another student's work, or from any other source (e.g. published books or periodicals or material from Internet sites), without due acknowledgement in the text.

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- a. I hereby declare that I am familiar with the faculty manual (<https://www.ru.nl/facultyofarts/stip/rules-guidelines/rules/fraud-plagiarism/>) and with Article 16 "Fraud and plagiarism" in the Education and Examination Regulations for the Bachelor's programme of Communication and Information Studies.
- b. I also declare that I have only submitted text written in my own words
- c. I certify that this thesis is my own work and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation, whether they be books, articles, reports, lecture notes, and any other kind of document, electronic or personal communication.



Signature:

Place and Date: Leende, 7-6-2021