

Radboud Universiteit



BA Thesis

International Business Communication

Faculty of Arts

Cross-cultural differences in Persuasion Knowledge: the effect of the individualist/collectivist cultural dimension on the recognition of persuasion intent and the role of persuasion strategy/agent type

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08-06-2021

Abstract

Advertisement and other forms of persuasion attempts are almost omnipresent. Consumers are confronted with thousands of advertisements a day, and thus unconsciously develop persuasion coping mechanisms. Persuasion knowledge is one coping mechanism that consumers can have to possibly deal with persuasion attempts they are confronted with. This can however differ per country and per culture, and so the question arises what the differences between cultures exactly are, and if these can differ for different persuasion tactics as well.

The present study studied the differences between an individualistic culture, represented by the Netherlands, and a collectivistic culture, represented by Vietnam, with regards to their persuasion knowledge coping mechanisms and their attitudes when confronted with persuasive content using different persuasion strategies. The present study had two participant groups, one from each nationality, fill in a questionnaire in their own language in which they were all confronted with an advertisement that contained either a scarcity, a reciprocity, or a neutral tactic.

The findings of the present study show that the Vietnamese participants had higher levels of inferences of manipulative intent (IMI) for all three ads, compared to the Dutch group. However, no significant differences in IMI between the scarcity and the reciprocity tactics were found in both the Dutch and the Vietnamese group. Furthermore, the study found that the Dutch participants had higher purchase intention for all three ads. Attitude towards the ad (Aad) was not affected by nationality, but was slightly affected by ad type, where the neutral ads received higher Aad scores. Lastly, inferences of manipulative intent were found to lower both purchase intention and attitude towards the ad in both nationalities.

The present study is mostly in line with earlier research and paves the way for further research on the topic of persuasion knowledge differences between cultures. Furthermore, it shows that cultures can differ with regards to their persuasion coping mechanisms.

Introduction

In the modern-day era, advertising and other forms of content that try to persuade consumers into performing specific actions are very common. The average amount of advertisements a person sees a day in 2021, is estimated to be between 6000 and 10.000 each day (Carr, 2021; Simpson, 2017). Every advertisement is different, and yet have certain fundamental things in common. That is why Friestad & Wright (1994) came up with the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM). This model suggests that every persuasion attempt happens between an agent and a target, where the agent uses Topic Knowledge, Target Knowledge and Persuasion Knowledge (PK) to attempt to persuade the target. The target, however, uses the same three knowledge aspects from their perspective in what is known as their ‘persuasion coping behaviours’. These coping behaviours can take many forms, can be different from person to person, and can differ for different persuasion attempts. Or in other words, consumers use coping knowledge to ‘recognize, analyse, interpret, evaluate, and remember persuasion attempts and to select and execute coping tactics believed to be effective and appropriate.’ (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p. 3). Friestad & Wright also state that the coping knowledge and persuasion knowledge from consumers help them to prevent being persuaded. This last point is backed up by Campbell (1995), who researched the importance of balancing benefits and investments in attention-getting advertising tactics. Research by Campbell shows that, when personal investments and benefits and the advertiser’s investments and benefits that are associated with a particular advertisement are not in balance, Inferences of Manipulative Intent (IMI) might arise. When IMI arise with a consumer, this means that the consumers notices that the content he or she is perceiving is trying to be manipulative and/or persuasive. Not only does this in turn help them to be less easily persuaded, but IMI also make a consumer look more negatively towards the advertisement, since they know the goal of the ad is to persuade them, which they will then actively resist. Consumers often do all of this unconsciously, which in theory makes it increasingly more difficult to create an advertisement that is actually successful in persuading the targeted consumers.

A study by Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013) however, partially contradicts the findings by Campbell and Friestad & Wright. Aguirre-Rodriguez studied the effect of consumer persuasion knowledge on the persuasiveness of scarcity appeals and discussed two types of scarcity appeals used, the supply-related scarcity tactic and the demand related scarcity tactic. The findings of the paper suggest that the supply related scarcity tactic does not activate persuasion knowledge in its target audience, since it is a rather informative tactic. The paper

also found that the demand related scarcity appeal leads to a higher purchase intention, even though consumers do easily recognize this tactic when confronted with it. This would mean that persuasion knowledge does not necessarily (indirectly) lower purchase intention. So, on the one hand, Campbell (1995) suggests that IMI, and thus PK, lead to lower persuasiveness of the ad and that IMI make consumers look more negatively towards an advertisement and the brand which is advertised, which in turn lowers the purchase intention of the consumers. While on the other hand Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013) suggests that in some cases, PK, can actually increase purchase intention and thus does not lower persuasiveness. The crux with this comparison however is that Aguirre-Rodriguez did not use IMI to measure persuasion knowledge. Taking this into account however, this does show that the relation between persuasion knowledge and persuasiveness is not completely set in stone. Furthermore, for this reason, the present study will use the demand related scarcity appeal, and not the supply related scarcity tactic.

The PKM has also been tested in multiple studies and incorporated in many different areas of research. Campbell & Kirmani (2000) for example looked into the use of the PKM in a salesperson context. They state that two factors, the accessibility of persuasion motives and the cognitive capacity of the consumer affect whether consumers use persuasion knowledge, and thus how they cope with a persuasion attempt. Moreover, they state that targets use persuasion knowledge to evaluate the salesperson, whether they are cognitively busy or not, as long as an ulterior persuasion motive is highly accessible. When this persuasion motive is not or less accessible however, targets that are cognitively busy tend to be less likely to use persuasion knowledge. This shows that the PKM is in line with their findings but does not keep in mind all variables of a target's perspective on a persuasion attempt. Another study by Hardesty, Beardon & Carlson (2007) looked into the effects of consumer knowledge of pricing tactics that marketers frequently employ and the effects of that knowledge on responses to various price offers. They developed a knowledge measure to assess what they call 'pricing tactic persuasion knowledge'. Their research was shown to be in line with the PKM expectations/predictions, where consumers with higher levels of pricing tactic persuasion knowledge showed to have more knowledge-related thoughts on information regarding the pricing tactic than consumers with lower levels of pricing tactic persuasion knowledge. This again shows that the PKM is correct, although persuasion knowledge itself can be divided in more than one form, among which is pricing tactic.

Another area of study where the PKM is often used, is to compare differences between different cultures and countries. As stated before, many studies have researched persuasion knowledge, not many studies, however, have looked into the differences in persuasion knowledge between multiple cultures. Individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Hofstede, 1984) for example, can have different reactions or coping mechanisms to the same manipulative content. An individualistic culture can be characterised as a culture where people are centred around their individual self and their immediate families, and their self-image is defined in terms of 'I'. While on the other hand, a collectivistic culture is a culture that is more woven together and is more centred around a broad network of friends, family, and acquaintances that all help and look out for each other. Furthermore, their self-image is defined in terms of 'we' (Hofstede, 1984). On Hofstede's individualism scale, the Netherlands scores 80, and Vietnam 20, out of 100. This means that the countries are highly individualistic and collectivistic, respectively. Because of these clearly opposite scores, these countries and cultures will be used in the present study.

Cheong, Kim, & Zheng, (2010) studied these differences in cultural factors that influence the use of advertising appeal in China and the United States, two countries with opposing cultures. They found that certain nutritional appeals were used more often in the collectivistic culture of China with a greater power distance, and an independence appeal was used far more often in the US, with a more individualistic culture. Another study studied cross-cultural differences in cognitive responding to ads (Shavitt, Nelson & Mei Len Yuan, 1997). This study found that, when comparing individualistic and collectivistic cultures (the US and Taiwan respectively) different types of thoughts were dominant in relevance for predicting attitudes towards the ad and the brand. The individualistic country was mostly about product-related claims in the advertisement, while the collectivistic country's thoughts were more about the advertisement evaluation, which could persuade them more. These findings again show that there are significant differences in persuasion processes between these two types of cultures. However, the study by Shavitt, Nelson & Mei Len Yuan did not look at persuasion knowledge directly.

Yet another study, done by Orji (2016), also studied the differences between collectivistic and individualistic cultures and looked into persuasion susceptibility of both these culture types. In this study, Orji used Cialdini's (2004) six persuasive strategies and the differences in responses to authority, reciprocity, scarcity, liking, commitment, and consensus tactics in persuasive content. The findings of Orji show that the responsiveness of individuals to Cialdini's persuasive strategies from either cultural background can differ greatly. The

present study will use the reciprocity tactic and the scarcity tactic based on Orji's findings. Both of these tactics were persuasive in both cultures; however, these tactics were chosen because of their differences in persuasiveness in both cultures, and because these tactics specifically are most interesting for the present study. However, Orji studied the responsiveness of both culture types to the different strategies and did not study persuasion knowledge and/or the Persuasion Knowledge Model.

All this shows that persuasion is a subject that is often researched, including the differences between different types of cultures. However, not all studies have also combined this with the Persuasion Knowledge Model and/or persuasion knowledge itself, even though the PKM and PK can be applied in numerous contexts of research, and especially when combined with persuasiveness, purchase intention and attitude towards the product. This topic however remains to be fully explored.

There are, however, also multiple issues regarding the persuasion knowledge field of research and the PKM itself. First and foremost is an issue given by Campbell and Kirmani (2008), who state that there is no single tried and tested method to measure persuasion knowledge. It is obviously an issue when many studies all have different methods of measuring the same variable, and then try to come to similar conclusions. To overcome this issue however, Ham et al. (2015) reviewed the literature on possibilities to measure persuasion knowledge, how this was done by previous studies, and what the best methods are to do so in specific situations. This will give an insight and the basis of the proposed measurements of the current study. The most interesting and useful measurements from the Ham et al. (2015) paper for the present study originate from Campbell (1995) and include three 7-point semantic differential scales to measure attitude towards the ad and 7-point Likert scales to measure purchase intention. Furthermore, a six-item scale will be used to measure IMI. These scales will be used for the present study because these are shown to be most reliable, and to accurately measure the intended variables by, among others, Ham et al. (2015). Moreover, multiple other studies have also used these same scales, (Cotte, Coulter & Moore, 2005; Wentzel, Tomczak & Herrmann, 2010) which shows that they are an accepted method of measurement. The scales themselves will be discussed in more detail in part *instruments*, in the method section.

Furthermore, one of the largest research issues encountered, as discussed, are the partly contradictive findings of Campbell (1995) and Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013). Since it is not clear whether or not persuasion knowledge consistently decreases or increases the persuasion of an advertisement, and since it is not clear whether IMI, directly or indirectly,

has an increasing or decreasing effect on attitude towards the ad (Aad) and purchase intention (PI), Aad and PI will be part of the present study. Furthermore, it is not known whether congruence of a tactic with a particular culture leads to higher or lower persuasion knowledge. Lastly, since this effect is not clear, and since the directionality of the effect of persuasiveness on persuasion knowledge is not fully clear, the hypotheses about these topics were non-directional.

This study, however, delved deeper into this topic of persuasion knowledge and combined the findings all the previously mentioned studies, the different persuasive strategies of Cialdini (2004), specifically reciprocity and scarcity together with the findings on how to measure persuasion knowledge by Ham et al. (2015) and the IMI measurements by Campbell (1995). This was done to investigate how persuasion knowledge impacts the response to the two mentioned tactics, and whether or not those responses include inferences of manipulative intent. Furthermore, the study also measured and studied purchase intention and attitude towards the ad, to study the directionality of the effect of persuasiveness on persuasion knowledge, which has been partially disputed so far. To measure these, the already measured IMI was turned into an independent variable to test whether IMI moderates the effect of persuasiveness Aad and PI. To do this, the study compared the more individualistic culture of the Netherlands with the more collectivistic culture of Vietnam, on their responses to advertisements of the shared product orange juice while using the scarcity tactic in one advertisement, and the reciprocity tactic in the other ad.

For these reasons, the research question for the current study was: To what extent do people in an individualistic culture differ from people in a collectivistic culture with regards to their persuasion knowledge coping mechanisms and their attitudes when confronted with persuasive content using different persuasion strategies?

To study the above formulated research question, the following hypotheses were tested:

H1: There will be a difference in inferences of manipulative intent between participants from the individualistic and the collectivistic culture in response to the advertisements using scarcity and reciprocity tactics.

H2: Participants from the individualistic culture will show higher purchase intention with the advertisement using the scarcity tactic and have a more positive attitude to the ad than the collectivistic culture.

H3: Participants from the collectivistic culture will show higher purchase intention with the advertisement using the reciprocity tactic and have a more positive attitude to the ad than the individualistic culture.

H4: Persuasion knowledge of the participants will influence the persuasiveness of the different tactics and have an effect on their attitudes.

H5: The control group will show less inferences of manipulative intent.

The findings of this study will hopefully be able to provide insights into the future of persuasion knowledge research and be an addition to the overall theories and knowledge of the subject. The findings of the present study can be used on a bigger scale and be an example of how to research persuasion knowledge differences when comparing cultures with different cultural aspects. Furthermore, this study can also provide insight into differences in IMI and coping mechanisms of different cultures, which could be used as a basis for future research.

The findings will also be able to provide practical relevance and insight in which ways advertising might be adapted and used in different ways in different countries and cultures. This study could also provide insights in what tactics not to use in specifically individualistic or collectivistic countries.

Method

Materials

In order to research the impact of culture and ad tactic on persuasion knowledge, a questionnaire in Dutch and a questionnaire in Vietnamese were used. In these questionnaires, all participants were shown an advertisement for orange juice, with either an embedded scarcity tactic, a reciprocity tactic, or a plain advertisement for the control group, based on Cialdini's six persuasion strategies (2004). For all variables, the same basic image was shown, however the accompanying text in the advertisement itself differed per tactic (see appendix A). For the advertisement including the scarcity tactic, the text suggested that only for that month, all bottles would have a new and temporary different design. The advertisement including the reciprocity tactic focussed on the reciprocity of the company, stating that every 10th order would be paid for by the company itself. For the control group, the ad remained as neutral as possible, only stating that the product contained 100% biological orange juice with 0% added sugars. All advertisement did not include a price, since this is often part of different tactics, and might interfere with the aforementioned tactics that were researched. All advertisements were translated to both Dutch and Vietnamese, so all participants saw them in their own language. For the translation method, see *instruments*. Before use, the materials were pre-tested (see *Pre-test*).

Pre-test

To evaluate whether the materials correctly represented the intended tactics, the materials underwent a pre-test.

The pre-test of the materials was done according to the findings of Gaube et al. (2020). The pre-test was shared with international (non-Vietnamese and non-Dutch) students studying at the Radboud University via social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook and was open for 3 days to gain a sufficient number of respondents. Because all participants were to be international, the questionnaire in the pre-test was in English. In the pre-test, participants were asked to read given material about the different strategies, after which they were asked to rate the advertisements on a 7-point Likert scale indicating how much they perceived the given material to fit within the congruent tactic. For this pre-test, five advertisements were created per tactic, where after the advertisements found to fit best within the tactics were chosen to be used in the study.

The pre-test was completed by 22 participants, who all indicated their perceived fit of all the advertisements with either the reciprocity or the scarcity tactic. Per tactic, the ads which were perceived as having the best fit within the respective tactics were chosen to be used for the study. Both the reciprocity ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 3.91$) and the scarcity (4.82 , $SD = 1.65$) ads were perceived as having a good fit.

Subjects

There was a total of 230 participants within the two nationalities. There were 115 Vietnamese participants (mean age 27.50, $SD = 8.43$, range 18-50, 82.6% female) and 115 Dutch participants (mean age 25.96, $SD = 11.21$, range 18-66, 51.3% female). The level of education of the subjects differed slightly per nationality. The level of education of Vietnamese participants (mode: Bachelor's degree, range compulsory education only – PhD) was generally slightly higher (91.2% had a bachelor's degree or higher) than the level of education of Dutch participants (mode: Bachelor's degree, range compulsory education – Master's degree, 80% had a bachelor's degree or higher).

Distribution of background variables

The distribution of the background variable age ($F(1, 228) = .162$, $p = .668$) was even across nationality groups.

The distribution of the background variables gender ($\chi^2(2, 230) = 25.75$, $p < .001$) and education ($\chi^2(6, 230) = 50.74$, $p < .001$) was uneven across nationality groups.

The Vietnamese participants group (82.6% female) had significantly more women than the Dutch participants group (51.3% female).

The Vietnamese participants (91.2% with a bachelor's degree or higher) group also contained significantly more higher educated individuals than the Dutch participants group (80% with a bachelor's degree or higher).

Design

The present study is a 2 (individualistic culture vs. collectivistic culture) x 3 (scarcity tactic, reciprocity tactic, control group) between subject design. The study is a between subject design, which means that every participant only encountered one condition, to avoid bias for other variables, since a participant can easily realise that the study is about persuasion or persuasion knowledge when confronted with multiple advertisements, which might affect the

data. The individualistic culture was represented by Dutch participants and the collectivistic culture was represented by Vietnamese participants.

Instruments

The main instrument used in the present study was a questionnaire, which was based on the study by Campbell (1995, α pre-test = .93; α experiment = .90). The questionnaire thus included IMI measurement. Even though the IMI measurement did not include specific questions about the recognition of persuasive intent, the questions do suggest that the participants saw a persuasion attempt and are thus adequate. More specifically, the following scales were used:

The participants' IMI was measured using six 7-point Likert scales for the statements 'The way this ad tries to persuade people seems acceptable to me', 'The advertiser tried to manipulate the audience in ways that I don't like', 'I was annoyed by this ad because the advertiser seemed to be trying to inappropriately manage or control the consumer audience', 'I didn't mind this ad; the advertiser tried to be persuasive without being excessively manipulative', 'This ad was fair in what was said and shown', followed by 1('completely agree') to 7 ('completely disagree') and the statement 'I think that this advertisement is' followed by 1('fair') to 7('unfair'). The reliability of IMI comprising these six scales was good: $\alpha = .88$. consequently, the mean of all six scales was used to calculate the compound variable IMI, which was used in further analyses.

The participants' attitude towards the ad was measured using three 7-point semantic differential scales anchored by 'unpleasant' and 'pleasant', 'bad' and 'good', and 'awful' and 'nice'. The reliability of Aad (attitude towards the ad) comprising these three scales was good: $\alpha = .90$. consequently, the mean of all three scales was used to calculate the compound variable Aad, which was used in further analyses.

Lastly, the participants' purchase intention was measured using a 7-point Likert scale for the question 'how likely would you be to choose the brand?' followed by 1 ('extremely unlikely') and 7 ('extremely likely').

The questionnaire that was used in the study, as well as the materials, were first created in English, after which it was translated to both Dutch and Vietnamese. To test whether the translations were as accurate as possible and did not contain any alterations that might lead to differences in interpretation and/or might influence the data, the translations underwent standard back translation procedure as well (Brislin, 1976). The translations of the

questionnaire consisted of multiple checks, where one translator who speaks both English and the target language, either Dutch or Vietnamese, translated the instruments to the best of their abilities. After that, the translated questionnaire went to a second translator, who checked whether, in their opinion, the translation was done correctly. These two translators could then discuss possible differences in opinion on the translation and come to a final conclusion. After this had been done, the translated instruments went to a third, independent, translator who was asked to translate the questionnaire back to English, to see whether any differences to the original English questionnaire could be found. If there were differences, the instruments would go back to the original translator, who would then again check the translation. This went back and forth until all three translators could not find any differences in language and/or interpretation in the questionnaire and agree that the translation was accurate. After this translation was done, a professional translator also checked the translation and gave some suggestions to slightly improve it.

Even though there was a pre-test, a manipulation check was also added to the questionnaire. These items checked whether the participants recognized the perceived tactic as either scarcity or reciprocity. These items were similar to the ones found in the pre-test that checked whether the participants agree that the tactic they perceived is consistent with the tactic it was supposed to be.

Procedure

The procedure is relatively simple and comparable to most studies including a survey. When a willing participant was found, he/she could gain access to the questionnaire via an online link which was shared via social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The questionnaire would start with a text which contained some information on the study and the researchers and stated that participation in the study and questionnaire was completely optional and that the participant could stop at any time. The text also explained that the data collected in the study would only be used for this particular study for research purposes, would remain private, and would not be shared in any other way. The participants would then continue to the survey where they encountered one of the three conditions as explained in *design*, after which they had to fill in the questionnaire. The start of the questionnaire included some short questions about the participants' age, gender, nationality, and education level. At the end of the survey, a small explanatory text thanking them was included, and provided them with contact details of the researchers in case any questions would arise.

After some time however, an error was found in the Dutch version of the survey, in which the responses to one question were not saved. Because of this error, the Dutch version of the survey had to be sent out again, and new participants had to be found. This eventually resulted in a slightly lower number of Dutch participants than the first round.

Furthermore, after merging and testing all the data, unequal variances were found. This mostly had to do with unequal sample sizes, where there were more Vietnamese participants than Dutch participants. Because of this, standard deviations and significance levels could not be trusted. To accommodate for this, the sample sizes needed to be balanced. This was done by using a filter to randomly select parts of the data from the Vietnamese part to omit. By doing this, an equal sample size for both nationality groups was created, and the significance levels could be accepted.

Statistical treatment

The categorised measurement levels of the variables are as follows: The persuasion tactic used is a nominal independent variable with three levels (scarcity, reciprocity, no tactic). The cultural dimension is a nominal independent variable with two levels (collectivistic, individualistic). Inferences of manipulative intent, purchase intention and attitude towards the ad are interval dependent variables. Because of this, the statistical tests carried out were mostly two-way ANOVA's, however, one-way ANOVA's were also used for the manipulation checks and to test hypothesis 4, as well as an independent samples t-test to test hypothesis 5.

Results

Manipulation checks

All participants had to rate the ad they saw in the questionnaire on two 7-point Likert scales indicating whether it was consistent with the scarcity ad and with the reciprocity ad from totally inconsistent to totally consistent (1-7). To test these manipulation checks, two one-way Analysis of variance were performed.

A first one-way analysis of variance ($F(2, 227) = 5.11, p = .007$). showed a significant effect of the type of ad the participants saw on the reciprocity manipulation check. The participants that saw the ad containing the reciprocity tactic scored higher ($M = 4.26, SD = 1.82$) on the reciprocity manipulation check than the participants that saw the ad containing the scarcity ad ($M = 3.50, SD = 1.79, p = .025$ Bonferroni correction) and the participants that saw the neutral ad ($M = 3.43, SD = 1.72, p = .013$ Bonferroni correction). See table 1.

A second one-way analysis of variance ($F(2,227) = 3.84, p = .023$) showed a significant effect of the type of ad the participants saw on the scarcity manipulation check. The participants that saw the ad containing the scarcity tactic scored higher ($M = 4.35, SD = 2.03$) on the scarcity manipulation check than the participants that saw the ad containing the neutral tactic ($M = 3.46, SD = 1.85, p = .020$ Bonferroni correction). However, this same difference was not seen for the participants that saw the ad containing the reciprocity tactic ($M = 3.79, SD = 2.12, p = 2.59$ Bonferroni correction). See table 1.

Table 1. *M, SD, and n for reciprocity manipulation check and scarcity manipulation check scores in function of type of ad (1 = very inconsistent, 7 = Very consistent).*

	Reciprocity ad		Scarcity ad	
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>
Reciprocity	4.26 (1.82)	76	3.79 (2.13)	76
Scarcity	3.50 (1.79)	78	4.35 (2.03)	78
Neutral	3.43 (1.72)	76	3.46 (1.85)	76
Total	3.73 (1.81)	230	3.87 (2.03)	230

Gender

A significant negative correlation was found between gender and IMI ($r(230) = -.16, p_s = .013$). The level of IMI was decreased, the higher the number of women was.

A significant negative correlation was found between gender and PI ($r(230) = -.14, p_s = .029$). The level of PI was decreased, the higher the number of women was.

IMI compared per nationality

A two-way analysis of variance ($F(2,224) = 9.86, p < .001$) showed a significant effect of the type of ad the participants saw on their levels of IMI. Dutch ($M = 5.40, SD = 1.03$) participants show significantly higher IMI scores than Vietnamese ($M = 4.48, SD = 1.03$) participants. This shows that on average, for all three ads, Dutch participants showed significantly lower inferences of manipulative intent than the Vietnamese participants.

The same two-way analysis of variance showed that, for the Dutch participants, the IMI scores for reciprocity ($M = 5.31, SD = 1.03$) and scarcity ($M = 5.25, SD = 1.03$) did not significantly differ. This same finding can be seen for the Vietnamese participants were the scores for reciprocity ($M = 4.17, SD = 1.03$) and scarcity ($M = 4.18, SD = 1.03$) did not significantly differ either. See table 2.

Table 2. *M, SD, and n for IMI scores in function of nationality and ad type (1 = very high IMI, 7 = very low IMI).*

	Dutch		Vietnamese		Total	
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>
Reciprocity	5.31 (1.03)	38	4.17 (1.03)	38	4.74 (1.03)	76
Scarcity	5.25 (1.03)	39	4.18 (1.03)	39	4.71 (1.03)	78
Neutral	5.65 (1.03)	38	5.08 (1.03)	38	5.36 (1.03)	76
Total	5.40 (1.03)	115	4.48 (1.03)	115	4.94 (1.03)	230

Purchase intention compared per nationality

To test H2 and H3, two two-way analyses of variance were performed.

The first two-way analysis of variance ($F(1,224) = 33,24, p < .001$) showed a significant effect of nationality as well as type of ad on purchase intention (PI). Dutch participants ($M = 4.15, SD = 1,34$) showed significantly higher PI than Vietnamese participants ($M = 3.03, SD = 1,64, p < .001$) regardless of which ads the participants saw.

The same two-way analysis of variance showed that, for the Dutch participants, PI scores were significantly higher for the neutral ad ($M = 4.63, SD = 1,10$) than for both the reciprocity ($M = 4.08, SD = 1.40, p < .001$) and the scarcity ($M = 3.74, SD = 1,37, p < .001$) ads. The PI for the ad containing the reciprocity tactic did not significantly differ from the ad containing the scarcity tactic.

Furthermore, the two-way analysis of variance showed that for the Vietnamese participants, PI scores for the neutral ad ($M = 3.21, SD = 1.85$) and for the reciprocity ad ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.46$) were almost equal. The PI scores for the scarcity ad ($M = 2.72, SD = 1.57$) did not significantly differ either. See table 3.

Table 3. *M, SD, and n for PI scores in function of nationality and ad type (1 = extremely unlikely to choose the brand, 7 = extremely likely to choose the brand).*

	Dutch		Vietnamese		Total	
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>
Reciprocity	4.08 (1.40)	38	3.16 (1.46)	38	3.62 (1.49)	76
Scarcity	3.74 (1.37)	39	2.72 (1.57)	39	3.23 (1.55)	78
Neutral	4.63 (1.10)	38	3.21 (1.85)	38	3.92 (1.67)	76
Total	4.15 (1.34)	115	3.03 (1.64)	115	4.94 (1.03)	230

Attitude towards the ad compared per nationality

The second two-way analysis of variance ($F(1,224) = < 1, p = .35$) showed no significant effect of nationality on the participants' attitude towards the ad (Aad). It did show a significant effect of the type of ad on the participants' attitude towards the ad.

The Aad scores for the reciprocity ad of the Dutch ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.20$) and Vietnamese ($M = 4.44, SD = 1.37$) participants did not significantly differ from each other but did significantly differ from the neutral ad ($M = 5.20, SD = 1.13, p = 0.13$ and $M = 4.98, SD = 1.42, p = 0.13$ respectively). This same finding goes for Aad scores for the scarcity ad where the scores of the Dutch ($M = 4.54, SD = 1.18$) participants and the Vietnamese ($M = 4.43, SD = 1.26$) did not differ significantly, but did both differ significantly from the Aad towards the neutral ad ($p = .010$).

Table 4. *M, SD, and n for Aad scores in function of nationality and ad type (1 = very bad, 7 = very good).*

	Dutch		Vietnamese		Total	
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>
Reciprocity	4.56 (1.20)	38	4.44 (1.37)	38	4.50 (1.28)	76
Scarcity	4.54 (1.18)	39	4.43 (1.26)	39	4.49 (1.21)	78
Neutral	5.20 (1.13)	38	4.98 (1.42)	38	5.09 (1.28)	76
Total	4.77 (1.19)	115	4.61 (1.36)	115	4.69 (1.28)	230

Purchase intention compared between IMI levels

To test H4, two one-way analyses of variance were performed. To be able to perform these however, a new variable was created by changing the linear IMI variable into a categorical variable with high, medium, and low IMI. All IMI scores between 1 and 3 were grouped as high IMI, scores between 3 and 5 were grouped as medium IMI, and all scores higher than 5 were grouped as low IMI.

The first one-way analysis of variance ($F(2,227) = 14.68, p < .001$) showed a significant effect of IMI score on the participants' PI. The participants with low IMI scores ($M = 3.95, SD = 1.68$) showed significantly higher PI than the participants who showed medium IMI scores ($M = 3.25, SD = 1.26, p = .004$). The medium IMI group in turn showed significantly higher PI scores than the high IMI group ($M = 2.06, SD = .75, p = .011$). See table 5.

Attitude towards the ad compared between IMI levels

The second one-way analysis of variance ($F(2,227) = 36.52, p < .001$) showed a significant effect of IMI score on the participants' Aad score. The participants with low IMI scores ($M = 5.17, SD = 1.19$) showed significantly higher Aad than the participants who showed medium IMI scores ($M = 4.11, SD = 1.06, p < .001$). The medium IMI group in turn showed significantly higher Aad scores than the high IMI group ($M = 3.25, SD = .72, p = .015$). See table 5.

Table 5. *M, SD, and n for PI scores and Aad scores in function of IMI (1 = extremely unlikely to choose the brand, 7 = extremely likely to choose the brand) and (1 = very bad, 7 = very good)*

	PI		Aad	
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>
Low IMI	3.95 (1.68)	140	5.17 (1.19)	140
Medium IMI	3.25 (1.26)	73	4.11 (1.02)	73
High IMI	2.06 (.75)	17	3.25 (.72)	17
Total	3.59 (1.59)	230	4.69 (1.28)	230

IMI levels compared per type of ad

To test H5, a one-way analysis of variance was performed.

The one-way analysis of variance ($F(2,227) = 8.18, p < .001$) showed a significant effect of the type of ad on IMI. The general IMI scores per ad for the reciprocity ($M = 4.74, SD = 1.19$) and scarcity ($M = 4.72, SD = 1.26$) ads did not significantly differ. The general IMI score for the neutral ad ($M = 5.37, SD = .91$) did differ significantly from both the reciprocity ($p = .002$) and the scarcity ($p = .001$) ads. See table 6.

Table 6. *M, SD, and n IMI scores in function of type of ad (1 = very high IMI, 7 = very low IMI).*

	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>
Reciprocity	4.74 (1.19)	76
Scarcity	4.72 (1.26)	78
Neutral	5.37 (.91)	76
Total	4.94 (1.17)	230

Conclusion & discussion

The purpose of this study was to research the differences between, and the effect a person's cultures can have on their persuasion knowledge coping mechanisms and their attitudes when confronted with persuasive content using different persuasion strategies. Specifically, an individualistic and a collectivistic culture were compared.

For the present study, the Netherlands were chosen to represent an individualistic culture, and Vietnam was chosen to represent a collectivistic culture. To answer the research question 'To what extent do people in an individualistic culture differ from people in a collectivistic culture with regards to their persuasion knowledge coping mechanisms and their attitudes when confronted with persuasive content using different persuasion strategies?', the five hypotheses were tested.

H1 was confirmed, since a difference in inferences of manipulative was found between the Dutch and Vietnamese participants. The Dutch participants showed lower IMI on all fronts, and in reaction to all three ads compared to the Vietnamese participants.

H2 was confirmed for the first part, since the Dutch participants were found to have higher purchase intention for all three ads. The second part of H2 was not confirmed however, since no significant difference in attitude towards the advertisement containing the scarcity ad was found compared to the group of Vietnamese participants.

H3 was not confirmed. The Vietnamese participants had lower purchase intention for all three ads when compared to the Dutch participants, so also for the advertisement containing the reciprocity tactic. The second part of H3 was not confirmed either, since no significant difference was found between the attitude towards the advertisement containing the reciprocity tactic between both nationalities.

H4 was confirmed for both parts. The group of participants that showed to have high IMI also showed significantly lower purchase intention than both the groups with medium and low IMI. The medium IMI group was also found to have lower purchase intention than the low IMI group. Corresponding results were found for the second part of H4, where the group with high IMI was shown to have a significantly lower attitude towards the ad than both the groups with medium and low IMI. The medium IMI group was also found to have lower attitude towards the ad than the low IMI group. This shows that the level of inferences of manipulative intent can significantly affect a person's purchase intention and attitude towards the ad and should thus be something to avoid.

H5 was also confirmed, since the control group showed significantly lower IMI than both the participant groups that were confronted with the scarcity ad and the reciprocity ad.

Explanation of findings & comparison with literature

IMI

The findings of the present study regarding inferences of manipulative intent and thus persuasion knowledge tie into the contradictive findings of Campbell (1995) and Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013) which showed that it was not clear whether IMI, directly or indirectly, have an increasing or decreasing effect on purchase intention and attitude towards the ad. The present study found that IMI does have a decreasing effect on both purchase intention, as well as attitude towards the ad, which is in line with the findings of Campbell (1995) and Friestad & Wright (1994). This shows that the findings of previous study of Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013) is not necessarily set in stone, and this effect needs further research to settle the dispute over these contradictive findings.

Furthermore, the findings of the present study are shown to be in line with the findings of Orji (2016), since the individualistic and collectivistic cultures that were studied show a significant difference in their IMI levels, regardless of which advertisement they were confronted with. This shows that there are indeed intercultural differences in regard to peoples' persuasion coping mechanisms when confronted with persuasion attempts, and their perceived levels of manipulative intent.

No difference however was found between the levels of IMI for the different advertisement groups. The participants reflecting the individualistic culture had similar IMI levels for both the advertisement regarding the scarcity and the reciprocity tactics, and only had lower IMI for the neutral ad. This same result was found for the participants group reflecting the collectivistic culture. This shows that the effect of the difference in tactics, for this study, did not significantly show.

PI

Purchase intention was the operationalisation of persuasiveness, as to measure how effective the different tactics were. Purchase intention was higher for the Dutch participants, reflecting the individualistic culture across all three ad groups. This, however, may have to do with the

fact that the same group also had lower levels of inferences of manipulative intent, which in the other nationality group was more omnipresent. This in turn could explain why the Vietnamese participants, representing the collectivistic culture, had lower purchase intention for all three advertisements.

Interestingly, both nationalities did not have significant differences in purchase intention between the scarcity and reciprocity tactics, and both only showed higher purchase intention for the neutral ad. This shows that the different tactics used in this study may not have such a large difference in persuasiveness as shown in the results of the study by Orji (2016). This does also go against the findings of Aguirre-Rodriguez (2013), who found that a scarcity appeal can lead to a higher purchase intention, even though a person's IMI can also increase due to being confronted with a scarcity tactic.

Furthermore, purchase intention was shown to be affected by the level of IMI. Purchase intention was the highest for the group with low IMI, and the lowest for the group with high IMI. The medium IMI group had lower PI than the low IMI group, but higher PI than the high IMI group. This is in line with the findings of Campbell (1995), who found that persuasion knowledge makes consumers less easily persuaded.

Aad

The findings of the present study regarding the attitude towards the ad variable are relatively similar to those of purchase intention. Both nationality groups did not show significant differences in their attitude towards the ad regarding the scarcity and the reciprocity ad. The results of the individualistic and collectivistic culture did not significantly differ from each other. The only significant results for attitude towards the ad in function of ad type and nationality was that both nationalities had significantly higher Aad scores for the neutral ad.

Furthermore, the attitude towards the ad was shown to be affected by the level of IMI. The attitude towards the ad was the highest for the group with low IMI, and the lowest for the group with high IMI. The medium IMI group had a lower Aad than the low IMI group, but a higher Aad than the high IMI group. This, again, is in line with the findings of Campbell (1995), who also stated that persuasion knowledge makes consumers look more negatively towards an advertisement.

Limitations & restrictions

There are several limiting factors in the present study. A first limiting factor is the relatively low number of participants. This is also due to the fact that the present study had some difficulties in gathering the participants. Due to this low number of participants, one could argue that the findings are not necessarily generalisable for the two countries and cultures.

A second limiting factor is that fact that the Vietnamese participants group contained a lot more females than males, while the Dutch participants group was relatively balanced on gender. This might have had an influence on the findings of the study, since a negative correlation was found between gender and IMI, and gender and PI.

Furthermore, the scarcity manipulation check showed no significant difference between the scores given to the reciprocity and the scarcity tactic by the group of participants that saw the scarcity tactic. This means that the scarcity tactic in the scarcity advertisement, might not have been clear enough to the participants, which could have had an influence on the results.

Moreover, the questionnaire only included one question to measure purchase intention, unlike all other variables such as Aad and IMI. This means that the reliability of that question cannot be calculated.

Lastly, because the present study only included one country per culture, the findings might not be generalisable for their respective cultures and might also just be a difference between the two countries themselves.

Implication of findings

The findings of the present study implicate that persuasion knowledge does indeed have a negative effect on the effectiveness and persuasiveness of an advertisement and can negatively impact a person's willingness to purchase a product or service when it is perceived as being manipulative. The findings also imply that the reactions of people from different countries and cultures can highly differ when confronted with the same advertisement. This could imply that a strategy of e.g. more locally focused marketing could be more effective than a global ad campaign that is the same in every country.

Moreover, the effectiveness of and differences between different strategies, such as scarcity and reciprocity tactic, might not necessarily be congruent with individualistic and collectivistic culture differences.

Recommendations further research

Recommendations for further research include trying to minimise the limitations the present study had, and possibly do a similar study on a larger scale with more participants. Also, a more extensive pre-test might be wise, as to make sure that the manipulation is as clear as can be to participants, unlike the present study in some cases. Other recommendations are to possibly include multiple countries with similar cultures and see if the findings of the present study can be generalised for all individualistic and collectivistic countries. Further research could also look into making further improvements to the questionnaire, to make sure that e.g. purchase intention are more precisely and reliably measured.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Materials

Advertisements used in the questionnaire, in Dutch, Vietnamese and English, using a scarcity tactic



Advertisements used in the questionnaire, in Dutch, Vietnamese and English, using a reciprocity tactic



Neutral Advertisements used in the questionnaire, in Dutch, Vietnamese, and English



Appendix B: 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.

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

Nhất quán	X	X	X	X	X	Không nhất quán
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Sự đáp lại

Nhất quán	X	X	X	X	X	Không nhất quán
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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