The relation between patterns of persuasion knowledge and the cultural dimension of long-term orientation in advertising

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Abstract

Few studies have laid focus on the relation between persuasion knowledge and cultural values. In this study, 9 interview transcripts were analyzed using a qualitative approach. Transcripts from German and American individuals were scanned for themes regarding differences and similarities in persuasion knowledge and cultural characteristics. The results showed mainly similarities among German individuals, while patterns were generally absent for American individuals. However, most participants seemed to identify the primary goal of the advertisement used as being to gain profit. Additionally, it was expected that German individuals would respond more positively to emotional messages, although no evidence for this proposition was found. This thesis discusses questions as to why certain beliefs were present and how these might be linked to cultural characteristics. Finally, it recommends further investigation into the interaction between persuasion knowledge and culture.

Introduction

For a long time, it was thought that persuadees were passive recipients of information. It was expected that advertisements could persuade consumers using a cunning strategy, without the person knowing exactly what happened. Marketers tailored messages to specific demographics to evoke more responses from the consumer. Naturally, a marketer (i.e., the persuader) has a certain goal when advertising a product or service, which goes beyond the immediate circumstances. Persuasion targets are usually actively involved in persuasion episodes. This means they can pursue their own goals actively involved in a persuasion episode. This means they pursue their own needs. Simply put, these are, 1) to resist the persuasion attempt, or 2) to utilize the marketer or spokesperson for one's own goals (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008). This means that persuadees are not merely passive during persuasion attempts, they also influence the persuasion process by managing their desires and needs. In fact, in certain settings such as in face-to-face interactions with individual marketers, they can even be active to the extent that they influence the marketer (Kirmani & Campbell, 2004).

The purpose of this study is to investigate what underlying beliefs persuadees have to come to responses. It is argued that after adequate exposure, persuadees develop knowledge on when, how, and why they are being influenced (Friestad & Wright, 1994). The outcome of this process is defined by Friestad & Wright (1994) as having *persuasion knowledge*. That is to say that consumers become aware of the strategies that marketers use to persuade them. Campbell & Kirmani (2008) have provided an overview of the literature on persuasion knowledge, to assess where research has progressed thus far and where research is still lacking. It is not sufficiently clear whether persuasion knowledge differs between cultures and exactly how it would differ, and specifically, to what extent patterns of persuasion knowledge relate to the cultural background of the persuadee. For the task at hand, one advertisement has been used with a cause-related marketing theme, sponsored by a corporation. As sponsorship of social messages is getting more popular (Szykman, Bloom & Blazing, 2004), it would be interesting to find whether past experiences affect the responses to such messages. First and foremost, an attempt is made to explore what differences or similarities can be found regarding persuasion knowledge when comparing individuals from two different countries. Second, it attempts to clarify the relation between concepts of culture and persuasion knowledge for these individuals.

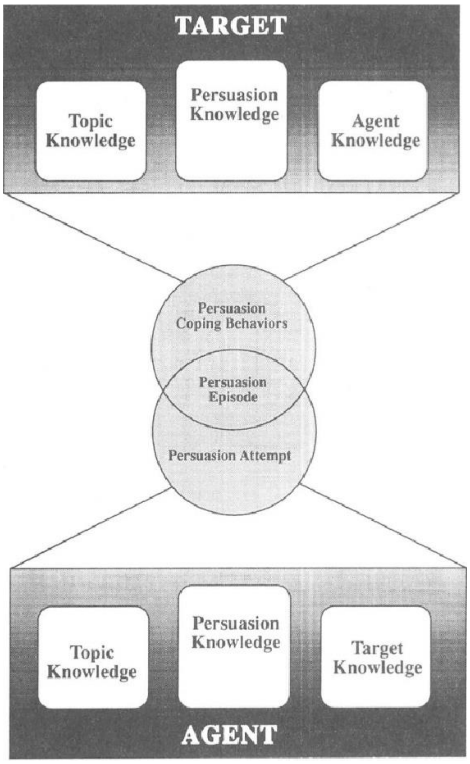
Theoretical Framework

The Persuasion Knowledge Model

The traditional perspective of persuasion research generally regards the persuasion target as a passive recipient (Friestad & Wright, 1994). However, it suggests ignoring the importance of the effect that persuasion knowledge can have. To demonstrate how persuasion knowledge emerges and how it develops over time, the PKM was introduced. The PKM is relevant to disciplines such as consumer behavior and marketing because it carefully explains the importance of experience that consumers gain from the persuasion attempt (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008). The time-frame of persuasion, or the 'persuasion episode,' is defined by Friestad & Wright (1994) as: "the directly observable part of an agent's behavior" (p.2). Examples of persuasion episodes can be the viewing of a TV advertisement, as well as a sales encounter with an agent in person, or even exposure to a marketing campaign including several advertisements (Friestad & Wright, 1994).

Figure 1

The Persuasion Knowledge Model by Friestad & Wright (1994)



The PKM distinguishes three knowledge structures that predict behavior within an episode, namely ‘Topic Knowledge,’ ‘Persuasion Knowledge,’ and ‘Agent Knowledge’ (see figure 1). These knowledge structures are separated in the PKM. However, they are not always considered separate categories because there is overlap between them. It is sometimes unclear whether consumers draw upon their persuasion knowledge or their agent/topic knowledge. Imagine a racing driver who knows a great deal about cars. It could be argued that when a marketer tries to sell the racing driver a new car, the racing driver activates both his persuasion knowledge of how marketing works and his topic knowledge on the specifics of the car's features. These categories have been separated in previous research, which allows the interaction effect to be studied (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008). Persuasion knowledge is defined by Campbell & Kirmani (2008) as encompassing all knowledge that has to do with persuasion. This could also include knowledge about which strategies a particular agent often tends to use. On the contrary, topic knowledge and agent knowledge could be strictly seen as non-persuasion related. In other words, this would mean that persuasion knowledge includes only the strategies that agents in this field use. Let us imagine a marketer part of an organization promoting a social cause such as sustainability. During the persuasion episode, a passing local might show both topic knowledge and agent knowledge. In practice, this means that this person could hold the belief that interest in sustainability has risen in recent years (topic knowledge). Likewise, it could be that the local holds the belief that the company promoting the cause is competent in doing so (agent knowledge). Agent knowledge is usually accessed to evaluate claims that marketers make about their products or services. It could also be that they want to inform themselves about the agent behind the product. This could mean that targets want to develop a sound attitude towards a specific agent. Another reason could be that targets are interested in the ad they see before them and the thoughts that went into the designing process (Friestad & Wright, 1994).

Contents of Persuasion Knowledge

First, there are the beliefs about the marketer's motives or goals. These are meant to influence the beliefs and attitudes of persuasion targets in a way that is most effective (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Possible beliefs about marketer's goals could be to manage one's self-image, meaning that persuasion targets perceive that a marketer wants to represent his moral values positively in the persuasion attempt. Another belief could be about estimating the marketer's investment of effort, money, and time into the persuasion attempt (For a more comprehensive list of possible goals, see Friestad & Wright (1994)). Second, there are beliefs about the tactics that marketers might use. Tactics are usually connected to the agent through a psychological event (e.g., gaining one's attention): "We see evidence of this in everyday descriptions of tactics that reference a psychological mediator, for example, an attention-getting tactic, a scare tactic, a tactic to stir curiosity or to make people like the product" (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p.4). Other tactics might include figures of speech (also known as rhetoricals) or guilt appeals, etc. By thinking about tactics, consumers are said to develop ideas about how persuasion works (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008). Third, there are beliefs about psychological mediators. These are often emotions that are targeted and are therefore considered internal causes for persuasion: "consumers have ideas about the difficulty of eliciting a variety of psychological events (e.g., attention, feeling emotion, connecting, etc.), as well as of the importance of these psychological events to advertising effectiveness." (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008, p. 556).

Fourth, there are beliefs about the effectiveness and appropriateness of marketer's tactics. The distinction between these two can be summarized as: "Appropriateness differs from effectiveness in that appropriateness has to do with the consumer's belief that it is right or wrong to use the tactic, regardless of whether the tactic works." (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008, p.557). Thus, beliefs about appropriateness might revolve around ideas about whether the tactic is being manipulative or not, while beliefs about effectiveness are more concerned about whether the tactic is considered 'powerful' (Friestad & Wright, 1994). For these last two, it is worthy to note that tactics can be appropriate in one context and inappropriate in another (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008; Friestad & Wright, 1994). For example, a scare tactic might be seen as appropriate when the goal is to make targets quit smoking, while it would not be appropriate in an advertisement about children's toys. Finally, a fifth set of beliefs can be identified; beliefs about coping tactics and coping goals. This set of beliefs concerns the target's need for control during the persuasion attempt. Examples of coping tactics could be that targets simply ignore certain parts of the message, or that they recognize their enhanced emotional reactions triggered by parts of the advertisement shown to them (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Lastly, there are beliefs about one own's coping goals. Similar to the marketer's persuasion goals, the coping goals of consumers can be defined as: "beliefs about the possible end goals of marketers and parallel beliefs about the possible end goals they can pursue in their coping activities." (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p.5).

Persuasion Knowledge Activation & Development

For targets to activate their persuasion knowledge, they have to consider the marketer's motives. The target needs to have enough awareness to perceive it as a persuasion attempt, which means it could either be seen as a motive that is persuasion or non-persuasion related (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008). Whether targets activate their persuasion knowledge is dependent on a few factors. First, the marketer's motives must be visible to the persuasion target. If this is the case, the persuasion target can start developing beliefs about the marketer's goals (for instance, whether the marketer's goal is to establish a long-term relationship with the target or not). Furthermore, the consideration of the marketer's motives is also dependent on persuasion expertise. For example, it has been shown that older adults are more likely to use persuasion knowledge in a more advanced way because they have more experience with persuasion attempts (Kirmani & Campbell, 2004). This increased experience also might have consequences in terms of beliefs about appropriateness and effectiveness.

Moreover, persuasion knowledge is likely to develop over time (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Its development is often considered an interaction between personal experience with persuasion attempts and the idea of "vicarious learning" (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008, p.564). Although the importance of persuasion expertise has been covered in a previous section, vicarious learning has not. Vicarious learning is the process of learning from others. By relating persuasion experiences to one another, a so-called 'folk-model' of persuasion starts to develop (Friestad & Wright, 1994). This means, in the case of advertising, that both consumers and marketers alike develop psychological knowledge about each other until it becomes 'common sense'. This knowledge is shaped in the course of one's life, as new ways of advertising are being thought of and knowledge can be gained from many sources, which includes consumers' observations, observations by others, as well as ideas by researchers and professors of marketing (Friestad & Wright, 1994).

Persuasion and cultural values

The ideas put forward about folk knowledge and its development, lead us to research that discusses the relationship between persuasion and culture. The concept of culture is defined by Hofstede (2011) as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (p. 3). In this definition, culture can be found in several different settings. It can be located in ethnic groups, nations, organizations, or other categories of people such as occupations or gender. Cultural characteristics help define the thought patterns that groups of people inhabit. It seems logical then, that different groups develop different thought patterns. Research on persuasion and cultural differences has looked into the concept of cultural congruity within marketing, which means that marketing strategies should correspond with the cultural values of that person. It has been found that when comparing individualistic and collectivistic cultures, persuasion strategies were evaluated more positively if they were congruent with either culture (Khaled, Fischer, Noble, and Biddle, 2008). Additionally, it has been found that culturally congruent messages were more effective in persuading others. For example, people in cultures that care about group dynamics, those who are collectivistic oriented, might react more favorably to messages that refer to the history of the group. Likewise, people in individualistic cultures are more likely to respond to messages that concern their personal opinions (Rodrigues, Blondé, and Girandola, 2018).

Among others, Rodrigues et al., (2018) used Hofstede's (1984; 2001) cultural dimensions. His dimensions provide a framework of cultural behavior that is frequently used and further studies are considered expansions of his work (Rodrigues et al., 2018). Hofstede (2011) identified six cultural value contrasts and framed them as dimensions. Respectively, these are (1) low/high power distance, which distinguishes cultures that value strict opposing power roles, and those that prefer equality; (2) low/high uncertainty avoidance, which can be seen as a distinction between cultures that rather avoid taking risks, and cultures that see benefits to taking risks; (3) individualism/collectivism, which sorts out whether people identify themselves as part of a group or as individuals; (4) masculinity/femininity, which concerns the roles of men and women in society, where masculine cultures are more assertive and feminine cultures more caring; (5) long/short term orientation, which distinguishes cultures with a short term orientation that are more concerned about the present and past, whereas long term oriented cultures situate themselves in the future (However, to prevent possible confusion, it should be noted that long-term orientation cultures not only turn to the future. For eastern cultures, in particular, representing a long-term orientation means considering the future while also taking inspiration from the past (De Mooij, 2019); (6) indulgence/restraint, which indicates whether a culture is likely to fulfill its needs, and therefore being more or less restrained (Hofstede, 2011).

Persuasion knowledge and culture

Where (societal) culture and persuasion knowledge are argued to overlap is in the process of vicarious learning, or the learning process from others. The PKM proposes that persuasion knowledge not only changes within individuals over time, but it also proposes that persuasion knowledge of entire generations and cultures is modified over time (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Campbell & Kirmani (2008) mention the lack of literature on persuasion knowledge and cross-cultural research and invite studies to explore this gap. Most research on persuasion knowledge has emphasized how it affects the effectiveness of advertisements. For example, one study focused on how persuasion knowledge use can lead to a more favorable evaluation of the agent (Isaac & Grayson, 2017). Others focus on how evaluations may be dependent on the equity of a brand, i.e., how well a brand is known (Ahmad & Guzmán, 2020), or how persuasion knowledge might positively increase brand trust (Chen & Cheng, 2019). What has been insufficiently covered, however, is why certain strategies are considered effective by targets. In other words, it has not been thoroughly explored what beliefs persuasion targets hold when making such evaluations, or the reasons behind them. This is relevant in the sense that vicarious learning might affect individual beliefs. For example, shared cultural norms might impact which beliefs are considered appropriate or effective in a certain culture, yet not in another. However, these suggestions need to be proven before any conclusions can be made. Furthermore, research on persuasion and culture has mainly focused on the individualism/collectivism dimension (e.g., Khaled et al., 2008; Rodrigues et al., 2018; Zhang & Gelb, 1996), whereas the dimension of long-term/short-term orientation has not been given the same amount of attention by scholars. Therefore, this study will mainly focus on the short-term (STO) and long-term orientation (LTO) dimension. The LTO dimension is closely related to Confucius' ethic of hard work and pragmatism, which is why East-Asian cultures with a history of Confucian ideas are, generally speaking, more concerned with the long-term (Hofstede, 2011). Table 1 presents a table from Hofstede (2011) depicting several differences between values for the LTO/STO dimension:

Table 1. "Ten Differences Between Short- and Long-Term-Oriented Societies" (Hofstede, 2011, p. 15).

Short-Term Orientation	Long-Term Orientation
Most important events in life occurred in the past or take place now	Most important events in life will occur in the future.
Personal steadiness and stability: a good person is always the same	A good person adapts to the circumstances
There are universal guidelines about what is good and evil	What is good and evil depends upon the circumstances
Traditions are sacrosanct	Traditions are adaptable to changed circumstances
Family life guided by imperatives	Family life guided by shared tasks
Supposed to be proud of one's country	Trying to learn from other countries
Service to others is an important goal	Thrift and perseverance are important goals
Social spending and consumption	Large savings quote, funds available for investment
Students attribute success and failure to luck	Students attribute success to effort and failure to lack of effort
Slow or no economic growth of poor countries	Fast economic growth of countries up till a level of prosperity

Transformational vs. Informational appeals

Some studies identified distinct differences between eastern and western cultures when concerning the LTO/STO dimension (Tai, 2004). Namely, it has been found that eastern cultures were more likely to react to less-verbal messages, where information is more implicit. In other words, cultures with a long-term orientation place their interests mainly in 'transformational advertising'. Western cultures, however, were prone to more verbal, explicit messages generally labeled as 'informational advertising' (Tai, 2004). It has been suggested that informational appeals that are effective and appropriate in one culture are suggested to have a different effect in other cultures (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). Informational advertising aims to put forward factual information, while transformational advertising attempts to influence one's emotions (Tai, 2004). Thus, one of the factors that might influence cultural differences is the type of appeal that is used.

Present study: persuasion knowledge in American and German individuals

This study examines similarities and differences between individuals of Germany and the United States, cultures that can be viewed as very similar. Although the scores for most cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1984, 2001) are very similar for the USA and Germany, a large difference in the long-term orientation dimension can be found. Germany depicts a score of 83 (on a scale from 1 to 100, with a score of 100 depicting a culture with a long-term orientation), whereas the United States receives a score of 26. Germany's score presupposes that it is a pragmatic culture, meaning that it interprets the truth differently based on context and time (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). American culture, on the other hand, should not be considered pragmatic. Individuals in American culture are expected to recognize universal guidelines for good and evil. However, this should not be mistaken for the fact that Americans are practical. American businesses, for example, are usually focused on the measurement of performance and short-term profits. Individuals within German culture are instead more likely to concern themselves with saving for the future and perseverance in their efforts (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

While considering the lack of knowledge on persuasion knowledge and culture, this thesis sets out to address the following research question regarding persuasion knowledge and cultural values:

RQ1: What are the similarities and differences between patterns of PK in American and German individuals?

Another research question has been formulated to investigate in what way cultural values and persuasion knowledge relate to each other. Since the attempt to answer it will be highly interpretative, the results of this research question will be discussed in the conclusion section.

RQ2: How do similarities and differences between patterns of persuasion knowledge relate to LTO and STO cultural characteristics?

Research on persuasion strategies suggests that the distinction between transformational and informational appeals is related to cultural values (e.g., Albers-Miller & Stafford, (1999); Tai (2004)). It might be expected that members of an LTO culture such as Germany will elicit more positive patterns in terms of persuasion knowledge towards transformational appeals than STO individuals. This research question aims to compare German and American individuals primarily regarding the STO/LTO dimension.

This thesis does not compare the scores for Hofstede's (1984, 2001) other cultural dimensions, since none of the other scores are as similar as the STO/LTO dimension for these two countries. Including other dimensions might have proven difficult for exploring the second research question, in the sense that findings on patterns of persuasion knowledge and cultural values could have been attributed to any of the cultural dimensions. Additionally, as research on persuasion knowledge and culture is scarce, this study is to be considered highly explorative in nature.

Method

Participants

Data were collected from 9 participants ages 20-40 using convenience and snowball sampling. 2 out of 9 participants were female, while the others were male. 5 participants had German nationality and 4 had American nationality, meaning that they have citizenship in their country of origin and have lived there for most of their lives. Participants were directly recruited via personal connections of the researcher and contacted through the researcher's email. A questionnaire has been used to indicate whether participants were representative of their culture or not. This is done to check if participants corresponded with values that would place them under a long-term orientation. As Hofstede (2011) made clear, although one belongs to a certain culture, there is no certainty that individuals will identify with its values on all dimensions. An overview of the questionnaire can be found in appendix 1. The questionnaire is made up of questions regarding the participant's long-term orientation, which have been drawn from differences in Table 1 and the questionnaire in the study by Tai (2004).

Material

One advertisement has been used (see appendix 3). The advertisement is from an advertising agency known as Blue Hive, which designed it for an NGO in the United Kingdom called 'Brake'. An advertisement in cause-related marketing has been chosen, as it is expected that cause-related marketing might be a catalysator for persuasion knowledge, meaning that it might raise suspicion of a company's motives (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008). However, the advertisement is changed from its original brand to represent the brand 'Ford.' This is done because it is expected that associations with the brand 'Brake' will be rather low, given that neither nationalities in this study are from the United Kingdom. In terms of persuasion knowledge, it might therefore cause a problem for the activation of the participant's agent knowledge if the brand is unknown to the participant. Additionally, there will be a slight difference in the advertisement concerning the original advertisement, in that a statistic has been added. Although transformational appeals are dominant in the ad, it is expected that the attention of American participants would go more to informational messages as proposed by Tai (2004).

The advertisement contains two emotional appeals, with one being a verbal message '*was that txt worth it*?,' and the other a non-verbal image. The image shows part of the body of a deceased child (with no text, hence being non-verbal), with the implication of the child being seemingly lifeless because of the actions of texting and driving. The reasoning behind using a tactic of showing death is the assumption made by past research that this subject might be considered taboo (Manceau & Tissier-Desbordes (2006). Therefore, it might be expected that this tactic would evoke participants' beliefs about the appropriateness or effectiveness of the ad because they might feel it contradicts societal norms about portraying death.

In addition, an informational appeal was incorporated in the form of a fabricated statistic of people severely injured or killed in car accidents every 15 minutes. The statistic is fabricated to isolate the effect of its trustworthiness, meaning that it could be expected that beliefs about appropriateness or effectiveness might be influenced by the sincerity of the statistic. Several guilt appeals are present in the advertisement since the use of guilt appeals might evoke beliefs about the advertiser's motives and the appropriateness of the used tactics (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008). What is more, cultural values might also influence participants' beliefs about guilt appeals. In discussing the STO/LTO dimension, Hofstede (2001) argues that the long-term pole characterizes a sense of shame, whereas cultures with short-term orientation are not prone to the feeling of shame. It might thus be expected that German individuals with a high score on the LTO dimension, would be more likely to feel a sense of guilt or shame than American individuals.

Instrument & Procedure

After participants had been shown the advertisement, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from participants. In total, 9 interviews were held. Each interview took approximately 18 minutes in total. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams or Zoom. In the case that data collected from the interviews was saturated, the researcher would consider decreasing the number of interviews. All participants were asked whether they agree to be recorded and had to sign a consent form, in which they were informed about the conditions of the study. These conditions include that participants can choose to withdraw from the study at any moment and that their data will be collected according to the EACH guidelines of Radboud University. The consent form and ethics form can be found in the appendix (4 and 5). Audio recordings of the interviews were taken for transcription using the researcher's mobile phone. Interviews were held in English because the process of translating into another language is time-consuming and all German participants were educated at university levels. The researcher is fluent in German, which meant that German expressions were likely to be understood and participants could be supported in translating German words to English. Additionally, it can be argued that student populations are near-native speakers of English and that translation into German for the German participants is not of concern. Information about the study was handed to participants at the outset of the study. The information form can be found in appendix 6. This form explained the procedure of the study while withholding information about its underlying goal. The concept of persuasion knowledge was mentioned in the title of the study. This was deemed unharmful, however, as persuasion knowledge in itself was considered a concept that is not ubiquitous to most people.

Some authors mention the benefit depth interviews can bring for measuring persuasion knowledge directly because depth-interviews can cause beliefs of which the participant is not aware to be made explicit to them (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008). Others argued that interviews allow targets to be open about their experience regarding the persuasion attempt (Ham, Nelson, and Das, 2015). However, there are also ways to be less restrictive with answers that participants could give, such as with the think-aloud method. Using this method, participants would be asked to describe everything that comes to mind when evaluating the advertisement. This way, overarching ideas in the data could be detected with more ease when not using scales (Ham et al., 2015). The problem with this method in comparison to interviews is that the coding process becomes much more difficult (Shapiro, 1994). According to Shapiro (1994), the meaning of what participants report is not clear to the coders. An example involves an utterance that could be either a statement or a question ("how important is the environment,", p. 24). These problems can be evaded in depth-interviews because the researcher can direct the participant toward relevant data by probing at a moment when persuasion knowledge is not yet activated. This way, subjects are made conscious of the beliefs that were applied by them, but not explicitly known.

Individual questions were made up of components of the PKM by Friestad & Wright (1994). Questions were asked about subjects' types of knowledge (persuasion-, agent-, topic knowledge) as well as different beliefs about marketer's tactics or goals, their appropriateness and effectiveness, and the beliefs about psychological mediators. Some of the beliefs in the PKM have been excluded, such as coping behaviors, as they are not vital to discovering how persuasion knowledge works. An extensive overview of the questions can be found in appendix 2. Afterward, transcripts from the interviews were coded by the researcher using software called Atlas.ti. After the analysis, a coding session followed that was meant to assess the reliability of the approach to coding the data. If there were any disagreements regarding the interpretation of the first researcher, these disagreements were discussed until coders came to an understanding. Individual codes that had ambiguous meanings to the researcher were discussed and also agreed upon.

Analysis

Analysis of interview transcripts was done using thematic analysis with open coding. There are generally two ways to analyze interviews, thematic analysis, and content analysis. First off, thematic analysis focuses more on what is important than what is common. The meaningful data is then extracted and formulated into certain themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Second, content analysis focuses more on a systematic analysis of a certain phenomenon that aims to put it into categories. For this study, thematic analysis has been chosen for several considerations. It is argued that one of the limitations of content analysis includes that information in transcripts can belong to multiple categories. Another aspect of content analysis is the possibility of a vast amount of categories that are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). As explained before, the concept of persuasion knowledge is made out of possibly overlapping types of knowledge. To illustrate this point, imagine that consumers might elaborate on their knowledge of how promotions work. One could argue they make use of their persuasion knowledge while it could also be argued that they seem to demonstrate high topic knowledge (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008).

Since persuasion knowledge seems to be made up of many fragments that can be interpreted in multiple ways by coders, analysis will be done using an inductive approach. As there are no current theories that compare long-term orientation and persuasion knowledge, this approach was deemed most appropriate. After interviews were transcribed, they were coded following an inductive approach as described by Williams & Moser (2018). First, individual utterances were open coded by viewing the transcriptions. Then, utterances were axially coded to identify common concepts across interviews, relating to the underlying beliefs. These include the tactics they think marketers use, their beliefs about the tactics and effectiveness or appropriate of the tactics. Finally, utterances were selectively coded to represent a certain theme, e.g., ‘financial gains’ for utterances that were discussing the probability of the company capitalizing on profits.

Pilot-study

A pilot study was held to find out if a premature set-up of the study was viable. Specifics of this method section have therefore been subject to change after findings from the pilot-study. One American participant was interviewed in the pilot-study. After filling out the questionnaire she was found to have a medium-term orientation (once participants agreed between 4 and 6 statements out of the 9, they were considered medium-term oriented). This was to be expected, as the participant spoke both German and English, and has lived in Germany for a considerable amount of years. A number of problems became clear after reviewing the transcript. During the interview, some questions were misunderstood by the participant without follow-up questions from the researcher. For example, one question addressed what associations the subject had regarding car companies in general. The answer included specifications about the product, which was not relevant to the question:

I usually attribute them to not so much of like their value it's like what the car does or whoever is driving it and not just like the other aspects of it.

An explanation could lie in that the participant was informed insufficiently of the task and that the introductory question was flawed. This seemed to have affected the answers to most of the questions. Instead of asking what the marketer's goals was, it was considered to be more effective to ask how the marketer is trying to persuade them. In addition, subjects would be given a more elaborate instruction. Subjects were told that the questions concerned their reasoning behind their opinions. They were also instructed that the advertisement shown functioned as an example, which was meant to prevent subjects from merely discussing what they saw before them.

Results

The goal of this study was to examine what differences and similarities between patterns of persuasion knowledge could be observed in individuals from two different countries, Germany, and the United States. This means that, first, three identified patterns regarding persuasion knowledge are explained.

Pattern 1: Persuasion goal of financial gain

A similarity was identified regarding the marketer's goals, given that the main motive of the marketer was identified by most as attempting to increase sales or to gain profits. This motive was explicitly mentioned by all German participants. For the American participants, this pattern was not as pronounced. One did not mention the goal of financial gain whatsoever. Another American participant did not elaborate upon his belief. He mentioned that companies were always commercially targeted, therefore this would make them money in some way. He stated, however, that the brand was also interested in prevention of texting and driving, besides gaining profits. In most instances, participants also noted that marketers often would make an effort to manage the companies' self-image (with the fundamental goal of selling products). This was said to be done in several ways. For instance, by seeming to take responsibility for the problem of texting and driving. Another explanation that was only mentioned by American participants was that companies were not actually interested in taking responsibility, or that it was not their duty to do so. Other ways they would attempt to improve their image, was by seeming to strive for the moral good, or by attempting to be associated with a certain value (such as safety).

Pattern 2: showing death/scare tactic

Regardless of nationality, all subjects seem to have found the display of a deceased child or body as a scare tactic appropriate. The differences between the nationalities lied in the beliefs for why they are appropriate. Namely, most German participants do not consider it inappropriate in of itself. One participant argued that the topic is truthful, meaning it is seen as an important problem to address and therefore appropriate. Another two mentioned the perceived goal of the marketer, i.e., preventing more deaths due to texting and driving, as the reason for its appropriateness. Others argued that showing death is a common sight in various media and therefore not perceived as inappropriate. Beliefs that showing death was appropriate were dependent on the context for some German participants. One subject argued that he accepted being offended, only because the advertisement might help prevent accidents in the future. Another argued that the topic was truthful, although showing a dead person is generally not appropriate. It was only appropriate to her because the consequences of texting and driving were considered a serious problem. For the American participants, no distinct pattern was found. Nevertheless, one American participant did mention context as a factor. He argued that people would find it appropriate because they would agree with the message to not text and drive.

Another aspect discussed was the effectiveness of showing death, meaning that the scare tactic either worked or did not work to accomplish the perceived goal of the marketer. For German subjects, it did not seem as if a pattern regarding effectiveness could be found. Similarly, for the American participants, there seemed to be no clear dominance towards effectiveness or ineffectiveness either.

Pattern 3: reminding of the danger as a strategy

Although there were few mentioned beliefs about psychological mediators, at least half of the participants mentioned the importance of reminding targets of the danger of texting and driving as contributing to the general effectiveness of the ad. This means it was deemed effective regardless of whether this effect was achieved in the advertisement or not. This finding was evenly present across both nationalities. The most cited reason for its effectiveness was that it reminds one of the consequences of texting and driving. It was effective in the sense that reminding targets while they want to use their phone while driving, contributed toward the goal of preventing people from texting and driving. Participants did differ in what served to them as a reminder. Only Americans referred to the statistic or the image and the statistic as an effective reminder about the consequences of texting and driving. A pattern for German participants regarding beliefs about the statistic could not be found as most German subjects did not explicitly mention the statistic. One German individual discussed its unimportance compared to the rest of the advertisement, as its font size was smaller. Another stated that it would be more effective if it were more connected to the topic of texting and driving.

Additional findings

A final observation was that participants found ads with a social cause to be common in their country of origin. Some also mention that the use of a social issue has been more often used as a persuasion goal in recent years. This observation was expressed by participants of both nationalities. However, only Americans individuals attributed the commonality of cause-related marketing to texting and driving to being a significant problem in their country of origins.

RQ1: Similarities

This section attempts to answer the first research question, which examined what similarities and differences could be found between German and American individuals. In terms of similarities, most participants sought to explain the marketer’s goal in this advertisement. Almost all noted that the intent behind ads is generally to gain revenue or sell products. Most also identified the goals of improving the company’s image. One American participant, also discussed the ineffectiveness of companies trying to improve image as a tactic:

I think more and more companies are trying to sell that, this brand's, brand identity is going more to societal impact, societal empathy like: when you think about our brand, you *should think about how we care, or how we you know … it's like: nah, I want to know if you have a good product ...*

In addition, most individuals seem to have found the scare tactic appropriate. This might have been partly mediated by topic knowledge, as some participants pointed out that drinking and driving was a serious issue, whether this was the case worldwide, or in their country-of-origin. German participants mostly found the image to be appropriate, although not in of itself. Various reasons were given for how it would be inappropriate in other contexts. For American participants, no distinct pattern was found. Lastly, half of the participants seem to have noted the effectiveness of the reminding targets about the consequences of their actions. In sum, there seem to have been a few similarities across individuals from both countries.

RQ1: Differences

There were few differences in patterns found among individuals of both countries. However, it was found that one American participant argued that the statistic could be made up, while another labeled it as ambiguous:

this stat is, is it misleading or is it what it should like? It's so ambiguous that it feels like misinformation and then because we're so ... again we're desensitized to violence but super revved up against misinformation right?

For German individuals, no pattern for the statistic was identified. Although two of the five German subjects also brought up the statistic, they did not any make statements about its inappropriateness, or that it could be false. Furthermore, it seemed as if patterns between German individuals were relatively common, whereas beliefs displaying persuasion knowledge for American individuals usually seemed to be divided or their patterns incomprehensive.

Conclusion & Discussion

This study's primary research question set out to find similarities and differences between patterns of persuasion knowledge in individuals of the United States and Germany. Similarities were found in that almost all perceived attempts to improve the image of the brand were met with suspicion. Possible arguments revolved around the motives of corporations generally being superficial. This is in line with findings from Koslow (2000), who found that even honest claims about a company's motive were resisted by consumers. Furthermore, these findings were in agreement with research which has indicated that when firms do not mention self-serving motives while advocating for the common good, they are met with more negative responses from consumers (Forehand & Grier, 2003). Another similarity found was that for German individuals, there was a pattern regarding the tactic of showing death in advertisements, whereas this was not the case for American individuals. As American participants were on average older, this might have impacted their views on the appropriateness of showing death. Most Germans seem to have found the use of death to be exclusively appropriate under certain conditions. This is in line with recent findings proposing that the use of death and its appropriateness depends on age and whether the image is relevant (Caulfield et al., 2021).

More of an observation than a finding, this study seems to replicate the effect found by Kirmani & Campbell (2004). Namely, the observation that older participants seemed to use their persuasion knowledge in a more sophisticated manner. Further investigation is required to find out how large this effect would be and in what way it affects individual beliefs.

This section addresses the second research question, which asked whether these patterns can be attributed to Hofstede's (1984, 2001) cultural dimensions. These arguments will be more interpretative in nature. The second research question addresses how these findings relate to the cultural values of participants. From the literature by Tai (2004), it would be expected to have German individuals react more positively towards emotional appeals, because they might be influenced by their LTO cultural values. Interestingly, most German participants seem to feel that the perceived shock-appeal of a deceased child was appropriate. For some however, this was under strict conditions set by the participants themselves. Some German subjects stated that it was only appropriate because of a compromise between feeling disdain for contradicting norms of how to portray death, and valuing the positive outcome it might have. With one individual accepting to be offended if that would help prevent more accidents from people texting while driving. This might have been a showcase of an LTO value, as individuals within LTO cultures typically hold pragmatic beliefs. However, it is undesirable to suppose that German individuals would have responded more positively to emotional appeals by default. This in turn suggests that no evidence was found for the proposition by Tai (2004), that transformational messages would appeal more to LTO cultures.

Another part of this proposition was that LTO cultures would react more positively towards implicit, non-verbal communication, while STO cultures would react more positively towards verbal, explicit communication. One American individual explicitly named the statistic inappropriate, while another argued it could have been fabricated. Thus, these findings seem to run contrary to the expectation that American individuals would respond more positively towards explicit information strategies such as the use of a statistic. This might have been due to its trustworthiness. In any case, more research is needed to investigate if and how cultural values mediate beliefs of effectiveness and appropriateness towards informational and transformational appeals. Additionally, quite a number of participants explicitly mentioned a perceived connection between the image and the consequences of texting. It was argued in the introduction that it would be possible for German participants to feel some sense of shame when being confronted with a guilt-appeal tactic. This is because Hofstede (2001) described a sense of shame as one of the characteristics of the STO/LTO dimension. Namely, he expected that LTO cultures would feel shame to a greater extent than STO cultures. However, none of the participants mentioned anything about a sense of personal shame.

Next, some of the limitations of this study are presented. First, it should be noted that although it was explained that the concept of cultural dimensions might affect consumer beliefs (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008), it should not be forgotten that individuals can diverge from values that are shared broadly within their culture. Cultures are also bound to change between generations (Hofstede, 2011). In the current study, this might have been a plausible explanation as it only interviewed 9 participants. Findings should therefore not be regarded as generalizable to a wider population.

Another limitation is the distinction between eastern cultures with LTO values compared to western cultures with LTO values. Given that the LTO dimension is partly based on Confucianism, studies on transformational appeals and LTO cultures have mainly focused on countries with a Confucian background. This might explain why German individuals did not seem to find transformational strategies more effective. What is more, this study primarily interviewed a sample of university students. Although groups such as these might be more aware of marketer tactics and goals because of education on the science of marketing. It might be plausible that older, non-student participants would find it less difficult to abstract from the context of the advertisement. It has been discussed that this might be due to the fact that they gained more persuasion knowledge over time and are therefore more able to abstract their knowledge about persuasion (Kirmani & Campbell, 2004). Qualitative approaches to studying persuasion knowledge should be careful in designing their interview questions, as these might help to activate persuasion knowledge if applied correctly.

Conclusively, future research should include more components of the PKM by Friestad & Wright (1994). As this was not the main focus of this study, consumer coping tactics and goals were left out of the analysis of the data. How consumers cope with persuasion attempts might give insight to the underlying processes when deciding if a marketer's tactic or goal is appropriate or effective. Additionally, future studies should compare more countries to gather data that shows more easily whether differences are caused by cultural aspects, or that they stem from their own persuasion knowledge. As stated previously, this study has been highly explorative in nature. Regardless, it might provide steppingstones for studies that want to investigate the concept of persuasion knowledge and the interaction between persuasion knowledge and cultural aspects.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire overview

- Gender
- Age
- Nationality
- Which languages do you speak?
- I am proud of my country - I try to learn from other countries (agree – do not agree – I don’t know).
- When I fail it is usually because of bad luck - When I fail it is usually because of my lack of effort (agree – do not agree – I don’t know).
- Most important events in life occurred in the past or take place now - Most important events in life will occur in the past (agree – do not agree – I don’t know).
- Personal steadiness and stability: a good person is always the same - A good person adapts to the circumstances (agree – do not agree – I don’t know).
- There are universal guidelines about what is good and evil - What is good and evil depends upon the circumstances (agree – do not agree – I don’t know).
- Traditions are to be respected - Traditions are adaptable to changed circumstances (agree – do not agree – I don’t know).
- Service to others is an important goal - Thrift and perseverance are important goals (agree – do not agree – I don’t know).

- Slow or no economic growth of poor countries - Fast economic growth of countries up till a level of prosperity (agree – do not agree – I don't know).
- I look to the near future for inspiration - I look to the past for inspiration (agree – do not agree – I don't know).
- I have short-term plans - I have long-term plans (agree – do not agree – I don't know).

Appendix B

Interview question overview

- How do you think that the marketer is trying to persuade you with this advertisement? (Persuasion knowledge)

- How do you think that they want to achieve (participant's answer to previous question)? (Beliefs about marketer's tactics)
- Why do you think that?

- What is your opinion on cause-related marketing in general? (Topic knowledge)

- How do you think cause-related marketing in this ad can be effective? (Beliefs about Marketer's Effectiveness)
- Do you think this ad's effectiveness would change in other contexts (cultural)? (unconditional/conditional)

- What are your opinions on Ford? (Agent knowledge)

- Why do you value these aspects and not others?
- Would you say this advertisement is appropriate? (Beliefs about appropriateness)
- Why do you think that / why is that important to you?

- Do you think the marketer knows anything about the target demographic? (If so, what?) (Target knowledge)
- Is this type of advertisement common in your country-of-origin? (Cultural congruence)

- Do you think this could change if it was shown in other cultures? (If so, how?)

Appendix C

Advertisement from the UK organization Brake (logo adjusted to that of Ford).

Appendix D

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: Daan van Brenk

Student number: S1030759

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.

DECLARATION:

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: Nijmegen, 13-06-2022

Appendix E

Consent form

CONSENT FORM

for participation in the scientific research study: *Persuasion Knowledge in advertising*

Statement of participant

The aim of the research study has been outlined to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the research study. I participate voluntarily in the research study. I understand that I can stop at any point during the research study, should I wish to do so. I understand how the data of the research study will be stored and how they will be used. I consent to participating in the research study as described in the information document.

In addition, I give permission to (please check all that apply):

Yes No

☐ ☐ process the following (special categories of) personal data: voice

☐ ☐ have audio recordings made of me

☐ ☐ have the audio recordings transcribed

☐ ☐ use the anonymized transcripts for scientific research

Name: ....

Signature: .... Date: ....

Statement of executive researcher

I declare that I have informed the above-mentioned person correctly about the research study and that I abide by the guidelines for research as stated in the protocol of the Ethics Assessment Committee Humanities.

Name: ....

Signature: .... Date: ....

Appendix F

Ethics form

1. Is a health care institution involved in the research?

Explanation: A health care institution is involved if one of the following (A/B/C) is the case:

A. One or more employees of a health care institution is/are involved in the research as principle or in the carrying out or execution of the research.
B. The research takes place within the walls of the health care institution and should, following the nature of the research, generally not be carried out outside the institution.
C. Patients / clients of the health care institution participate in the research (in the form of treatment).

☒ No → continue with questionnaire

☐ Yes → Did a Dutch Medical Institutional Review Board (MIRB) decide that the Wet Medisch Onderzoek (Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act) is not applicable?
☐ Yes → continue with questionnaire
☐ No → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen → end of checklist

2. Do grant providers wish the protocol to be assessed by a recognised MIRB?

☒ No → continue with questionnaire

☐ Yes → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen → end of checklist

3. Does the research include medical-scientific research that might carry risks for the participant?
☒ No → continue with questionnaire

☐ Yes → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen → end of checklist

Standard research method

4. Does this research fall under one of the stated standard research methods of the Faculty of Arts or the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies?

☒ Yes → 9. Standard in-depth interview→ continue with questionnaire

☐ No → assessment necessary, end of checklist

Participants

5. Is the participant population a healthy one?

☒ Yes → continue with questionnaire

☐ No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

6. Will the research be conducted amongst minors (<16 years of age) or amongst (legally) incapable persons?

☐ Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☒ No → continue with questionnaire

Method

7. Is a method used that makes it possible to produce a coincidental finding that the participant should be informed of?

☐ Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☒ No → continue with questionnaire

8. Will participants undergo treatment or are they asked to perform certain behaviours that can lead to discomfort?

☐ Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☒ No → continue with questionnaire

9. Are the estimated risks connected to the research minimal?

☐ No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☒ Yes → continue with questionnaire

10. Are the participants offered a different compensation than the usual one?

☐ Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☒ No → continue with questionnaire

11. Should deception take place, does the procedure meet the standard requirements?

☐ No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☒ Yes → continue with questionnaire

12. Are the standard regulations regarding anonymity and privacy met?

☐ No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☒ Yes → continue with questionnaire

Conducting the research

13. Will the research be carried out at an external location (such as a school, hospital)?

☒ No → continue with questionnaire

☐ Yes→ Do you have/will you receive written permission from this institution?

☐ No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☐ Yes → continue with questionnaire

14. Is there a contact person to whom participants can turn to with questions regarding the research and are they informed of this?

☐ No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☒ Yes → continue with questionnaire

15. Is it clear for participants where they can file complaints with regard to participating in the research and how these complaints will be dealt with?

☐ No→ assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☒ Yes → continue with questionnaire

16. Are the participants free to participate in the research, and to stop at any given point, whenever and for whatever reason they should wish to do so?

☐ No→ assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☒ Yes → continue with questionnaire

17. Before participating, are participants informed by means of an information document about the aim, nature and risks and objections of the study? (zie explanation on informed consent and sample documents).

☐ No→ assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☒ Yes → continue with questionnaire

18. Do participants and/or their representatives sign a consent form? (zie explanation on informed consent and sample documents.

☐ No→ assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

☒ Yes → checklist finished

Appendix G

Information form

Radboud University

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

persuasion knowledge in advertising

Introduction

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study. Participation is voluntary. If you want to participate, I will ask you to sign a consent form. Before you decide whether or not to take part, I will give you information about the study. Please take time to read the following information carefully. If something is not clear, or you would like more information, please ask the researcher.

Outline and aim of the research study
In this research study the researcher wants you to answer a number of questions regarding persuasion processes after examining an advertisement about cars. These questions will be about the advertisement you will get to examine before the interview.

What is going to happen to you?
In this research study you will discuss the advertisement with the researcher in an online interview. This interview will take approximately 15 minutes in total. You will be asked to agree to being recorded before the interview.

Voluntary participation
Your participation in this research is voluntary. This means that you can withdraw your participation and consent at any time during the research, without giving a reason. Even up to two weeks after participating you can have your research data and personal data removed, by sending a request to daan.vanbrenk@ru.nl

What will happen to my data?
The research data I collect during this study will be used by scientists as part of data sets, articles and presentations. The anonymized research data is accessible to other scientists for a period of at least 10 years. Personal data collected remain confidential. When we share data with other researchers, these data cannot be traced back to you.

Audio recordings will be made during this study. These recordings are used for collecting data for this particular study only. Audio recordings cannot be fully anonymized due to the recording of a person's voice. These recordings will be deleted and are only shared with the researcher.

You will be handed a consent form on which you can give permission for me to make and use these recordings.

In order to carry out the study and register your participation, it is necessary for me to collect, use and store personal data. The consent form indicates which personal data is involved.
For the research it is also necessary to collect special personal data. These special personal data are indicated in the consent form.
All research and personal data are safely stored following the Radboud University guidelines.

More information?
If you have any questions or would like more information about the research study, please contact me using the contact information at the bottom of this letter.

Ethical assessment and complaints
Should you have any complaints regarding this research, please contact the researcher.

You can also file a complaint with the secretary of the Ethics Assessment Committee Humanities of Radboud University (etc-gw@ru.nl)

For questions on data processing in this research, please contact: dataofficer@let.ru.nl.

Consent form
If you want to participate in this research study, I ask you to sign the consent form. With this written consent, you declare that you have understood the information I have provided and consent to participate in this research study.

Kind regards,

Daan van Brenk
Contact: daan.vanbrenk@ru.nl