

# The influence of culture on online advertisement

The differences between The Netherlands and Spain

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*"Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster."*

- Geert Hofstede -

## Colophon

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## Executive summary

The purpose of this research is to analyse how culture influences online advertisement by comparing the Netherlands and Spain.

Online advertisement holds significant importance in the international market sector. The use of online advertisement has increased the past years and has become a vital promotion tool in the international marketing sector and therefore individuals from different cultures with personal norms and values will receive the ad. Therefore, it is important to research how culture influences online advertisement.

The methods of research include qualitative research on the impact of culture on online advertisement. Secondary three theories were compared and analysed to find out what theory was most applicable to analyse culture. Hofstede's theory was used to analyse the characteristics of culture. The cultural characteristics of the Netherlands and Spain were analysed according to the system of Hofstede. Moreover, primary research in the form of a focus group was executed to evaluate the impact of culture on online advertisement between the Netherlands and Spain. In the focus group, the participants responded to advertisement correlated to the cultural dimensions of Hofstede.

The results of the focus groups showed that the participants of the two cultures responded differently to the advertisements. The appreciation rewarded by the participants was for 75% in agreement with the analysis made on the cultural characteristics based on the theory of Hofstede. The results of the focus group confirm that there is a correlation between the cultural characteristics of the countries and the way they interpreted and appreciated the advertisements. On the hand on the before mentioned information, there can be stated that the culture of a society influences online advertisement interpreted and appreciated. The answer to the question shows the importance of taking culture into account in order to achieve the most effective online advertisement strategies in the international marketing sector.

In addition, the results of the focus group showed that twenty-five per cent of the answers were not in agreement with the analysis of Hofstede. This unexpected result illustrated that there might have been other factors involved that influenced the results of the focus group. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct further research on the influence of culture, possibly with the addition of other factor that could have an influence on effective online advertisement.

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## Preface

This bachelor thesis is written as part of the graduation process of the Bachelor of European studies at the Hague university of applied sciences and has taken place in the period of November 2019 until May 2020. This research has been written out of personal interest on the subject of matter and to emphasize the importance of the research on cultural influence on online advertisement.

I wish to express my genuine appreciation towards my supervisor, Ernst van Weperen, who demonstrated a great amount of patience by supporting me even when I sent twenty stress related emails. Mr. van Weperen has given me the assistance that I needed in order to be able to efficiently execute my research.

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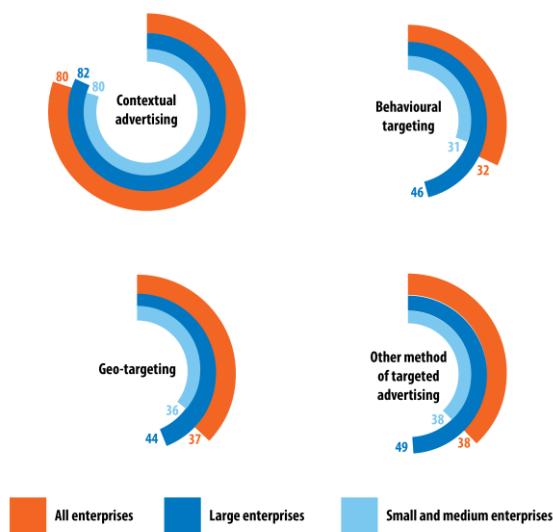
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## Introduction

### 1.1 Motivation

Online advertisement is a highly important tool in the world of advertisement as illustrated by the statistics provided by Eurostat (Figure 1) (Eurostat, 2018).



**Figure 1:** statistics on usage of ads (Eurostat, 2018).

Eurostat, in its latest online publication, explains that the internet is a medium used to make communication across the world possible. In this day and age, the internet is the most used tool when searching for products. Moreover, Eurostat claims that "websites have become customers' the first option when seeking for information and eventually purchasing goods or services, whether it is online or offline" (Eurostat, 2018). Moreover, Dr Sanje and Dr Senol (2012) state that using the internet as a medium for advertisement is gaining popularity significantly fast. This phenomenon especially takes place in the sectors of national and international marketing (Sanje & Senol, 2012). Therefore, the use and popularity of the internet and online advertisement is increasing.

Moreover, according to Kalid Saleh, online advertisement is a vital advertisement tool. Online advertisement is an effective way to increase the success and revenue of an organisation within the marketing sector. Saleh concluded that the use of online advertisement is highly effective. Research on Google has shown that 95% of Google's revenue has been generated through the use of online advertisements (Saleh, 2019). Besides, research conducted by Louisa Ha has shown that there has been an increase in revenue from \$1.8 billion to \$20 billion resulting from US online

advertisements. This rapid growth of income has multiplied tenfold (Ha, 2018). Therefore, showing that online advertisement is an essential part of the marketing sector.

Furthermore, online advertisement holds significant importance in the international marketing sector. Nyagam Suriyanarayanan, business planning analyst, found that in the past years, the increase of globalisation has made it possible for businesses to distribute products all over the world efficiently. "Online advertising has become one of the key elements in the process of advertising, and internet promotional strategies are widely spread as it has the capability to target a particular market while surfing on the World Wide Web" (Suriyanarayanan, 2010, p. 3). The aforementioned statement shows that the strategies of online advertisement are cross-border in nature as it can result in reaching a broader audience. According to Jim Hamell, online information technology has been through an evolution in the past decade. This evolution is proven to have a profound effect on the performance of businesses in the international marketing sector. The development of online advertisement has proven to be the most crucial in the global marketing sector (Hamell, 1997). Online advertisement, therefore, makes it possible to reach out to different parts of the world and is a convenient method to attract customers on a global scale.

Online advertisement can be considered as the centre of promotional strategies of companies and is therefore essential to look at in the sphere of the international marketing sector. For an advertisement to be effective, it is important to consider culture. When researching the influence of culture on the effectiveness of online advertisement, the effects of globalisation in the modern world should be brought into consideration. Nahavandi Firouzeh implies that the impact of globalisation could cause homogenisation across the globe. Modernisation and westernisation in the world have been increased by the development of communication technology, such as radio, internet and television. The homogenisation is associated with the world evolving into a global village and might, therefore, cause cultures to experience loss of identity (Firouzeh, 2004). Moreover, Ritzer claims that homogenisation could cause cultures to converge because dominant global cultures are influencing the local submissive cultures. (Ritzer, 2010). As a support to the statement of Ritzer, the report of Prasad clarifies that due to globalisation, different cultures start showing similar behaviour and are developing similar habits. It could be stated that globalisation could lead to the homogenisation of the world. Prasad and Prasad state that "Individuals from different societies start to watch the same entertainment programs, listen to the same music, consume common global brand products and services, and wear the same or similar clothes" (Prasad and Prasad, 2006, p. 91-131). This situation displays how cultures are coalescing.

However, besides the statements given above about the converging of cultures, other researchers argue that globalisation does not cause complete homogenisation. Theodor Levitt says that globalisation does cause homogenisation to a certain extent, however, it does not necessarily equal the loss of cultural identity. Even though individuals are getting some equal global preference standards regarding certain aspects, the cultures also maintain the same norms and values. Cultures will continue to preserve their culture-related preferences, beliefs and national tastes (Levitt, 1983). Besides, Richard Volkman explains that globalisation does not necessarily imply total homogenisation. Because of globalisation, there is a possibility to observe certain countries adopting foreign products and habits into their cultures. However, that does not indicate that these foreign products will take over the local traditions and way of life; these foreign products and habits will, at most, be added or adapted to the culture (Volkman, 2006). As John Micklethwait stated "Unlike steel and microchips, food is personal. To a Frenchman, the idea that Cheez Whiz will replace camembert and Brie strikes at his very essence." (Micklethwait, 2003, 286).

Moreover, the following examples illustrate the lack of research on cultural differences by showing examples of advertisement that have been misinterpreted despite globalisation. In 2011, Dove published an advertisement about their released shower gel line. The commercial showed the 'before' and 'after' result of using the shower gel. The 'before' shot showed a dark-skinned woman with bad skin. The 'after' shot showed a light-skinned woman with beautiful skin after using the product (Inside Edition, 2017). After this commercial aired, there was much commotion and remarks were made about the fact that the advertisement shows racist connotations. Business Insider gathered that a large number of people who viewed the advertisement perceived that it suggested that for a black woman to be attractive, she should have a lighter skin colour. (Business Insider, 2017). The commercial received a negative response, and according to Kate Taylor, more than 1000 responds came in on the fact that the Dove commercial was perceived as racist.

One of the responses on this topic was "Dove VisibleCare body wash: 'Visibly more beautiful skin.' Bye-bye black skin hello white skin! (Scrub hard!)" (Held, 2017). After receiving this sarcastic comment, Dove responded that it was not their intention to send a racist message. Marissa Solan, a spokeswoman for Dove, explained that the intention of the advertisement was to show that the Body Wash is for women of every colour and has tried to embrace diversity (Solan, 2017). However, it had the opposite effect. This Dove advertisement amplifies that not considering the norms and values of cultures can have an impact on the effectiveness an advertisement can have in attracting consumers to a product. Another example of an online advertisement that has been misinterpreted is the "Hitler Ice-Cream" advertisement. In 2015, an article written by Abhishek

Saha in Indian newspaper, Hindustan Times, released a report on the ice-cream brand named Hitler. The brand chose to use a picture of Hitler as part of their advertisement (Saha, 2015). According to Mike Fromowitz, writer for Haymarket, Neeraj Kumar, the owner of the ice-cream company, decided to call the ice-cream after Hitler because one of his uncles was dubbed the name due to his quick temper. Nevertheless, the commercial got perceived as very inappropriate and uneducated (Fromowitz, 2017).

As demonstrated, there are researchers that claim that globalisation will result in homogenisation and researchers that state that globalisation does not necessarily mean total homogenisation. The issue of whether cultures preserve their lifestyle, norms, and values is still to be looked into.

## 1.2 Problem definition

The objective of this research is to argue the extent to which culture influences online advertisement by comparing two countries, namely, the Netherlands and Spain. The research on the impact of culture on online advertisement is of importance because, as reported by Nahavandi Firouzeh, the world is turning into an enormous international global market, as a result of globalisation and westernisation. (Firouzeh, 2004). Moreover, according to Nyagam Suriyanarayanan, globalisation is increasing international exchanges and therefore the possibilities of retailing all over the world has increased. Moreover the time-space compression is shrinking, which makes international trade faster and easier (Suriyanarayanan, 2010). However, as stated by Levitt (1983) and Volkman (2006), increasing globalisation does not cause cultures to completely disappear (Levitt, 1983) (Volkman, 2006). As support to the previously mentioned statements, Adam Matei claims that the globalisation causes different cultures to watch the same television series and consume dishes from different cultures, however that does not necessarily have result in complete homogenisation. Globalisation creates heterogeneity in the world with a structure in which certain aspects connect cultures to each other. However, the cultures still maintain their norms and values, ideas and perceptions (Matei, 2006). Not considering cultural aspects into advertisements can cause people to perceive the advertisement in an unintended way. The misinterpretations of online advertisements by different cultures can cause an advertisement to not obtain optimal effectiveness and will limit their reach across the globe.

As stated in the theory developed by Hofstede, people all over the world have different needs and demands as a result of factors such as differing cultures, backgrounds, income brackets, societal norms and values (Hofstede, 1980). These cultural differences could influence the decision-

making process online customers go through while looking at a certain advertisement and deciding whether it is attractive enough to entice them into buying the product.

Because of these reasons, the question remains whether these differences cause people to perceive advertisements differently. For this reason, the central question of this research is: How does culture have an influence on the effectiveness of online advertisements in The Netherlands and Spain? In order to answer the central question, the following three sub-questions have been formulated:

1. How can culture be analysed?
2. What are the characteristics of culture?
3. Do individuals from different backgrounds respond differently to advertisements?

Secondary research has been carried out to define how culture can be analysed and what the characteristics of culture are. In order to find out the most effective theory, the cultural theories of Hofstede, Trompenaars and Lewis have been analysed and compared. After the analysis of the theories, the theory of Hofstede has been selected to analyse culture and define cultural characteristics.

More in-depth research has been done on the influence of culture on online advertisement by executing two focus groups to observe how cultures with different characteristics respond to the same online advertisements. The Netherlands and Spain have been selected because of the clear contrast between the cultural characteristics of the two countries. The objective of the focus group was to analyse if there is a difference between the responses and if they are correlatable to the cultural dimensions of Hofstede. The participants have been selected based on the demographical characteristics age, gender, nationality and educational level. The two groups consisted of six Dutch students and six Spanish students all between the ages of 18 to 29. During the focus group, the participants have been asked to reward an appreciation to advertisements chosen in correlation to the cultural dimensions. Participation in the focus group was carried out online due to the measures that were implemented as a response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The theory of Hofstede has been used to execute this research successfully. From the cultural dimensions of Hofstede, four cultural dimensions have been selected: masculinity versus femininity, individualism versus collectivism, high – versus low uncertainty avoidance and high – versus low power distance.

## Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Concept of culture

The term 'culture' is a broad term and is therefore difficult to define. However, there are basic definitions that describe the concept. Dutch social psychologist, Hofstede, states that "Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede, 2019). Another definition has been given by Helen Spencer-Oatey, who states that culture is a vague collection of simple assumptions, points of view, behaviour, beliefs, norms and values that are shared by a group of individuals. These characteristics could have an influence on the behaviour and on the way that different cultures interpret advertisements. (Helen Spencer-Oatley, 2012).

### 2.2 Concept of Advertising

The second concept that needs to be clarified is advertising. Online advertisement as confirmed by Eurostat, is a concept that came into an existence over the past years since the increase of the use of social media (Eurostat, 2018). Susan Ward claims that the concept online advertising can be defined as a way to effectively influence customers their buying behaviour or persuade customers by sharing messages about the product or service. The aim of a product or a service advertisement is to obtain interest from new customers. This is done by trying to reach out to the customers with an effective targeted campaign (Ward, 2018).

### 2.3 Theories on culture

While conducting this research, different cultural theories have been looked into. The theories have been compared to discover which theory is sufficient to analyse the cultural differences between countries and their interpretation of online advertisement. Theories used and studied in this paper are:

1. The Cultural Dimensions of Hofstede
2. Trompenaars Seven Dimensions of Culture
3. The Lewis Model

The three theories stated above apply to the concept of culture. The theories can be used to compare cultures and to analyse them. To have a better comprehension of these theories, they have been discussed and compared to each other.

### 2.3.1 The Cultural Dimensions of Hofstede

The first model is the cultural dimensions of Hofstede. Hofstede is a social psychologist and an international culture expert. He has executed a great extent of research on intercultural communication. In accordance to the book '*Culture's Consequences: comparing values, behaviours, institutions, and organisations across nations*' written by Hofstede, the objective of the cultural dimensions was to provide a clear overview of the cross-cultural differences. The model was developed to simplify the understanding of different cultures around the world. The cultural dimensions of Hofstede give an insight on how to act towards a certain culture provide an expectation on their behaviour (Hofstede, 2001). Based on the book '*Cultures and Organisations: Software for the Mind*', there are six different dimensions. Examples from the book '*Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede model in context*' support the dimensions stated below in order to clarify:

1. Power distance: The dimension of power distance focuses on the unequal distribution of power among the individuals in a society. The dimension of power distance analyses the extent to which less powerful members in the community accept the difference in the power distribution. In a high power distance culture, individuals are more accepting of unequal power distribution. Moreover, in large power distance cultures, the social hierarchy is important. Individuals that have a higher role in the hierarchy, such as teachers or employers, get respected more than individuals that are lower on the list of hierarchy. Members of a high power distance culture will believe what is stated by people that are high on the social hierarchy scale. Members of large power distance culture do not focus on detailed information and rather have options proposed to them than doing detailed research on them themselves. An example of a high power distance is that parents are superior over their children; the children have to obey the demands of the parents, and teachers will not socialise with their students in a casual environment. In low power distance cultures, independence and the equality between genders are highly important. In low power distance cultures, the communication between individuals with high and low roles in the hierarchy is more informal. Members of a low power distance culture do not appreciate to be controlled, and they will only accept detailed information that is based on facts and are objective. An example of a low power distance culture is that the parents would raise the children with the idea that they are equal to the parents and not submissive.
2. Individualism versus collectivism: The dimension of individualism versus collectivism focuses on the degree in how independent an individual acts among members which

belong to the society. In an individualistic society, people mainly focus on their self-image or their close relatives. Members of these societies are perceived as successful if they are strong and independent. It is expected that individuals take care of themselves; there is no strong cohesion between individuals. In a collectivistic society, it is common for the members to take care of the other members in their community in exchange for their loyalty. It is common to ensure the wellbeing and happiness of the family rather than the wellbeing of themselves as an individual. People are used to living in strongly united groups. Examples of individualism versus collectivism are that when an incident happens to a person, in an individualist society, the individuals are more likely to be focused on autonomy and being independent. The idea is to be able to take care of themselves as soon as possible. When it comes to a collectivist society, the attention will mainly be focussed on supporting the injured person and providing them with continuing assistance.

3. Uncertainty avoidance: The dimension of uncertainty avoidance focuses on to what extent a society feels threatened by what will happen in the future and by unknown situations. It analyses how societies deal with certain situations to avoid uncertainties. The dimensions measures if the society tries to control the future or if there is tolerance towards uncertainty. In a culture with high uncertainty avoidance, it is common that the members of a society try to avoid situations without a clear structure and prefer a deductive approach. These cultures maintain this behaviour by setting strict rules and laws, behaviour codes and uncommon opinions get disapproved. The members of these societies prefer clarity about their expectations and prefer an inductive approach. In a culture with low uncertainty avoidance, people feel more at ease in situations that are not entirely certain. Members from a low uncertainty avoidance society do not have a strong desire for a definitive outcome. The members of these societies are more likely to accept changes or risks, and it is not necessary to implicate rules.
4. Masculinity versus Femininity: The dimension of masculinity versus femininity is focused on the strength of differentiation between genders in a country. In a feminine society, the equality between the genders is high, and it is common for both men and women to have the same social or emotional roles. In these societies, it is common that household work is shared and that the quality of life is more important than to achieve or perform. An example of a feminine culture is the acceptance for men and women to cry. The emotional interactions in life are handled equally by both genders. In a masculine society, the main focus us on being the best and achievement. Both men and women are considered as

assertive; however the gender roles are still clearly unequal. In a masculine society, a man is supposed to be self-confident, ambitious and materialistic. Women are expected to be focused on taking care and maintaining the emotional aspects of life. An example of a masculine culture is that in a family, the mother will be more comfortable handling emotional interactions in life and the father will feel more comfortable with handling the factual aspects, such as planning and finances.

5. Long-term versus short term orientation: this dimension focuses on if the society prioritises concentrate on future challenges or focusing on the present challenges.
6. Indulgence: this dimension focusses on the extent to which the members of the society try to have power over their impulses and needs (Hofstede, 2004) (Hofstede, 2011) (Annex 2).

The theory has been analysed because it can be used when analysing the different responses on online advertisements and observe how the responses can be connected to the different cultural dimensions.

### **2.3.2 Trompenaars Seven Dimensions of Culture**

The second theory is Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's Seven Dimensions of Culture. Fons Trompenaars is a Dutch consultant and a management trainer while Charles Hampden-Turner is a British management consultant. The Trompenaars model can be used to understand the differences between cultures in order improve communication and understanding of each other's cultures. As reported, the objective was to do research on the different "natural cultural attitudes". Trompenaars and Hampden made the theory to show that there are a lot of cultural differences in the world. The understanding of these cultural differences are an essential part of effective intercultural marketing and business managing. The model was supposed to simplify the understanding and the expectations of the cultural differences (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997, p. 6). The Trompenaars model consists of seven dimensions. The dimensions stated below are supported by examples published by EPM (Expert Program Management) in order give clarification:

1. Universalism versus particularism: This dimension analyses how important a society think the obligations, laws, norms and rules of a country are and if they are more important than relationships. A society that is based on universalism intents to maintain equality between different classes, it does not matter how close this person is to another. These societies

are more focussed on rules than relationships. Examples of countries that are mainly based on universalism are Canada and Australia. A society that is based on particularism value relationships more than rules. The level of equality is lower in these societies, the rules can be broken or bend for people that have a close relationship. Examples of countries that are mainly based on particularism are China and Korea.

2. Individualism versus communitarianism: This dimension analyses to what extent a society thinks that you must take care of yourself and if the society believes in individual freedom and accomplishments or that they believe in that the interests of the group are more important than individual interest. In individualistic societies, people are convinced that the success in life is based on your personal choices. Members of these societies make decisions themselves without the advice of other individuals. Examples of Individualistic countries are the United States of America and the United Kingdom. In societies that are based on communitarianism, members of the society believe that life can be improved by working together and taking advice of other individuals. Examples of countries that are mainly based on communitarianism are Japan and Latin American countries.
3. Specific versus diffuse: This dimension analyses to which extent a society keeps their personal lives separated from their professional life. In societies with a specific culture, individuals clearly differentiate their personal life from the professional life. Members of these societies tend to be very direct in their way of communicating. Examples of countries with a specific culture are the United States of America and Germany. In societies with a diffuse culture, individuals do connect their personal and professional life. The members of this society believe that results in work life will improve when the relationships between colleagues are strong. Examples of countries with a diffuse culture are India and Spain.
4. Neutral versus affective: This dimension analyses to what extent the members from a society show their emotions to one another. In societies that are neutral, individuals are not used to sharing their emotions, the emotions do rarely get shared or showed. The members of these societies are seen as rational. Examples of countries with a neutral culture are The Netherlands and Germany. In societies that are affective, individuals are more comfortable with sharing and showing their emotions, even in professional surroundings. Examples of countries with an affective culture are Italy and Spain.
5. Achievement versus ascription: This dimension analyses if the members of a society obtain status because of achieving things and proving themselves or that it is given based on who

you are. In societies that are based on achievement you can obtain status by proving yourself. You get status based on your qualities. Examples of countries that are based on achievement are Sweden and Finland. In societies that are based on ascription a status cannot be obtained by achievements but because of who you are and what your place is in the society not because of the qualities you have.

6. Sequential time versus synchronous time: This dimension analyses if a society executes tasks one by one or if many tasks are executed at the same time (the 'time is money' concept). In a society that is based on sequential time, punctuality is the key to success. Being on time for appointments and meeting deadlines is expected from the members of these societies. Examples of countries that are based on sequential time are the United Kingdom and Germany. In a society that is based on synchronous time, time and punctuality does not play such an important role. The members of these societies do not differentiate the importance of the past the present and the future. Examples of countries that are based on synchronous time are India and Mexico.
7. Internal direction versus external direction: This dimension analyses the extent in which the society controls their environment or that the environment has control over the society. In a society based on internal direction, the members of the society are convinced that it is possible for them to adjust the environment to their needs and demands in order to reach their objectives. Being the best at something is something that is really important in these cultures. Examples of countries that are based on internal direction are Australia and the United States of America. In a society that is based external direction, the members of the society are convinced that they have to work with the environment they are in, that they are not able to change it. In these societies its most important to focus on relationships rather than winning to achieve their goals. Examples of countries that are based on external direction are Russia and Saudi Arabia. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997), (Hofstede, 2011) (Annex 3)

### 2.3.3 The Lewis Theory

The third theory is the Lewis theory. The Lewis theory is explained in the book '*When Cultures Collide*' written by Richard D. Lewis. Lewis is a social theorist and an English communication consultant. Lewis developed a chart about categorising the world its cultures in a chart. As explained in the book, the objective of Lewis to develop the theory was to make a division between people all over the world, however not according to nationality and religion, but focussed on

behaviour. Lewis believes that other theories on cross-cultural communication, such as Trompenaars, and Hofstede, can be easily confused, due to the many dimensions that exist. Lewis was convinced that there should also be a theory that is more compact and has more clarity (Lewis, 1996). The theory of Lewis consists out of three categories. The dimensions stated below are supported by examples stated by The American Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam:

1. Linear-activities: This category is devoted to the persons who plan, structure, schedule, organize and only do one thing at the time. In Linear-Active societies, individuals are factual, direct in communication and focussed on their professional life. In these societies everything is planned and already outlined for in the future, not meeting deadlines or sticking to the agenda is not appreciated. Countries that fit in to this category are the Germany and Switzerland.
2. Multi-activities: This category is devoted to the persons who are vivid, talkative people who are able to multi-task and can plan according to the importance of the appointment and not necessarily to a time. In Multi-Active societies, the communication is focused on the person, the individuals communicate emotionally and consider emotions as more important than facts. In these societies, future plans are only outlined in big lines, no strict agreements are made, and decisions are continuously made during the process. Countries that fit in this group are Italy and countries in Latin America.
3. Reactives: This category is devoted to the persons that prioritize politeness and respect. These persons are most often calm, listen quietly and react in a careful way to the other persons' proposal. In Reactive societies, the communication is indirect but polite at the same time, and the individuals are people-oriented. In these societies individuals plan according to the general principles, future plans are often discussed multiple times. The individuals consider personal contact as very important. Countries which fit in this group are Chinese, Japanese and Finland (Lewis, 1996) (The American Chamber of Commerce, 2013) (Annex 4)

## 2.4 Comparing and analysing theories

In Section 2.1 different cultural theories have been discussed which could be applied to the research on cultural influences on online advertisement. In order to answer the main question in the most efficient way and to obtain the optimal result, only one theory should be used. The three theories have been compared to determine which theory is the most applicable. All three theories

are related to the concept culture because they can be used to obtain a better understanding about culture and prevent misunderstandings and prejudices. The theories of Hofstede, Trompenaars and Lewis analyse culture dividing aspects into dimensions or categories. These three theories have been selected because of their usefulness to analyse the impact on online advertisement in connection to cultural aspect. The comparison of these theories has been done by looking at three aspects: completeness, actuality and relevancy.

#### **2.4.1 Trustworthiness**

In this section, the extent to which the theories are trustworthy has been considered. All the three theories are written systematically, and the content of the theories are controllable as books, articles and journals have been written about them. When looking in more details there can be stated that the cultural dimensions of Hofstede and the cultural dimensions of Trompenaars are popular theories and frequently used theories in the sector of intercultural communication. The Lewis theory has been mentioned in research and articles as well, however it has not been referred to as much as Trompenaars and Hofstede. For this reason there can be stated that the three theories that have been discussed in this research can be considered as trustworthy.

#### **2.4.2 Actuality**

This section focuses on the extent in which the theories are up to date. This analysis has shown that the Lewis theory is the most recent as the book 'When Cultures Collide' was published in 1996 (Lewis, 1996). Moreover the analysis showed that, the Cultural Dimensions of Hofstede was published multiple times in different periods according to the books published by Hofstede and Minkov. The original theory was released between 1967 and 1973. However, the information on the theories is still being refined. After more research was done, the theory went from four to six dimensions in 2010 (Hofstede, 2001) (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Furthermore, the seven dimensions of Trompenaars was published in 1993 in the book 'Riding the Waves of Culture' but has not been refined ever since (Trompenaars, 1993).

#### **2.4.3 Completeness**

In this section, the three theories have been analysed on scope and depth. The analysis shows that the scope of the Lewis Theory is slightly limited as the theory consists of three broad cultural aspects and therefore does not have a lot of depth. As well as this, there is only a limited amount of information retrievable online or in books. When looking at the theory of the cultural dimension of Hofstede and Trompenaars Cultural dimensions there is a clear significant difference. Both of

the theories consist out of six or seven cultural dimensions and are provided with a lot of depth as these theories have been studied and developed multiple times. Furthermore, both of these theories are authoritative. These theories are often used by researchers and in articles as a reference. There is a large amount of information available both online and in books on both of these theories.

#### **2.4.4 Comparison**

The three aspects that have been analysed – trustworthiness, actuality and completeness – have been compared to come to a final result. The cultural dimensions of Hofstede and the cultural dimensions Trompenaars are based on dimensions, however some of the dimensions that are used differ from each other. The Lewis theory is more focused on the different ways the cultures can be categorised and specifically on behaviour. The theories have similar features, for this reason the theories have been compared in an comparison table to see which theory is most complete and applicable to the objective of the research (Table 1). This table shows that both Trompenaars and Hofstede contain six of the seven cultural aspects. Because of this reason there has been a focus on the actuality, and Hofstede was the most actual theory. The first release of Hofstede is less recent then the first releases of Trompenaars and Lewis, however Hofstede appears to be more actual because of the refining that is still going on. For these reasons, there can be stated that the cultural dimensions of Hofstede is the theory most applicable to execute the research successfully.

**Table 1:** Comparison table of Hofstede, Trompenaars and Lewis

CULTURAL APECTS	HOFSTEDE	TROMPENAARS	LEWIS
The extent in which power is distributed in a society.			
The way in which a society perceives the importance of time.			
The way in which a society deals with emotions.			
The way a society relates and reacts to their environment.			
The extent in which a society perceive accomplishments as important .			
The extent in which a society feels the desire to have strictness and regulations.			
The extent in how independent a societal acts among members which belong to the society			

## 2.5 Motivation of advertisements

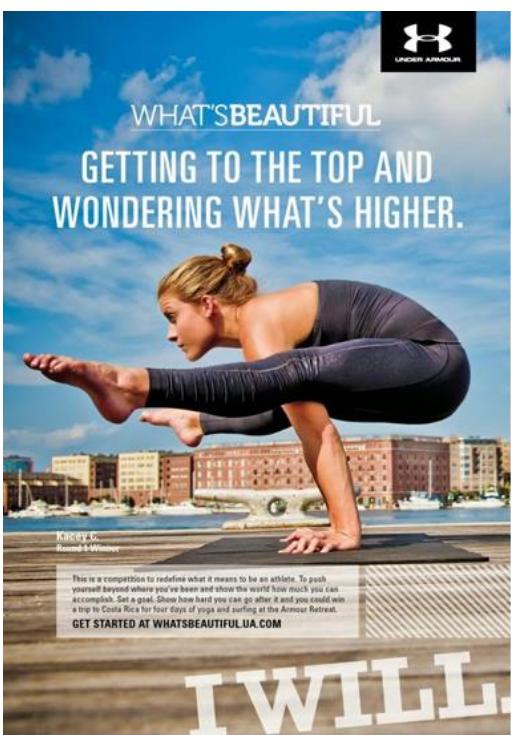
In this section, the motivation for the advertisements selected for the primary research has been explained in detail. The advertisements have been selected accordingly to the cultural dimensions of Hofstede. The advertisements for the questionnaire have been chosen according to the characteristics of the cultural dimensions explain in Section 2.1 in the theoretical framework.

### Advertisement 1 – Individualism



**Figure 2:** Advertisement individualism. (Starbucks, 2018).

The Starbucks advertisement on the left has been selected to represent individualistic culture. When you look at the advertisement the first thing that catches your eye is the slogan. The slogan states "The best coffee for the best **you**". The stress on the word "you" reflects the individualism in this advertisement and focuses on the self-image and independency rather than a group interest. Furthermore, It stresses the importance of what is best for "you", hence the individual. From this, there can be stated that this advertisement will rather appeal to a individualistic audience than a collectivistic audience.

**Advertisement 2 – Individualism**

**Figure 3:** Advertisement individualism (Under Armour, 2013).

This online advertisement represents the individualistic culture. Looking at the visual aspect of the advertisement, a woman performing a difficult position for which you have to be disciplined and strong can be seen. The way the woman is depicted, represents a strong and independent individual which is one of the characteristics of individualism. Moreover, the text underneath the woman states "To push yourself beyond where you've been and show the world how much you can accomplish". This statement reflects the importance of the self-image and personal accomplishment. This advertisement is focused on the importance of the individual and is therefore a good representation of individualism.

**Advertisement 3 – Collectivism**

**Figure 4:** Advertisement collectivism (McDonald's, 2009).

This online advertisement has been selected to represent collectivism. The visual aspect of the advertisement reflects a strong collectivistic image. The advertisement displays a happy family having dinner at McDonald's. This picture shows a family laughing together, which will be considered as more attractive to a collectivistic culture because the members are used to living in strongly united groups. Furthermore the text states: "happy family, happy me" which is an expression that clearly reflects collectivism. In collectivistic cultures it is important to ensure the wellbeing and happiness of your family rather than ensuring the personal wellbeing.

**Advertisement 4 – Collectivism**

**Figure 5:** Advertisement collectivism (Coca Cola, 2017).

This online advertisement represents collectivism. When analysing the visual aspect, the picture used reflects a strong, cohesive group. The advertisement displays a group of smiling friends who appear to be having a great time, sharing their happiness (in this advertisement, it is in the form of a beverage). The idea of sharing happiness with in a group rather than promoting individualistic need reflects the idea of taking care of each other and the importance of the loyalty to the group.

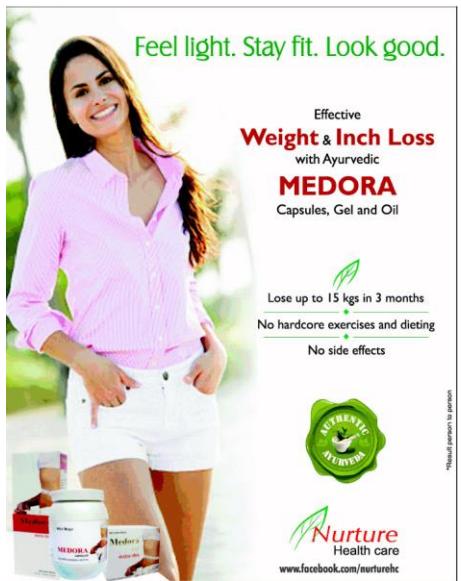
**Advertisement 5 – High uncertainty avoidance**

**Figure 6:** Advertisement high uncertainty avoidance (L'Oréal Paris, 2012).

The L'Oréal advertisement displayed on the left has been selected to represent high uncertainty avoidance. This advertisement is based on a deductive approach. It shows three facts about the product to ensure that the customer has access to information on the product, therefore preventing uncertainties. A deductive and clear approach is an approach that characterises a high uncertainty culture. Besides that, the visual aspect is systematic and

structured, derived from the numeric technique of displaying the effect of the product. The general design of this advertisement is clear and creates a trustworthy feeling.

### Advertisement 6 – High uncertainty avoidance



**Figure 7:** Advertisement high uncertainty avoidance (Nurture Health Care, 2020).

The Nurture Healthcare advertisement displayed has been selected to represent high uncertainty avoidance and is based on a deductive approach. The advertisement is showing facts for example: "Lose up to 15 kgs in 3 months" Furthermore, the advertisement provides a clear and structured explanation of the functioning of the product making the information about the product 'controllable'. The advertisement provides structured and relevant information to the customer, such as the effects, the intentions and the content of the product. The visuals of this advertisement is classic and systematic; there is no unnecessary information. The woman depicted in the advertisement adds a positive feeling. The way the advertisement is displayed gives an overall clear and trustworthy impression.

### Advertisement 7 – Low uncertainty avoidance



**Figure 8:** Advertisement low uncertainty avoidance (KFC, 2018).

advertisement there are no facts stated (for example ingredients, calories or ingredients), which is accepted in a low uncertainty avoidance community as members from these societies are accepting towards impulsiveness and do not desire a specific outcome. This is a Danish KFC advertisement which is presenting a new burger called "Dirty Louisiana", showing the tolerance to new ideas and possibilities.

This online KFC advertisement has been selected to represent low uncertainty avoidance. This KFC advertisement is structured and in terms of functionality, for example the footer makes the site practical to use. However, the visualisation of the advertisement shows flexibility and is more risky and creative seen in the use of a bright layout that contains a lot of colour. In the

**Advertisement 8 – Low uncertainty avoidance**

**Figure 9:** Advertisement low uncertainty avoidance (Apple, 2020).

The latest iPhone advertisement has been chosen to represent low uncertainty avoidance. The design is creative, colourful yet functional. Using this kind of design shows the acceptance for innovation, flexibility and creativity. The advertisement itself does not show any factual information besides the name of the product, which can be perceived as unclear. Moreover,

the slogan of the advertisement states “just the right amount of everything”, which does not contain any factual or clear information. These two contextual aspects show the tolerance to uncertainty and inductivity which is accepted in a low uncertainty avoidance culture.

**Advertisement 9 – Femininity**

**Figure 10:** Advertisement femininity (Mr. Clean, 2020).

The advertisement concerning Mr. Clean has been selected to represent feminine culture. In this advertisement, a man depicted as the face of a cleaning product. This represents the equality

between genders in a feminine culture. In these cultures it is common that the household work is shared over both genders, not only the woman (which is stereotypical in a masculine culture). Moreover, the slogan states “the muscle to knock out every mess in the house”, demonstrating that cleaning is not uncommon for a man and that it does not make the man less masculine by making the slogan sound ‘manly’.

### Advertisement 10 – Femininity



**Figure 11:** Advertisement femininity (Haribo, 2017).

This Haribo Gold-Bears advertisement represents feminine culture. This advertisement states “Kids and grown-ups love it so, the happy world of Haribo”. According to the slogan everybody loves the candy and the product will make their life “happier”. The

advertisement is not focused on success in life but rather on satisfaction and the quality of life. The focus on being happy in life rather than performance or achievement is a clear characteristic of a feminine culture. Also, the slogan shows that the product is for both adults and kids, which reflects the aspect of caring and sharing that is common in feminine culture.

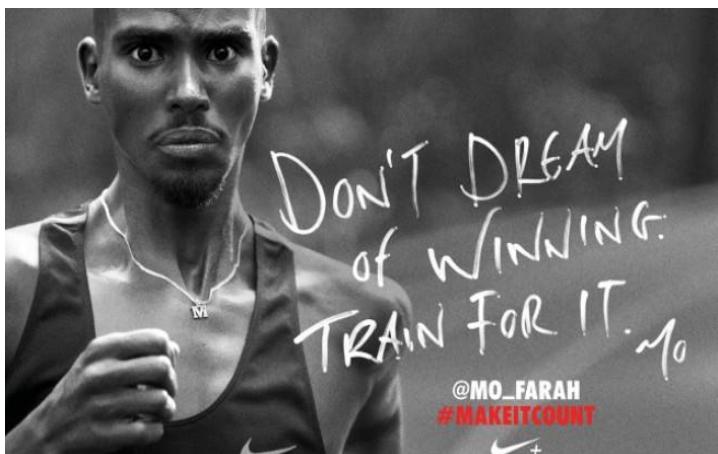
### Advertisement 11 – Masculinity



**Figure 12:** Advertisement masculinity (Volvo, 2018).

The displayed Volvo advertisement has been selected to represent masculine culture. The slogan reads “The best in luxury. At the best price”, which aims to show that their product is superior and that there are no other cars with the same quality for a good price. The stress the advertisement puts on being the best, shows one of the key characteristics of a masculine society. Moreover, the advertisement above states “buyer will be

the first owner”, which gives the customer a feeling of buying an exclusive product; the customers get addressed on their materialistic and competitive needs. Materialism and competitiveness are characteristics of a masculine culture.

**Advertisement 12 – Masculinity**

**Figure 13:** Advertisement masculinity (Nike, 2012).

advertisement above is a famous athlete. Through the use of a well-known person, the advertisement stresses the need for achievement even more. When displaying that a successful athlete uses Nike gear and accomplishes his goals, people will be aspired to use the same brand and items to attain a similar level of success to their role models.

**Advertisement 13 – High power distance**

**Figure 14:** Advertisement high power distance (Nespresso, 2016).

convince the customer of the quality of the product is common in large power distance cultures. Members of a large power distance culture will believe what is stated by people that are high on the social hierarchy scale because of their authority, even if there are no facts or details.

The Nike advertisement above has been selected to represent masculine culture. The statement in the advertisement states: "Don't dream of winning, train for it". The statement is focused on winning, which reflects that when the Nike product will be used, the customer will achieve and accomplish. Achievement and accomplishment are key characteristics of a masculine culture. The man depicted in the

The Nespresso advertisement displayed above has been selected to represent high power distance. The advertisement above depicts famous actor George Clooney. George Clooney's success and status have been used to convince the customer that the product is the best. Using celebrities in advertisements to

**Advertisement 14 – High power distance****Figure 15:** Advertisement high power distance (Oral-B, 2019).

recommended toothbrush brand". In a high power distance culture individuals are tempted to believe the statements from other individuals with a higher social status.

This Oral-B advertisement has been selected to represent high power distance. In the advertisement a dentist can be seen, namely, Dr. Elizabeth Milford. The use of the dentist illustrates the use of expert endorsement to garner customer interest. The slogan reads "dentist

**Advertisement 15 – Low power distance****Figure 16:** Advertisement low power distance (Taco Bell, 2019).

The Taco Bell advertisement has been chosen to represent low power distance. The advertisement provides the customer with options to create their personal meal. The approach of giving customer the freedom to customise their meal fits into the characteristics of a low power distance culture. In low

power distance culture individual desire to have control over their decisions and not be controlled by others. Moreover the advertisement displayed above is transparent, providing the customer with an extensive and detailed description on what the product contains. Members from low power distance societies prefer to have detailed information about the product to ensure themselves they are decently informed before making a decision.

**Advertisement 16 – Low power distance**

**Figure 17:** Advertisement low power distance (NikeiD, 2011).

The NikeiD advertisement above has been selected to represent low power distance. The concept of NikeiD is to give the customer the possibility to customise their shoes. Customers are provided with the option to select their material, colours, patterns and personal text. The possibility for the customer to personalised their items correlates with the need of members from low power distance societies to control over their decisions and to receive detailed information on the possible options. Furthermore, the advertisement above states “Our best products: built by you, made to order”, which reflects the customers authority over the design of the shoe. As a result, the customer will feel that they have made the decision independently, and independence is a key characteristic of low power distance cultures.

**Table 2: Operationalisation table**

Central Question	Cultural dimensions	Examples	Question	Advertisem ent
How does culture have an influence on online advertisement?	Individualism vs. Collectivism	<p><b>Individualism:</b> In an individualistic society, people mainly focuses on their self-image or on their close relatives. Members of these society are perceived as successful if they are strong and independent. Individuals take care of themselves, there is not strong cohesion between individuals.</p> <p><b>Collectivism:</b> In a collectivistic society, it is common for the members to take care of the other members in their society in exchange for their loyalty. It is common in these societies to ensure the wellbeing and happiness of the family rather than the wellbeing of themselves as an individual person.</p>	How would you rate this advertisement from 1 to 4?	1 2 3 4
How does culture have an influence on online advertisement?	Uncertainty avoidance	<p><b>High uncertainty avoidance:</b> In a high uncertainty avoidance culture, members of a society will try to avoid any situation without clear structure and rather have a deductive approach. This cultures set strict rules, laws, behaviour codes. These societies prefer clarity, uncommon opinions get disapproved.</p> <p><b>Low uncertainty avoidance:</b> In a culture with a low uncertainty avoidance, people feel more at ease in situations that are not fully certain and would not mind a inductive approach. Members from these societies do not have a strong desire for a definitive outcome. The members of the society are more likely to accept changes or risks, it is not necessary to implicate rules when it is not necessary.</p>	How would you rate this advertisement from 1 to 4?	1 2 3 4
How does culture have an influence on online advertisement?	Masculinity vs. Femininity	<p><b>Femininity:</b> High equality between gender, women and men are able to have the same social and emotional roles. In a feminine society, it is accepted for both girls and boys to cry, the emotional interactions in life are handled by both men and women.</p> <p><b>Masculinity:</b> Low equality between genders, women will be treated as less as men. In a masculine society the mother will be more comfortable handling emotional interactions in life and the father will feel more comfortable with handling the factual aspects, such as planning and finances.</p>	How would you rate this advertisement from 1 to 4?	1 2 3 4
How does culture have an influence on online advertisement?	Power distance	<p><b>Large power distance:</b> In a large power distance culture, individuals accept the unequal power distribution more than in a small power distance culture. Examples of Power distance are that in large power distance cultures parents are superior over their children, the children have to obey to the demands of the parents</p> <p><b>Small power distance:</b> In a small power distance cultures, the power is distributed there is a higher equality. In these societies the parents raise the children with the idea that they are equal to the parents, not submissive.</p>	How would you rate this advertisement from 1 to 4?	1 2 3 4

## **Methodology**

The aim of this research is to give a clear insight on the influence of culture on online advertisement. The countries that are studied are The Netherlands and Spain and has a particular emphasis on students. The following part of the research will give a detailed insight on the methods that have been used in this research.

### **3.1 Research strategy**

Saunders, Lewi sand Thornhill stated that “Qualitative”, is a term frequently used as a synonym for a way to a data collection technique or a procedure to analyse data that generates or uses non-numerical data” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, p. 414). For this research, qualitative research has been used as the research question is mainly focused on individuals’ perception of the world rather than numeric information. The case study is executed in the form of a focus group which focuses on the relationship between the participants’ meanings and how their meaning can relate to their cultural background. However there has been used some quantitative research to be able to process the participants meanings into statistics which make the results more clear.

### **3.2 Research methods**

In order to conduct useful information, different research methods have been chosen. There has been used descriptive research to describe the characteristics of culture and of effective advertisement. For the foundation of the research, secondary research has been chosen, more specifically, in the form of desk research. According to Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, secondary data has advantages to it. The advantages of secondary research are that in general it is economical, it saves time and money. The data used has been researched and collected before, saving the author time when searching for all the information and provides the author with more time to analyse the information. Moreover, the information has been analysed and given contextual background in the past, which can lead to interesting discoveries when analysed again. However, the disadvantage of secondary data is that the information has been collected before in order to research specific objectives and questions that are different than the intention of your research. This could result in the data not be useable for your research. Another obstacle is that a lot of academical articles are hard to access and are expensive to buy (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2003). Additionally, primary research has been carried out in the form of a focus group to measure the responses on the advertisements that have been selected according to the theory of the cultural dimensions of Hofstede. According to Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, primary research

has some advantages and disadvantages. Advantages of primary research are that the information retrieved is specific to the objective. Also the data has been collected by the author of the research and therefore the rights of the information belong to the author. Disadvantages of primary research are that it is often costly and time consuming to retrieve and analyse all the data. Moreover if the participants are not honest, it may complicate the final results.

### 3.3 Data collection

#### 3.3.1 Secondary research

The most frequently used author is Hofstede as the research is based on the theory of the cultural dimensions of Hofstede. As stated before in the theoretical framework (Chapter 2.2.1), Hofstede is social psychologist and an international culture expert. He has executed a great extent of research on intercultural communication. In this research information from the following books and articles from Hofstede have been used:

- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work- Related Value*. Beverley Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviours, institutions, and organizations across nations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, G. (2004). *Cultures and Organizations: Software for the Mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*.
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede G. J., & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Besides Hofstede, other cultural theories have also been considered. The theory of the seven dimensions of culture of Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden Turner has been researched. As stated above in the theoretical framework (Chapter 2.2.2) Trompenaars is a Dutch consultant and a management trainer and Charles Hampden-Turner is a British management consultant. Another theory that has been researched is the Lewis theory, written by Richard Donald Lewis. As stated before in the theoretical framework (Chapter 2.2.3) Lewis is a social theorist and an English communication consultant. In this research information on these theories from the following books and articles have been used:

- Hampden -Turner C. & Trompenaars, F.(1993) *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding diversity in Global Business*. First edition, London: Irwin Professional Publishing.
- Hampden-Turner C. & Trompenaars, F. (1997) *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business*. Second edition, London: Nicholas Brealy Publishing Limited.
- Lewis, R. D. (1996). *When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures*. Finland: WS Bookwell.
- Saunders, M, Thornhill, A. & Lewis, P. (2003). *Research methods for Business Students*. Edinburgh Gate : Pearson Education Limited .
- The American Chamber of Commerce . (2013). *The Lewis Model: How to understand every culture in the world*.

Moreover, articles from the following institutions have been used to give a more clear explanation on different concepts.

- *Commisceo Global*. According to their website they are an organisation that focusses on “bringing togetherness on a global scale through interaction, understanding and knowledge transfer” ( Commisceo Global, 2019).
- *Cultural Atlas*. As mentioned on their website, Cultural Atlas is an organisation that has the objective to provide the world with education on “cross-cultural attitudes, practices, norms, behaviours and communications” (Cultural Atlas, 2020).
- *Eurostat*. As stated on their website “Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Union situated in Luxembourg. Its mission is to provide high quality statistics for Europe” (Eurostat, 2018).
- *Expert Program Management*. EPM is an organisation that is dedicated to “share information on program management” (Expert Program Management, 2019).
- *Hofstede insights*. As explained on their website, Hofstede Insights is an organisation that analyses the cultural dimensions of Hofstede. The site its objective is to create a better understanding of the cultural habits of different groups that are in their information bank (Hofstede Insights, 2019).
- *Holland Expat Centre South*. Holland Expat Center South as stated by their website “a non-profit governmental agency. It is a joint initiative of the participating municipalities, the

Immigration and Naturalisation Services (IND), Brain port Development" (Holland Expat Center South, 2019).

- *LSE – the London School of Economics and Political Science.* According to their website, LSE is a University located in London that is specialized in social sciences (LSE, 2017).

Furthermore, sixteen online advertisements related to the cultural dimensions have been retrieved via Google Image search in order to be able to execute the primary research. Moreover videos from Inside Edition have been used solely to illustrate the misinterpreted advertisements discussed in the problem definition. The remaining academic articles conducted during this research are stated in the reference list.

### **3.3.2. Primary research**

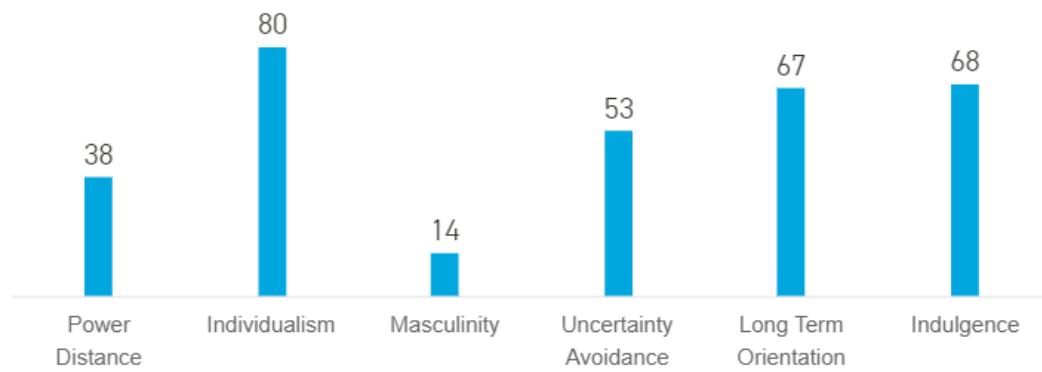
In order to answer the central question, field research in the form of a focus group has been executed. The objective of the focus group was to measure and compare the reactions of the two groups of participants with different nationalities on online advertisements related to the cultural dimensions of Hofstede. The reason behind choosing to execute a focus group was the ability to select the participants based on demographic factors. The demographic factors were an essential factor for the results of the research. For the focus group the candidates have been selected on age, gender and nationality. During the focus group two groups of twelve participants have been questioned. The two focus groups consisted of six Dutch students and six Spanish students. The participants were selected on age, gender, nationality and educational level. The age of the participants was between 18 to 29 years old and all study at a University of Applied Sciences.

Additionally, all of the academic sources cited had clear author information and are certified. Databases that have been used for this research are mainly academic, the sources used are retrieved from high quality journals of professional papers, journals and essays by either graduates or people with expertise in the specific area. However, some non-academic sources have been used in order to explain basic concepts or to illustrate the information for the reader in a non-academic way. In this research, biased online sources have not been utilised. All the sources that have been used were written in English.

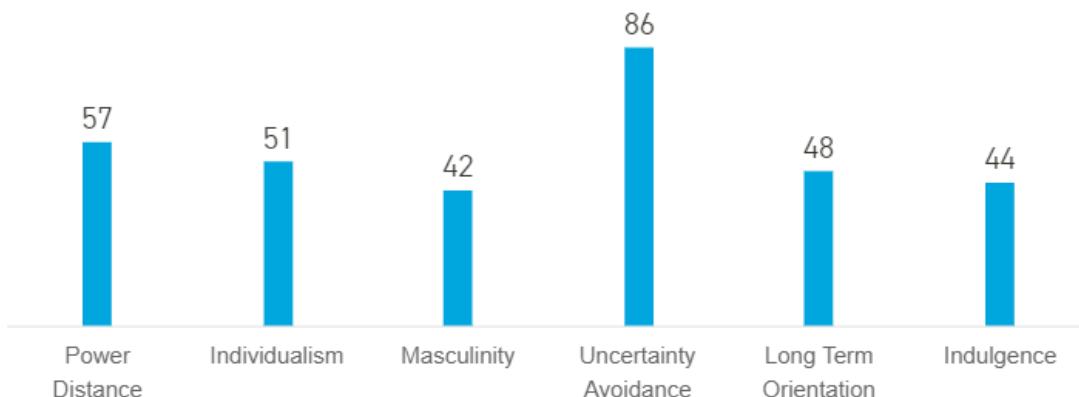
### 3.4 Scope and limitations

#### 3.4.1 The Specification of the countries

In the research on the matter if culture has an influence online advertisement, a case study focused on the Netherlands and Spain has been executed. The reasoning behind the choice of the two countries – The Netherlands and Spain – is that the cultures of these countries are highly different when considering the cultural dimensions of Hofstede. The ‘cultural compass’, a cultural analysis tool found on the official Hofstede index was used and according to Hofstede Insights, The Netherlands and Spain have obvious differences when comparing the scores (Hofstede Insights, 2020).



**Figure 18:** What about the Netherlands? (Hofstede Insights, 2020).



**Figure 19:** What about Spain? (Hofstede Insights, 2020).

Figure 18 and Figure 19 illustrate the difference in terms of cultural dimensions between the two countries. According to Hofstede Insights, a score of hundred indicates 'high' and a score of zero indicates 'low'. Comparing the graphs in these figures, it can be concluded that the countries show a significant difference in all the cultural dimensions (Figure 18)(Figure 19). Besides the analysis of Hofstede Insights, further research on some of the cultural dimensions has been done to prevent subjectivity from one source. Take femininity versus masculinity as an example. According to the analysis of Holland Expat Centre South, in The Netherlands, it is considered important to treat men and women equally. Men and women are supposed to have the same privileges in The Netherlands (Holland Expat Centre South, 2019). In Spain, according to CommisCEO Global, there is low equality between men and women. Women are expected to take care of the children at home and the men are supposed to work and provide for the family. Although women are obtaining more independence and men are becoming less dominant over women, there is still no actual equality (CommisCEO Global, 2019). The statements above support the analysis of Hofstede Insights that the Masculinity in Spain is 28 points higher than in The Netherlands. Furthermore, the dimension of power distance has been further researched. Holland Expat Centre South states that in The Netherlands, it is perceived as normal that people address other individuals by their first name regardless of their stance in the social hierarchy. Almost everybody is addressed informally (Holland Expat Centre South, 2019). However in Spain, it is common for people to speak formal to one another when they are not closely related. With regards to the elderly, people who are higher on the scale of social hierarchy and people in business environment, there is a higher ranking of getting addressed formally (CommisCEO Global, 2019). The statements above support the analysis of Hofstede Insights that the power distance in Spain is significantly higher than the power distance in The Netherlands.

### 3.4.2 Cultural dimensions

There has been chosen to solely conduct further research on four of the six dimensions of the Cultural Dimension of Hofstede. The cultural dimensions long-term versus short-term orientation and indulgence have been excluded. Further research on long-term versus short term orientation and indulgence has not been conducted because the characteristics of this dimension have appeared to be complicated to translate or recognise in advertisements and could, therefore, possibly decrease the quality of the results.

### **3.4.3 Focus group**

This research has been given more depth by doing primary research on the cultural effects on online advertisement. A case study has been executed in the form of a focus group that looks into the reactions to advertisements that are related to the cultural dimensions of Hofstede. The target group has been chosen to be composed of students because research on social media use conducted by LSE showed that students between the age of 18 to 29 are most frequently exposed to online advertisement as this group individuals who make the most use of social media (LSE, 2017). Moreover, the groups have been formed with three males and three females from both countries to maintain an equal gender division to keep the results as neutral as possible. For the case study, two focus groups have been created, consisting of six students from The Netherlands and six students from Spain. It has been decided that two focus groups be executed at different times to analyse if there is a difference. The two focus groups have been compared to increase the validity of the results. The first focus groups were executed at 12 P.M. and the second focus groups were executed at 8 P.M. in a room with good lightning, after having lunch so the students are least likely to be influenced by tiredness or hunger. The participants were informed about the fact that their answers will be strictly used for academic purposes only and that they have the right to stay anonymous. The participants of the focus group have been exposed to sixteen advertisements in total. The two cultural groups have been exposed to four pictures per cultural dimension. Every dimension explains two dimensions. For example, the dimensions individualism versus collectivism explains a collectivistic society and a individualistic society. Two pictures per type of society are chosen which show with the characteristics of collectivism and two that show the characteristics of individualism. Two advertisements per type of culture have been chosen to exclude the option of accidental personal preference on certain advertisements that is not related to the influence of culture. During the focus group, the participants will get the option to rate the advertisements on a scale of one to four. This choice has been made so there is not an option of voting the middle route, which could have had an potential influence of the results of the focus group, making them unclear.

### **3.4.4. Limitations**

#### **3.4.4.1 The focus of the research**

This researched has a sole focus on the cultural aspects of online advertisement and not the quality of the advertisements. Looking into the quality of the advertisements and the decision to exclude further research on the quality of the advertisements could have effects on the results of the case study. However a decision has been made that including the quality of the advertisements

would change the scope of the research and would make the research question too broad and could therefore, have the possibility to influence the results of the research. For that reason, the decision to execute more in-depth research on the cultural influence has been made. However it has been decided that including the quality of the advertisements would change the scope of the research and would make the research question too broad. For this reason, it has been decided that looking into the quality of advertisements is beyond the scope of this research.

#### **3.4.4.2 Focus group**

The intention was to execute the focus group experiment twice to obtain the best result, however due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, there was no possibility to reach out to a second target group in Spain. Besides that, the situation around the coronavirus could also physically influence the answers of the students.

## Results

In this section of the research, all information that has been retrieved from the focus groups on the influences of culture on online advertisements will be presented per cultural dimension.

### 4.1 Individualism versus collectivism

#### *Individualism*

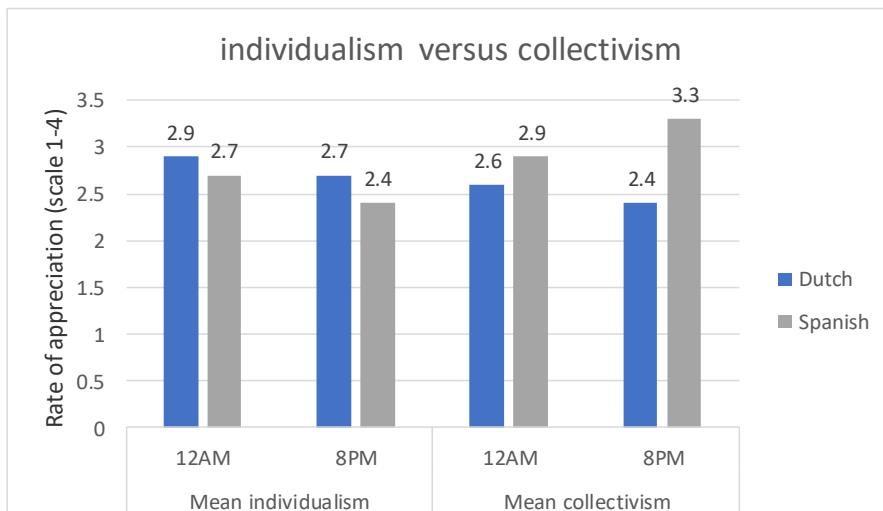
The advertisements selected to represent individualism, in general, received an appreciation of 2.7 points on average. The difference between the appreciation of the two cultures was 0.2 points on average. The score of the focus group at 12 A.M. was on average 0.25 higher than the score of the 8 P.M. focus group.

#### *Collectivism*

The advertisements selected to represent collectivism were appreciated with 2.8 points on average. The appreciation rewarded by the two cultures differed with an average of 0.7 points. The score of the focus group at 8 P.M. was on average 0.3 higher than the score of the 12 A.M. focus group.

#### *Dutch versus Spanish*

The Dutch participants on average rewarded the advertisement focused on individualism with 0.3 points more than the advertisements focused on collectivism. The Spanish participants on average rewarded the advertisements focused on collectivism with 0.5 points more than the advertisement focused on individualism.



**Figure 20:** Results focus group individualism versus collectivism.

## 4.2 Low- versus high uncertainty avoidance

### *Low uncertainty avoidance*

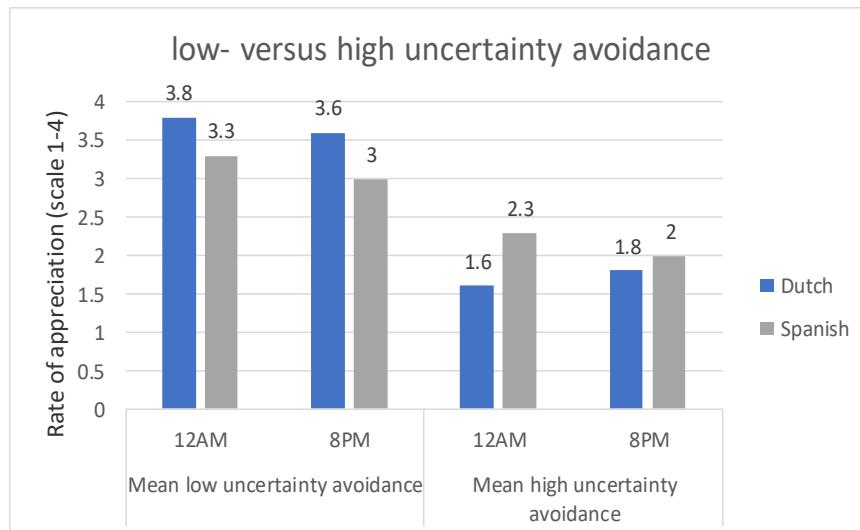
The advertisements selected to represent low uncertainty avoidance, in general, were appreciated with 3.4 points on average. The score of the Dutch and the Spanish differed by 0.5 points from each other, on average. The score of the focus group at 12 A.M. was, on average, 0.25 points higher than the score of the 8 P.M. focus group.

### *High uncertainty avoidance*

The advertisements selected to represent high uncertainty avoidance received an appreciation of 1.9 points on average. The difference between the responses of the Spanish and the Dutch participants was 0.5 points. The score of the focus group at 12 A.M. was 0.25 points higher than the score of the 8 P.M. focus group.

### *Dutch versus Spanish*

The Dutch participants, on average, rewarded the advertisement focused on low uncertainty avoidance with 1.5 points more than the advertisements focused on high uncertainty avoidance. The Spanish participants on average rewarded the focused on high uncertainty advertisements with 1 point more than the advertisement focused on low uncertainty avoidance.



**Figure 21:** Results focus group low- versus high uncertainty avoidance.

### 4.3 Masculinity versus femininity

#### *Masculinity*

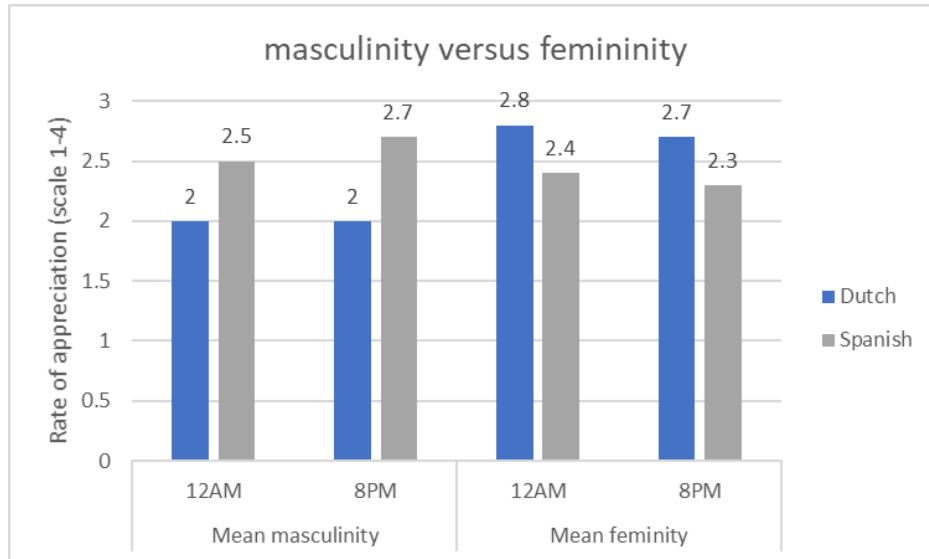
The advertisements selected to represent masculinity, in general, received an appreciation of 2.3 points on average. The difference between the scores of the Spanish participants and the Dutch participants was 0.5 points, on average. The score of the focus group at 8 P.M. was 0.2 points higher than the score of the 12 A.M. focus group.

#### *Femininity*

The advertisements selected to represent femininity in general appreciated with 2.3 points on average. The appreciation rewarded by the Spanish participants and the Dutch participants differed with an average of 0.4 points. The score of the focus group at 12 A.M. was 0.1 points higher than the score of the 8 P.M. focus group.

#### *Dutch versus Spanish*

The Dutch participants, on average, rewarded the advertisement focused on femininity with 0.8 points more than the advertisements focused on masculinity. The Spanish participants on average rewarded the focused on masculinity with 0.3 points more than the advertisement focused on femininity.



**Figure 22:** Results focus group masculinity versus femininity.

#### 4.4 Low- versus high power distance

##### *Low power distance*

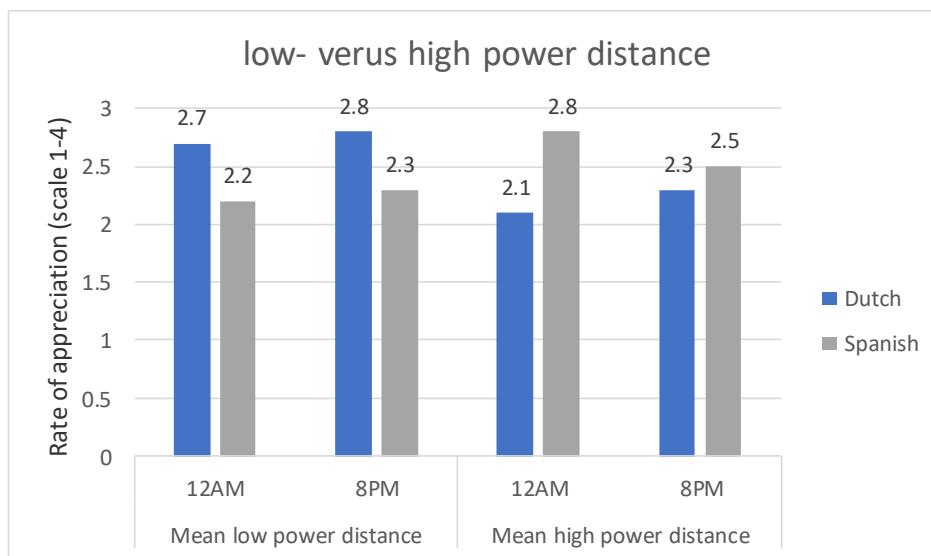
The advertisements selected to represent low power distance were, in general, appreciated with 2.6 points, on average. The scores from the Dutch participants and the Spanish participants differed 0.5 points. The score of the focus group at 8 P.M. was on average 0.1 points higher than the scores of the 12 A.M. focus group.

##### *High power distance*

The advertisements selected to represent high power distance received an appreciation of 2.4 points, on average. The difference between the scores of the Spanish participants and the Dutch participants was 0.4 points, on average. The score of the Spanish focus group at 12 A.M. was 0.3 points higher than the score of the Spanish focus group at 8 P.M. The score of the Dutch focus group at 8 P.M. was 0.2 points higher than the score of the Dutch focus group at 12 A.M.

##### *Dutch versus Spanish*

The Dutch participants, on average, rewarded the advertisement focused on low power distance with 0.6 points more than the advertisements focused on high power distance. The Spanish participants, on average, rewarded the focused on high power distance with 0.4 points more than the advertisement focused on low power distance.



**Figure 23:** Results focus group low- versus high power distance.

## Analysis

### 5.1 Reliability, validity and credibility

In this part of the research the quality of the research has been analysed by considering the reliability, validity and credibility.

#### 5.1.1 Reliability

Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis state that research is reliable when it can be reproduced. This means that if another person were to execute the research again with the same data collecting method and analytical strategies, the results would still be the same. Moreover the research should have a structured methodology (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis 2019). Therefore, the data collecting approach and the analytical strategies have been analysed on reliability.

#### *Secondary research*

In order to give answers to sub-question one and two, desk research has been used and is the foundation of the research. The quality of sources has been ensured by gathering those of good quality. The sources have either been written by highly accredited institutions or authors from whom their credentials have been checked. For that reason, it can be assumed that the content of the sources will not be altered in the future. Therefore if a person would execute the same research again on the same subject with the same sources used during the process of desk research, there is high possibility of obtaining equal results. However, should one of the authors decide to update one of the sources because of new discoveries, the results might slightly differ.

#### *Primary research*

The data collection method that has been chosen was a focus group. As stated before in the scope and limitations in Section 3.4, the intention of the research was to execute four focus groups, however, due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the measures that were put in place as a result, there were complications in executing a higher amount of focus groups. Therefore, two focus groups of twelve people have been executed. The focus groups have been selected based on age, gender, nationality and educational level. Every focus group consisted of twelve people: three female Spanish students, three male Spanish students, three female Dutch students and three male Dutch students all between the age of 18 to 29. Executing two focus groups consisting of participants with the same geographical characteristics at two different times, one at 12 A.M. and one at 8 P.M. was also a choice that has been made. Two focus groups were executed in order to be able to compare the results, therefore, increasing the reliability of the data collected. When

looking at the results in detail, there can be stated that the difference between the two focus groups is not consistent. Five out of eight times the score from the 12 A.M. was higher with an average of 0.2. points. The other three times, the score of the 8 P.M. focus group was higher. Therefore it can be seen that there is not a clear consistency in the difference between the two focus groups. The execution of two focus groups instead of four could have had an influence of the reliability and therefore the quality of the research.

### **5.1.2 Validity**

Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis explain that there are three different categories of validity: construct validity, internal validity and external validity (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2019). Accordingly to these three categories the validity of the research has been analysed.

#### *Construct validity*

According to Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, construct validity is “the extent to which the research measures actually measured what the researcher intended them to assess” (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2019, p.166 ). The research measures that have been used were intended to assess if culture has an influence on online advertisement by comparing The Netherlands and Spain. With primary research there has been explained what the expected outcome was for both countries considering the cultural dimensions of Hofstede. The results of the focus group have illustrate if the countries actually showed their appreciation towards the advertisements as expected. With these results it has been possible to intend what was assessed.

#### *Intern validity*

*This is the case when the research displays a causal relationship between two variables* (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2019, p.166 ). There is no cause-effect relationship between the two variables used in the research and for this reason the intern validity cannot be analysed. Therefore there has been chosen to substitute internal validity by the category ‘credibility’ as suggested by the book ‘*Research Methods for Business Students*’ (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2019).

#### *External validity*

*Concerned with questions such as: “Are the research findings generalised?”, “Would a researcher find the same in other relevant settings or groups?”* (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2019, p.166). The research executed is focused on groups with specific demographical characteristics. For this

reason the same setting in other groups of relevant setting will naturally have another result as outcome. Therefore it has been chosen to substitute external validity by the category ‘transferability’ as suggested by the book ‘*Research Methods for Business Students*’ (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2019).

### **5.1.3 Credibility**

According to Lincoln and Guba, credibility is the extent in which the results of the research are believable. It is the extent to in which the sources that have been used are of good quality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) . As explained in detail in Chapter 4.2, the sources that have been used in secondary research have been checked on trustworthiness, completeness and actuality. Moreover the credentials of the authors have been checked and it has been made sure that the source are not easy to tamper with. However, the sources of the advertisements used were difficult to check for credentials as some of the advertisements were not displayed on page of the original author, which could have a negative influence on the credibility. Moreover, during the execution for the focus group, the participants were informed about the fact that their answers will be strictly used for academic purposes only and that they have the right to stay anonymous. For this reason the chance that participants will answer a honest as possible will increase. Moreover, the participants have been given the possibility to request for the results of the focus group, this process is called respondent validation. By using respondent validation the credibility of the research has been increased. Lastly, during the research there has only been focussed on the cultural aspects and not on the quality of the advertisements as explained in the scope and limitations. This decision could have had a possible influence on the final results on the research and therefore could increase the credibility.

### **5.1.4 Transferability**

Lincoln and Guba explain that transferability is the extent in which a research has the potential to be applicable in another context. A clear description of the data collecting approach has been given and the analytical strategies that have been used for both primary and secondary research. Because of this there is a possibility to further conduct research on this matter from other perspectives. The research could be executed again with a focus on different cultures or different cultural aspects.

## 5.2 Results analysis

In this part of the collected data of the research will be analysed. This research has been executed in order to provide an answer to the central question: How does culture have an influence on the effectiveness of online advertisement comparing The Netherlands to Spain? In order to answer the central question, there have been formulated and answered three sub-questions:

1. How can culture be analysed?
2. What are the characteristics of culture?
3. Do individuals from different background respond differently to advertisements?

The hypothesis on the central question is that culture has an influence on the way in advertisement is received and appreciated across the world. In order to find out if the hypothesis is correct, the results that were gathered have been analysed. Before the execution of the focus group, sub-questions one and two have been answered in the theoretical framework. The cultural characteristics of both The Netherlands and Spain have been determined and there has been research on how culture can analysed. In the analysis on the cultural characteristics of The Netherlands and Spain, predictions can be made on how the cultures would respond to the online advertisements connected to the cultural dimensions. In order to answer sub-question three, a focus group has been executed. The focus group has been executed in order to be able to analyse if the responses to the advertisements aligned with prediction made accordingly the theory of Hofstede. From the six dimension of Hofstede, four dimensions have been translated into advertisements in order to test the theory. The results of the focus group confirm that culture does have an visible influence on online advertisement, to a certain degree. The analysis of the results of the focus group show that 75 per cent of the questions the participants responded to the advertisement as predicted according to the theory. The 25 per cent that was not in agreement with the analysis of Hofstede was on the cultural dimension of low and high uncertainty avoidance. In order to give a better justification of the results, the key findings have been summarised and analysed per cultural dimension. The responses per cultural dimension differ and therefore it is not possible to provide a summary on all four dimensions at once.

### 5.2.1. Individualism versus collectivism

The theory of Hofstede, as illustrated in Figure 2 and 3, suggests that Dutch culture is more individualistic and Spanish culture is rather collectivistic. The results displayed in Figure 20 demonstrate that there is a clear correlation between the cultures and their responses on the advertisements related to individualism and collectivism. The data shows that the Dutch

participants have rewarded a higher appreciation to the advertisements focussed on individualism. The Spanish participants have shown a higher appreciation to the advertisements focussed on collectivism. The before mentioned results confirm that the Dutch and Spanish participants reacted on the advertisements accordingly to the expectation in the statistics in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

#### **5.2.2. Low- versus high uncertainty avoidance**

The theory of Hofstede, as illustrated in Figure 18 and 19, implies that The Netherlands has a low uncertainty avoidance culture and that Spain has a more high uncertainty avoidance culture. The results illustrated in Figure 21 indicate that in this dimension, there is not a clear correlation between the cultures and their responses on the advertisements related to low- and high power distance. Both the Dutch and the Spanish participants rewarded a significantly higher appreciation to the advertisement focussed on high uncertainty avoidance. The results stated before do not align with the statistics that have been displayed in the statistics in Figure 18 and 19.

#### **5.2.3 Masculinity versus Femininity**

The theory of Hofstede, as illustrated in Figure 18 and figure 19, suggests that the Dutch culture is more feminine and Spanish culture is rather masculine. The results presented in Figure 22 show that in this dimension, there is a clear correlation between the cultures and their responses on the advertisements related to masculinity and femininity. The Dutch participants rewarded a higher appreciation to the advertisement focussed on femininity. The Spanish participants showed a higher appreciation towards the advertisement focussed on masculinity. The before stated results show that the Dutch and the Spanish participants reacted to the advertisements on masculinity and femininity as predicted in the statistics in Figure 18 and 19.

#### **5.2.4. Low – versus high power distance**

The theory of Hofstede, as illustrated in Figure 18 and Figure 19, displays that in The Netherlands is a low power distance culture and that Spain is a high power distance culture. The results illustrated in Figure 23 shows that there is a clear correlation between the cultures and their responses on the advertisements related to low and high power distance. The Dutch participants have shown a higher appreciation towards the advertisement focused on low power distance culture. The Spanish participants rewarded a higher appreciation to the advertisements focused on high power distance. The results explained before confirm that participants reacted on the advertisements accordingly to the expectations in the statistics in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

The advertisements chosen on the cultural dimensions individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity and low- versus high power distance received the appreciation that predicted during the desk research in the theoretical framework. These results build on the evidence that culture has an influence on how online advertisements are perceived and interpreted. However, contrary to the hypothesis, the results of the advertisements chosen on the dimension low- versus high uncertainty avoidance show that the appreciation of that was predicted did not align with the actual results. This unexpected result does hold significant importance and opens the possibility to look further into explanations on why the unexpected result did occur.

The findings that have been conducted from the research agree with previous research done on the matter if and how in the international marketing sector mentioned in the introduction of this research. The results confirm the claims of Levitt (1983) and Volkman (2006) that the globalisation of the world does not necessarily mean that there will be complete homogenisation of cultures. The researchers have stated that cultures will remain to have their own local traditions and way of life (Levitt, 1983)(Volkman, 2006). The results of this research contribute to a clearer understanding of the importance of execution further research on the impact of culture online advertisement. These results builds on the existing evidence of Suriyanarayanan (2010) and Hamell (1997) that online advertisement is highly important international marketing sector (Hamel, 1997)(Suriyanarayanan, 2010). The importance of the research of culture on online advertisement has also been illustrated in Section 1 of the research by providing information of wrongly interpreted advertisements that did not take cultural factors in to consideration when designing them. Moreover, this research provides a new insight on the relationship between the cultural dimensions of Hofstede and the cultural influence on online advertisement. While previous researches have been mainly focused on the content of the advertisements, these results show that the research on cultural is also an important aspect considering effective online advertisement.

In general, the results of the focus groups have suggested that culture has an influence on the interpretation of online advertisements. However the reliability of this data might have been impacted by the limitations of the research. The analysis of responses of the focus group has shown that another consistency in the results despite the fact that there was a clear difference between the responses given by the Dutch and the Spanish students. Some online advertisements scored significantly higher with both the Spanish and Dutch participants than other advertisements. An example is the comparison between the advertisements focused on low- versus high uncertainty avoidance displayed in Figure 22. The general appreciation to low

uncertainty avoidance advertisements was significantly higher by both cultures than the appreciation towards the high uncertainty avoidance advertisement. This appearance could be caused by the lack of research on the quality of the advertisements. However, as mentioned before in Section 5.2.3, the quality of the advertisements have not been taken because it would change the scope of the research and would make the research question too broad and could therefore have an influence on the results of the research. For this reason the has been decided that looking into the quality of advertisements is beyond the scope of this research.

## Conclusion

This research aimed to analyse if and how culture has an influence on online advertisements. Based on the focus groups that have been executed with the intention to find out how different cultures respond to advertisements, it can be concluded that the culture of a society has an influence on how advertisement is interpreted and appreciated. The results imply that it is important to take cultural characteristics into account in order to achieve the most effective online advertisement strategies in the international marketing sector.

To conduct research on how culture has an influence on online, how to analyse culture has been researched. The theory of Hofstede has been used to analyse the characteristics of the Dutch and the Spanish cultures. To test the influence of culture on online advertisement, primary research has been carried out in the form of a focus group that was focused on the correlation between the cultural characteristics and the responses to the advertisements selected according to the four chosen cultural dimensions of Hofstede. The methods briefly summarised above have been affective in order to answering the research question. However, the focus on solely the cultural influence on online advertisement raised the question on how much the quality of the advertisements has impacted the decisions on the participants.

The results of the focus group illustrated that the Spanish and the Dutch participants showed a different appreciation towards the advertisements. The appreciation rewarded by the participants was seventy-five per cent in agreement with the analysis made on the cultural characteristics based on the theory of Hofstede. From these results, it can be concluded that there is a correlation between culture and the way they appreciated and perceived the advertisements. Accordingly to these results, the answer to the central question was formulated. The twenty five per cent that was not in agreement with the analysis of Hofstede was on the cultural dimension of low- and high uncertainty avoidance could indicate that this dimension was to difficult to translate or that the quality of the advertisement, as mentions before, might have had an influence on the result. This unexpected result could hold significant importance for further research.

The before mentioned results emphasizes importance of the consideration of culture regarding online advertisements to increase the effectiveness of in the international marketing sector. However it raises the question until what extent cultures have an influence on online advertisement is and how much the quality of the advertisement has had an influence on the participants their decisions making process.

## **Recommendations**

To have a better understanding of the implication of the results, further research on the same topic focused on different cultures may be considered.

This can be done, for example, through comparing a western culture to a non-western culture. Moreover, further research on this topic is needed to determine the relationship between the cultural influence on online advertisements and the quality of the advertisements. Furthermore, future research should consider the use of more than two focus groups to increase the reliability of the research.

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## Appendices

### European Studies Student Ethics Form

**Your name:** Julia Gerretje Lam

**Supervisor:** Ernst van Weperen

#### Instructions/checklist

Before completing this form you should read the APA Ethics Code (<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>). If you are planning research with human subjects you should also look at the sample consent form available in the Final Project and Dissertation Guide.

- a. [ ] Read section 2 that your Supervisor will have to sign. Make sure that you cover all these issues in section 1.
- b. [ ] Complete sections 1 and, if you are using human subjects, section 2, of this form, and sign it.
- c. [ ] Ask your project Supervisor to read these sections (and the draft consent form if you have one) and sign the form.
- d. [ ] Always append this signed form as an appendix to your dissertation. This is a knock-out criterion; if not included the Final Project/Dissertation is awarded an NVD.

#### Section 1. Project Outline (to be completed by student)

- (i) **Title of Project:** How does culture have an influence on the effectiveness of online advertisement on beauty products comparing the Netherlands to Spain?
- (ii) **Aims of project:** The aim of the project is to research if and how culture has an influence on online advertisement. The project aims to further examine the emergence of online advertisement in today's world. Furthermore, cultural aspects are further investigated regarding online advertisement. Lastly, the research provides a detailed perspective on the countries the Netherlands and Spain to give the research a focus.
- (iii) **Will you involve other people in your project – e.g. via formal or informal interviews, group discussions, questionnaires, internet surveys etc. (Note: if you are using data that has already been collected by another researcher – e.g. recordings or transcripts of conversations given to you by your Supervisor, you should answer 'NO' to this question.)**

**YES**

If no: you should now sign the statement below and return the form to your Supervisor. You have completed this form.

This project is not designed to include research with human subjects. I understand that I do not have ethical clearance to interview people (formally or informally) about the topic of my research,

to carry out internet research (e.g. on chat rooms or discussion boards) or in any other way to use people as subjects in my research.

Student's signature \_\_\_\_\_



- date : 08-05-2020

**If yes: you should complete the rest of this form.**

**Section 2 Complete this section only if you answered YES to question (iii) above.**

**(i) What will the participants have to do? (v. brief outline of procedure):**

The intention was to execute a focusgroup for this research, however due to the corona crisis it was not possible to execute the focusgroup in real life. For this reason, the decision was made to transform the focus group into an online survey to still obtain the information about the two different demographical groups.

**(ii) What sort of people will the participants be and how will they be recruited?**

The focus groups was composed from twelve Dutch students and twelve Spanish students. The objective of the focus group was to measure and compare the reactions on the chosen advertisements of the different cultural groups. The groups that were selected were both students studying at an university or at an university of applied sciences. The participants were selected according to age and gender. The age of the participants was between 18- and 29 years old.

**(iii) What sort stimuli or materials will your participants be exposed to, tick the appropriate boxes and then state what they are in the space below?**

**Questionnaires [ x]; Pictures [ x]; Sounds [ ]; Words [ x]; Other [ ].**

**(iv) Consent:** Informed consent must be obtained for all participants before they take part in your project. By means of an informed consent form you should state what participants will be doing, drawing attention to anything they could conceivably object to subsequently. You should also state how they can withdraw from the study at any time and the measures you are taking to ensure the confidentiality of data. A standard informed consent form is available in the Dissertation Manual.

**(vi) What procedures will you follow in order to guarantee the confidentiality of**

**participants' data?**

The confidentiality is obtained by being clear and open about the content of the survey. Moreover, the participants will be informed about the fact that the results will only be used for research purposes. Lastly, the participants will be given the opportunity to stay anonymous.



**Student's signature:** ..... **date:** 08-05-2020



**Supervisor's signature (if satisfied with the proposed procedures):**

**date:** 08-05-2020