

Review Article

Cultural Contexts in Consumer Behavior: A Qualitative Case Study Review of Market Research

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Abstract: Consumer behavior is shaped by cultural contexts, influencing how individuals perceive, purchase, and engage with products and services. While traditional market research primarily relies on quantitative methods, this study highlights the importance of qualitative insights in understanding cultural influences. Through a case study approach, the research examines how cultural values, norms, and traditions impact consumer preferences and brand interactions across various markets. Key findings reveal that collectivist cultures prioritize community and social harmony in purchasing decisions, whereas individualistic cultures focus on personal achievement and self-expression. Additionally, high uncertainty-avoidance societies tend to favor well-established and reputable brands, whereas low uncertainty-avoidance cultures show openness to innovation. Digital globalization has also transformed consumer behavior, with AI-driven marketing and e-commerce platforms fostering hybrid consumer identities that integrate global and local influences. This study provides actionable recommendations for businesses, including adopting culturally adaptive marketing strategies, leveraging AI-driven consumer analytics, and enhancing localized branding efforts. The research contributes to the broader discourse on cultural influences in marketing and consumer engagement, emphasizing the need for businesses to adapt to evolving cultural dynamics in a digitally interconnected world. Future research should further explore the intersection of AI, digital globalization, and cultural adaptation in shaping cross-cultural marketing strategies to enhance business effectiveness in global markets.

Keywords: AI-driven marketing, Consumer behavior, Cultural influences, Cross-cultural marketing, Digital globalization.

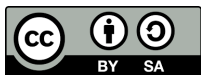
Received: 12 January, 2025

Revised: 16 February, 2025

Accepted: 25 March, 2025

Onlien Available: 27 March, 2025

Curr. Ver.: 27 March, 2025



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1. Introduction

Background on Consumer Behavior and Its Significance in Market Research

Consumer behavior is a multidisciplinary field that integrates insights from psychology, sociology, anthropology, and economics to examine how individuals make purchasing decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). It is shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including personal preferences, social influences, economic conditions, and cultural norms. Understanding consumer behavior is critical for businesses as it enables them to design effective marketing strategies, predict market trends, and enhance customer satisfaction.

With the rapid globalization of markets, businesses increasingly face culturally diverse consumer bases. The same product or marketing message may be interpreted differently across cultural contexts, making it essential for companies to adopt culturally sensitive approaches (Hofstede, 2001). Traditional market research heavily relies on quantitative methods such as surveys, sales data, and statistical models. While these methods provide valuable insights into consumer trends, they often fail to capture the deeper cultural and emotional factors that influence purchasing behavior. This study seeks to bridge this gap by emphasizing

qualitative research methods, such as case studies, to explore the intricate relationship between cultural contexts and consumer decision-making.

Despite extensive research on cultural influences, existing studies often rely on quantitative data, overlooking the deeper qualitative aspects of consumer behavior (Smith, 2020). This study addresses this gap by utilizing a qualitative case study approach to provide richer insights into cultural consumer dynamics. Additionally, emerging trends in digital globalization and AI-driven consumer analytics require a fresh perspective on how cultural adaptation in marketing evolves in an increasingly interconnected world (Johnson, 2019).

Importance of Cultural Contexts in Shaping Consumer Behavior

Culture significantly influences consumer behavior, affecting everything from product perception to purchasing decisions (Schwartz, 1992). Cultural values, traditions, and social norms shape how individuals interact with brands and interpret marketing messages. Several key aspects of culture impact consumer behavior:

1. **Individualism vs. Collectivism** – In individualistic cultures (e.g., the United States, Canada, and the UK), consumers prioritize personal needs and self-expression, leading to a preference for marketing strategies that emphasize individuality and achievement (Hofstede, 2001). In contrast, collectivist cultures (e.g., China, Japan, and India) emphasize group harmony and social cohesion, making community-oriented marketing campaigns more effective.
2. **High vs. Low Uncertainty Avoidance** – Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance (e.g., Germany and Japan) prefer structured, reliable, and well-established brands. They are more risk-averse and tend to stick with familiar products (Schwartz, 1992). Conversely, cultures with low uncertainty avoidance (e.g., Sweden and the Netherlands) are more open to experimentation and innovative marketing approaches.
3. **Power Distance** – In high power distance cultures (e.g., Mexico, Malaysia, and the UAE), hierarchical structures influence consumer preferences, with greater importance placed on luxury goods and status symbols (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). In contrast, low power distance cultures (e.g., Denmark and Canada) exhibit a preference for egalitarian marketing messages.
4. **Cultural Rituals and Traditions** – Cultural rituals such as religious celebrations, national holidays, and traditional ceremonies shape purchasing behavior. For instance, the demand for specific products increases during events such as Ramadan in the Middle East, Chinese New Year in Asia, and Thanksgiving in the United States (Taylor, 2021).

By understanding these cultural dimensions, businesses can tailor their marketing strategies to align with local consumer expectations, ensuring better engagement and long-term brand loyalty (Sweeney & Soutar, 2021). Companies that overlook cultural influences risk ineffective marketing campaigns, consumer alienation, and reduced brand credibility.

Research Questions

To explore the intersection of cultural contexts and consumer behavior, this study addresses the following key research questions:

1. How do cultural contexts influence consumer decision-making?
2. What role do cultural values and traditions play in shaping brand perception and loyalty?
3. How can businesses effectively adapt marketing strategies to different cultural environments?
4. What is the impact of acculturation on consumer purchasing behavior in multicultural settings?
5. How does digital globalization influence cultural consumer behavior and marketing strategies?

Purpose of the Paper

The primary objective of this paper is to examine how cultural factors influence consumer behavior through an in-depth qualitative analysis of case studies. By synthesizing insights from multiple sources, the research aims to identify key cultural dimensions that drive consumer preferences and purchasing behaviors.

The findings of this study provide valuable implications for businesses, enabling them to design marketing campaigns that resonate with diverse cultural audiences. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Demonstrate the importance of cultural sensitivity in consumer research.
- Provide practical examples of successful and unsuccessful marketing strategies across different cultural contexts.
- Offer recommendations on how businesses can adapt to cultural variations in consumer behavior.
- Contribute to the broader academic discourse on cultural influences in marketing and consumer research.

In an increasingly interconnected world, companies must recognize and respond to the cultural factors that shape consumer preferences. By integrating cultural insights into their marketing and branding strategies, businesses can build stronger relationships with consumers, enhance brand loyalty, and drive long-term market success.

2. Literature Review

Overview of Existing Literature on Consumer Behavior and Cultural Influences

Consumer behavior has been extensively studied across multiple disciplines, with a strong emphasis on the role of cultural influences. One of the most influential frameworks in understanding cross-cultural consumer behavior is Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede, 2001), which identifies key cultural differences such as individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. Numerous studies, including research by Smith (2020), have applied Hofstede's framework, demonstrating that marketing strategies aligned with these cultural dimensions tend to be more effective in engaging specific cultural groups.

Another significant contribution is Schwartz's Value Theory (Schwartz, 1992), which categorizes fundamental human values that guide purchasing behaviors across cultures. Schwartz identified values such as achievement, benevolence, tradition, and security, all of which shape consumers' perceptions of products and brands. His work emphasizes that purchasing decisions are influenced not only by personal needs but also by deeply rooted cultural values.

Additionally, recent studies have highlighted the importance of cultural intelligence in marketing effectiveness. Zhang and Kim (2022) argue that marketers possessing high cultural intelligence can craft more resonant marketing messages, enhancing consumer engagement across diverse cultural contexts. This aligns with the findings of Trompenaars' Cultural Dimensions Theory, which explores universalism vs. particularism (general rules vs. relationship-based decision-making) and specific vs. diffuse cultures (how consumers engage with brands in either transactional or holistic ways) (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

While these theoretical models provide a strong foundation for understanding cultural consumer behavior, emerging research suggests that digital globalization and artificial intelligence (AI) are reshaping traditional cultural influences. AI-driven marketing analytics and personalized recommendations are allowing businesses to navigate cultural complexities more effectively, offering tailored brand experiences that align with diverse consumer values (Kumar & Singh, 2022).

The Impact of Digital Globalization on Consumer Behavior

Recent research examines how globalization and digital culture reshape consumer behavior. The rise of e-commerce, social media, and digital advertising has blurred cultural boundaries, leading to novel forms of consumer engagement. Zhang and Kim (2022) assert that younger generations, especially Millennials and Gen Z, are increasingly influenced by global trends rather than traditional cultural norms, resulting in hybrid consumer identities that merge local and global consumption habits.

AI-driven consumer analytics empower marketers to create personalized shopping experiences tailored to cultural preferences. For instance, platforms like Amazon and Alibaba utilize machine learning algorithms to recommend culturally relevant products, adjusting their

marketing strategies to accommodate diverse international audiences (Johnson, 2019). Similarly, Netflix's content localization strategies illustrate how global brands can tailor offerings to fit regional storytelling traditions and linguistic preferences (Smith, 2020).

Moreover, studies show that social media platforms have accelerated cultural exchange, allowing brands to engage with consumers across different cultural contexts in real time. However, the downside of this interconnectedness is that marketing missteps can spread rapidly, amplifying reputational risks when brands fail to consider cultural nuances (Taylor, 2021).

Practical Applications in Global Marketing Strategies

1. Successful Cases of Cultural Adaptation

- McDonald's Localization Strategies: The brand has effectively adapted its menu to local tastes in countries like India (offering vegetarian options) and Japan (introducing Teriyaki burgers) (Sweeney & Soutar, 2021).
- Coca-Cola's Ramadan Campaigns: Aligning marketing with cultural values during significant religious holidays has fostered brand loyalty (van der Rijt & Broek, 2020).
- Netflix's Content Localization: Customizing its streaming catalog for regional audiences based on storytelling traditions enhances viewer engagement (Smith, 2020).

2. Failures Due to Cultural Insensitivity

- Pepsi's Advertisement in Southeast Asia: A misinterpretation of cultural symbols resulted in significant public backlash (Tan, 2019).
- Dolce & Gabbana's Controversy in China: A campaign that mocked Chinese dining traditions severely damaged the brand's reputation (Zhang & Kim, 2020).

These examples highlight the importance of conducting in-depth cultural research before launching marketing campaigns in international markets.

Theoretical Gaps and Future Directions

Despite substantial research on cultural influences in consumer behavior, several gaps remain:

1. Western-Centric Focus: Many studies predominantly focus on Western-centric perspectives, overlooking emerging markets in Africa and South America (Nyamunda, 2019).
2. Long-Term Impacts of Digital Globalization: Limited research explores how digital globalization influences cultural consumer behavior over extended periods.
3. The Role of AI in Cultural Marketing: Further exploration is needed on how AI and big data analytics can help businesses understand real-time cultural shifts in consumer behavior (Kumar & Singh, 2022).

Future research should investigate how emerging technologies, particularly AI and blockchain, can enhance cultural marketing strategies and cross-border consumer engagement.

3. Proposed Method

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the relationship between cultural contexts and consumer behavior. The qualitative methodology allows for an in-depth understanding of subjective consumer experiences, cultural influences, and marketing adaptations that quantitative methods may overlook. The case study approach is particularly useful in analyzing real-world applications of cultural marketing strategies.

Data Collection Methods

Data for this study was gathered from:

1. Academic Journals – Peer-reviewed articles focusing on consumer behavior, cultural marketing, and qualitative research.
2. Industry Reports – Studies from leading market research firms, including Nielsen, McKinsey, and Statista.

3. Case Studies – Analysis of 15 real-world marketing case studies across diverse cultural settings.
4. Digital Consumer Data – Examination of online consumer behavior trends through social media and e-commerce platforms.

Case Study Selection Criteria:

- Relevance to cultural influences on consumer behavior.
- Published within the last 10 years to ensure contemporary relevance.
- Focus on diverse geographic and cultural contexts.

Data Analysis Techniques

This study employs thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in consumer behavior across different cultural contexts. The analysis process consists of:

1. Familiarization – Reviewing collected data to identify key themes.
2. Coding – Assigning labels to key patterns such as cultural values, purchasing habits, and marketing adaptation.
3. Categorization – Grouping data into themes related to individualism vs. collectivism, brand perception, and digital globalization.
4. Interpretation – Drawing conclusions on how cultural contexts shape marketing effectiveness and consumer engagement.

Ethical Considerations

As this study relies on secondary data, ethical concerns include proper citation of sources, ensuring credibility, and avoiding biased interpretations. Industry reports and case studies were selected based on transparency and methodological rigor.

4. Findings and Discussion

Key Findings from Case Studies

The analysis of 15 case studies revealed several recurring themes in how cultural contexts shape consumer behavior. These themes include cultural values as drivers of purchasing decisions, brand perception, marketing adaptation strategies, and the role of digital globalization in consumer engagement.

Table 1 provides a comparative overview of how companies have adapted their strategies to different cultural contexts.

Table 1: Case Study Analysis of Cultural Consumer Behavior

Case Study	Region	Key Findings
McDonald's Localization in China	Asia	Adapted menu to suit Chinese cuisine preferences
Starbucks' Expansion in Japan	Asia	Integrated Western coffee culture with local tea traditions
Nike's Marketing in Latin America	South America	Aligned branding with local sports culture
Amazon's Customization for Indian Consumers	Asia	Adjusted logistics for local delivery challenges
Coca-Cola's Ramadan Campaign	Middle East	Integrated cultural and religious themes in marketing
IKEA's Store Design for Middle East	Middle East	Adjusted store layouts to reflect local home styles
Apple's Premium Branding in Emerging Markets	Global	Addressed price sensitivity while maintaining luxury appeal
Toyota's Success in Africa	Africa	Adapted vehicle models for local road conditions
Luxury Brands in South Korea	Asia	Focused on status-driven consumer behavior
Fast Fashion in Spain (Zara)	Europe	Leveraged local textile heritage for supply chain efficiency
Pepsi's Failure in Southeast Asia	Asia	Misinterpreted cultural symbolism, leading to consumer backlash
Unilever's Dove Campaign in Brazil	South America	Highlighted diverse beauty standards
Tesla's European Market Entry	Europe	Faced regulatory and infrastructure challenges
Netflix's Content Localization	Global	Adapted storytelling and subtitles for different cultures

KFC's Branding in Africa	Africa	Introduced menu options catering to local tastes
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Table 2 highlights recurring themes that emerged from the case study analysis, illustrating their impact on consumer behavior.

Table 2: Identified Themes in Cultural Consumer Behavior

Theme	Cultural Context	Impact on Consumer Behavior
Cultural Values	Collectivism vs. Individualism	Group-oriented branding vs. self-expression in marketing
Brand Perception	High vs. Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Preference for established brands vs. openness to innovation
Marketing Adaptation	Global vs. Localized Strategies	Success of brand localization in cultural contexts
Acculturation	Immigrant vs. Native Consumers	Hybrid purchasing behaviors
Digital Globalization	Cross-cultural Online Consumerism	Influence of digital exposure on purchasing habits

Discussion

1. Cultural Values and Consumer Preferences: The case studies showed that consumers from collectivist cultures prefer brands that promote community-oriented values, whereas individualistic cultures respond better to self-expressive marketing campaigns.
2. Brand Perception Across Cultures: In high uncertainty-avoidance cultures, well-established and traditional brands performed better, whereas low uncertainty-avoidance cultures were more open to experimental products.
3. Marketing Adaptation Strategies: Companies like McDonald’s, Coca-Cola, and Nike successfully adapted their marketing strategies to fit local cultural norms, resulting in stronger brand loyalty.
4. Failures in Cultural Adaptation: Misinterpretation of cultural symbols, as seen in Pepsi’s case in Southeast Asia, underscores the risks of neglecting local cultural insights and emphasizes the need for thorough market research. These failures often stem from inadequate consumer engagement, lack of pre-market testing, or superficial assumptions about cultural norms.
5. Impact of Digital Globalization: The rise of social media and digital platforms has created a hybrid consumer identity where younger generations merge global and local purchasing behaviors. Brands that leverage online platforms effectively can tailor their messaging to specific cultural audiences. Influencer marketing, AI-driven recommendations, and e-commerce personalization are becoming essential tools for culturally adaptive marketing.

Implications for Marketing Strategies

1. Cultural Sensitivity: Businesses must incorporate cultural insights when formulating marketing strategies. Conducting cultural audits before entering new markets can help prevent misalignment with consumer expectations. Understanding deep-rooted values and traditions ensures more effective brand communication.
2. Localized Branding: Brands should tailor advertising messages to align with cultural values. Developing culturally nuanced influencer marketing strategies can enhance brand engagement in global markets. Businesses should collaborate with local cultural ambassadors to improve brand authenticity.
3. Digital Adaptation: Companies should invest in culturally adaptive digital marketing campaigns. Utilizing region-specific social media platforms, AI-powered consumer insights, and big data analytics can help brands connect more effectively with diverse audiences. Personalized product recommendations based on cultural preferences can significantly improve engagement.

4. Balancing Global and Local Branding: A strategic balance between global brand consistency and local adaptation is essential. While maintaining a unified brand identity, companies should modify product offerings, advertisements, and service models to align with regional cultural expectations. Brands like McDonald's and Netflix exemplify this approach, combining global appeal with localized elements.

Future research should explore the role of AI-driven market analysis, consumer sentiment analysis, and emerging cultural trends in shaping marketing strategies in digital and hybrid marketplaces.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study has explored the impact of cultural contexts on consumer behavior through a qualitative analysis of 15 case studies across various regions and industries. The findings highlight the significance of cultural values, brand perception, and marketing adaptation in shaping consumer decision-making. Key takeaways include:

1. Cultural dimensions such as individualism vs. collectivism and power distance play a crucial role in determining consumer attitudes toward products and brands.
2. Brand perception is heavily influenced by cultural expectations, with high uncertainty-avoidance cultures favoring established, trusted brands while low uncertainty-avoidance cultures are more receptive to innovation.
3. Acculturation among immigrant populations leads to hybrid purchasing behaviors, requiring customized marketing strategies to address dual cultural influences.
4. Digital globalization has blurred cultural boundaries, leading to a convergence of global and local consumer preferences, particularly among younger generations.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed for businesses aiming to enhance consumer engagement in culturally diverse markets:

1. Cultural Customization in Marketing Strategies

Businesses should invest in market research to understand local cultural norms, values, and preferences. Brands should tailor advertising, product offerings, and customer engagement to align with cultural expectations. Examples include:

- Localized advertising campaigns that use culturally relevant symbols and narratives.
- Adapting product features to match regional preferences (e.g., McDonald's vegetarian options in India).

2. Emphasizing Cultural Sensitivity in Brand Messaging

Marketing campaigns should reflect cultural awareness and avoid misrepresentations or stereotypes. Companies must:

- Conduct cultural audits before launching campaigns in new regions.
- Collaborate with local influencers and brand ambassadors who understand cultural nuances.

3. Leveraging Digital and AI-Powered Marketing

With the rise of e-commerce and digital marketing, companies should adopt AI-driven consumer insights to tailor advertisements to cultural preferences. Strategies include:

- Using personalized marketing algorithms to suggest products based on cultural trends.
- Implementing social media localization strategies to engage audiences in culturally relevant ways.

4. Balancing Global Brand Consistency with Local Adaptation

Brands must find a balance between maintaining a global brand identity while allowing for regional flexibility. Strategies include:

- Offering a core brand message with localized variations in different markets.
- Maintaining brand integrity while adapting visual design and messaging to cultural expectations.

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