

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE GLOBAL BRAND

**A Cross-Cultural Analysis of the McDonald's Brand
and Consumer Relationship on Facebook**

A Capstone Project

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Thank you to Ted.

**I'm happy you kept asking me about
'those letters'.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

Globalization and social media connect us with goods, services, and different cultures from around the world. The emergence of social media forces multinationals to integrate it within their branding strategies. Basic branding concepts call for a personality that consumers can identify with. But, how do multinationals communicate a strong brand consistently on social media when what one culture finds attractive another one does not? The purpose of this research is to examine multinational social media presence to determine if branding strategies reflect culture and if the pages use consistent messaging to align with the fundamental values of the brand.

METHODOLOGY

This case study used a cross-cultural, qualitative, textual analysis to examine six of McDonald's Facebook pages over a one-month cycle. The six pages were examined through the cultural lens of anthropologists Edward Hall and Geert Hofstede. The countries used for this study were USA, India, Egypt, Russia, France and Norway.

RESULTS

The results of the research found that the examined McDonald's Facebook pages use culturally specific imagery, traditions, events, and language to communicate and interact with their respective community of users. High-context cultures were found to create inclusive environments and associations with the McDonald's brand when compared to low context cultures that used explicit and direct messaging about product items or the brand. Some pages used consistent messaging that aligned with the core values of the McDonald's brand while other McDonald's pages used Facebook as a social platform to interact with consumers and share information either about McDonald's or information not directly related to McDonald's. The most successful Facebook pages were McDonald's USA and McDonald's Egypt. The least successful Facebook page was McDonald's Russia.

Overall, the insight and tangible case study examples included in this study will help future marketing and communication professionals develop a strong and effective multinational branding campaign.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most innovative tools of the internet is social media. In 2012 it was recorded that 2.4 billion people use the internet and approximately 1 billion of those users are active monthly Facebook subscribers (“World Internet usage,” 30). Social media is having a tremendous impact on human and cultural communication and it is an important area for communication research.

In 1983 Theodore Levitt published his groundbreaking article about how business is now done in a global market and technology connects us with goods, services, and different cultures from around the world. Corporations that are fixtures in Western culture have successfully integrated in cultures completely different such as those in India and China. This concept of globalization and multinational branding has given way to much research in the field of intercultural communication, brand maintenance, and international public relations.

But, social media was not included in Levitt’s globalization theory nor has it been included in brand maintenance research. Prior to social media, communications professionals acted as cultural mediators and were able to create a branding strategy specific to the market’s cultural values and social norms. Multinational corporations were able to tailor everything about the consumer experience respective to the cultural market, beginning with the brand website right down to how many people appear in a commercial. Accelerated by social media, society has transitioned from a world of many countries and cultures separated by time and space to a world of instant communication and rapid diffusion of culture and ideas that knows no boundaries.

In fact, official company and brand websites are losing their audience and the decline may be due to the emergence of social media (Hutton and Fosdick, 2011). Furthermore, individual interaction on social media is a direct reflection of the native culture (Barker & Ota, 2011), and new age consumers require individual appeals (Chen, 2012; Olason & Pollard, 2004). Taking into consideration the increase in social media use for personal and brand interaction; and that individual social media use reflects native communication style, it would benefit communications, cultural, and branding research to examine *how multinational corporations tailor their brands specific to culture*.

Goals and Organization of Paper

There are several objectives of this study. The first is to see if multinational corporations regulate their brand's social media presence based on culture and how it affects brand identity. The second is to provide an understanding of the communication strategies used by multinational corporations cross-culturally. Finally, the information gathered will help determine effective branding strategies on social media and how to implement consistent brand messaging across cultures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Section I: Branding Concepts and Cultural Communication Theory

Basic Branding Concepts

Uniform brand identity is essential to market success. But maintaining brand identity is far greater than just thinking about packaging or advertising. Brand identity is comprised of brand knowledge, brand awareness, brand image, brand associations, and the most important, brand personality (Matthiesen & Phau, 2005). A successful, uniform brand identity goes beyond the brand's name; it also includes the signs, symbols and

emotions the consumer associates with the brand. For example, the athletic brand NIKE does not even need to use its name, the trademark *swoosh* says it all (Brønn, 2002).

The tip of the branding iceberg is brand knowledge. Brand awareness and brand image refer to the consumer's understanding of the product which then creates brand knowledge. Brand awareness is the ability to recall a brand and reference it to the correct product category, while brand image reflects the consumer's perception of the brand (Keller, 1993). The next level, brand associations, integrates the consumer's image of the brand with their semantic memory. Keller (1993) distinguishes brand association from image and awareness because brand association pertains to the "amount and kind of information included in each association" (Matthiesen & Phau, 2005, p. 329). Essentially, brand awareness and brand image are the basis of the consumer's brand knowledge. This brand knowledge interacts with the different things the consumer comes into contact with, giving way to their brand associations. The consumer's knowledge and associations with the brand would ideally match the core concepts the corporation tries to portray in their product category. The final slice, brand personality, is the hardest part to maintaining brand identity.

Whereas brand knowledge and associations are functions of brand identity, brand personality is the 'set of human characteristics associated with a brand that enables consumers to identify with a brand' (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). The biggest hurdle is having these factors, brand knowledge and consumer's associations, create a brand personality that will translate into an emotional response or attachment that the consumer can identify with (Matthiesen & Phau, 2005).

By creating a favorable brand personality, consumers use the product as an extension of their own personality which will inevitably yield loyal customers (as cited in Matthiesen & Phau, 2005). An example of successful brand identity by developing a brand personality is American motorcycle company, Harley-Davidson (Brønn, 2002). Harley-Davidson's customers are loyal because they align with the values the corporation stands for. Harley-Davidson's development of brand personality complements consumer knowledge (associations, perceptions) which comes together to form a solid brand identity. Creating an identifiable brand identity is critical because it helps the brand differentiate itself from competing products.

In a case study of the HUGO BOSS luxury brand, Mattheisen and Phau (2005) conducted an exploratory analysis to investigate perception gaps among Australian consumers and the HUGO BOSS brand identity in the luxury market. Their findings concluded that there was a divergence between the company's global identity as a fashion house for men and women and its perception among Australians as predominantly a producer of men's business suits. HUGO BOSS Australia failed to communicate its brand identity consistently as a provider of luxury business and sportswear for men and women; this fostered low levels of brand knowledge because they did not differentiate the HUGO BOSS brand in the Australian luxury market.

Brand identity is the overall concept that corporations need to communicate, whether domestically or internationally. Marketing professionals should aim to develop a favorable brand personality so it resonates positively with the consumer's brand knowledge thus achieving successful brand identity. But, how do companies effectively brand themselves in foreign markets? What one culture finds attractive does not translate

into another. The reality of global marketing has proven to be complex, with nuances down to something as basic as color (Würtz, 2006) or if the product requires high or low consumer involvement (Chow, Tang, & Fu, 2007) playing a crucial role in the success or failure of a brand.

If the brand wants to achieve global relevance, the brand must be able to provide meaning and experience to people in multiple markets (Richelieu, Lopez & Desbordes, 2008). But in order to provide meaning and experience for multiple markets, an understanding of each culture's values, norms, and style of communication is important to build a strong and identifiable brand with consumers.

Building Brand Identity in Foreign Markets: Understanding Culture

When developing favorable brand identity in foreign markets the practitioner must have a deep understanding of the culture's implicit knowledge. As Loenhoff suggests, implicit knowledge is the unknown 'know-how' - the unsaid norms and values of a respective culture (2011). Anthropologists Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede have both developed their own set of frameworks that are used to understand culture. Although separately reviewed, both frameworks discuss the considerations that corporations must be wary of when developing brands in different cultures.

Edward Hall: High Context to Low Context Culture

The framework proposed by Edward Hall argues that "all cultures can be situated in relation to one another through the styles in which they communicate" (as cited in Würtz, 2006, p. 274). This continuum spans from high to low context and helps classify the context and meaning of messages in different cultures. Hall stresses that meaning and context are 'inextricably bound' (1976, p. 79) and one cannot determine the meaning of a

message without understanding the context. Context is defined as the subject, activity, situation, status, past experience, and culture. Generally, people engaging in dialogue do not consider these factors during conversation. Their importance is only understood when traveling and learning the social norms and values important to one culture that may have no place in another. These five characteristics of context vary greatly in different countries and their intrinsic differences are outlined in the next section of the literature review.

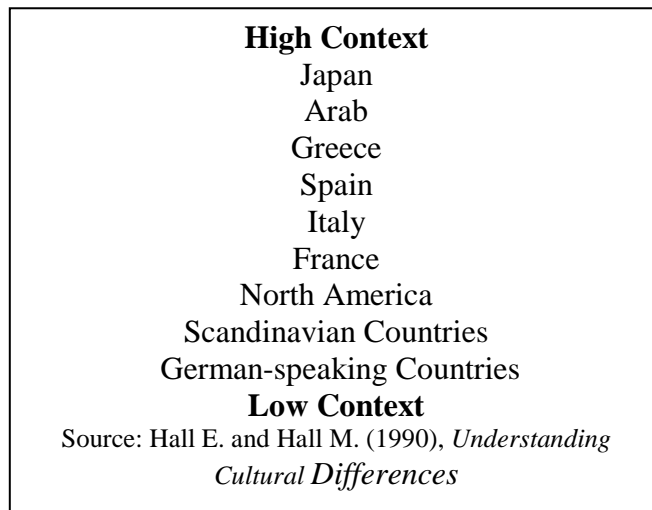


Figure 1: High/Low Context Culture

No culture/country is categorized as completely high or low; rather groups of cultures exist together similarly and gradual differences between them make up the continuum (see Figure 1). High- context cultures are described as collectivist, family-oriented, using vague language, un-spoken meaning in non-verbal communication, and an important emphasis on things such as the relationship between communicators and the environment. On the other hand, low context cultures are individualist, direct, dramatic, and explicit, with an emphasis on personal values such as achievement and freedom.

Geert Hofstede: Cultural Dimensions

The Hofstede model simplifies culture into five dimensions to understand the different variables that define culture. It is important to note that although countries are not the best way to categorize culture, they provide the most useful metrics for a comparative analysis, and in the end, are better than nothing (Mooji & Hofstede, 2010). Similarly to Hall's model, the score for each country in Hofstede's model does not isolate or define it as zero for that dimension. Rather, the score is used to show how it lies in comparison to other countries (Mooij and Hofstede, 2010).

Hofstede (2001) defines the five dimensions of cultures as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term versus short-term orientation.

Power Distance

Power Distance is defined as 'the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally' (p. 99). High power distance cultures believe everyone has a place with no need for justification, and behavior reflects status role, and communication style is usually indirect and requires high-context. Low power distant cultures demonstrate equal power systems and social mobility, and hierarchical structures are only used for convenience. Communication style is direct and requires low context.

Individualism versus Collectivism

Individualism/collectivism can be defined as 'people looking after themselves and their immediate family only, versus people belonging to in-groups that look after them in exchange for loyalty' (p. 225). Individualist cultures find self-actualization very

important and personal opinions are expressed and encouraged. On the other hand, collectivist cultures believe that their identity is to the social group they belong to. Collectivist cultures value loyalty and believe that building relationships are crucial for information sharing between neighbors or engaging in business investments.

Masculinity versus Femininity

The values in a masculine society are usually achievement and success while in feminine societies great value is placed on caring for others and the quality of life (Mooji & Hofstede, 2010). In masculine societies performance is valued and success and power is put on visual display. Feminine societies value the softer aspects of culture such as modesty, cooperation and working in order to live.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance can be defined as ‘the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguity and try to avoid these situations’ (Hofstede, p. 161). In cultures with strong uncertainty avoidance, they value rules, formal structure, and expert opinion. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures are open to innovations, trying new things, and don’t require as many guidelines or rules.

Long Term versus Short Term Orientation

This dimension is defined as ‘the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historic or short term point of view’ (Hofstede, p.359). Values in long-term orientation are perseverance and sense of shame. Short-term oriented cultures value personal steadiness and stability and have a respect for tradition.

Communicating Brand Identity in Foreign Markets: Tactics & Case Studies

Multinational corporations must take these fundamental ideologies of high context versus low context and implicit knowledge of cultural variables into account when building brand identity in foreign markets. If they do not understand the implicit knowledge and important cultural values, they are at risk of being rejected by ethnocentric individuals simply because of inherent beliefs and habits (Richelieu et al., 2008). In order to avoid cultural insensitivity and market failure, multinational corporations approach branding with a deeper consideration of cultural needs to avoid inconsistencies that may result in dilution of the brand, similar to what HUGO BOSS experienced when expanding their brand to the Australian market. (Matthiesen & Phau, 2005). The potential for brand dilution does not exist in the different product variations, but rather, how brand messaging is communicated internationally. If corporations investigate how cultures communicate and develop a strategy that is culturally specific it will help prevent inconsistent messages that may endanger the identity of the brand.

Although not every multi-national corporation uses the same tactics, the fundamentals of global marketing stem from the basic principles of standardization mixed with local adaption (Wilken & Sinclair, 2005). Scholarly evidence shows that a local and regional adaption strategy specific to cultural needs helps build market success (Altarac, 2008; Chow, Tang & Fu, 2007; Wilken & Sinclair, 2005; Würtz, 2006).

In a case study of the multi-national corporations McDonald's and Coca-Cola, it was concluded that each of these companies adapted Levitt's 'think global, act global' approach as a response to an evolution of increased globalization practice and market-to-market variations (Wilken & Sinclair 2005). Levitt's approach was that to achieve

success, a multinational corporation must standardize every approach regardless of the market, from the product design to marketing strategy.

Coca-Cola uses a ‘think local, act local’ strategy that was developed by former CEO Douglas Daft (Wilken & Sinclair, 2005). Daft’s departure from the traditional Coca-Cola product line, instead developing new beverages specific to Japan’s tastes, is an example of how a multi-national corporation redefined their brand identity to incorporate a product that the specific culture can identify with.

Similar to Coca-Cola, McDonald’s wanted a progressive approach to marketing in the 119 countries they conduct business in (Cardona, 2004). McDonald’s used a ‘think global, act local’ approach towards their advertisements. McDonald’s called for their advertising agencies throughout the world to develop a *local* adaption for the *global* template, “I’m Lovin’ It” campaign (Wilken & Sinclair, 2005). McDonald’s created a narrative that could be easily modified cross-culturally. This marketing tactic created culturally specific advertisements that resonate with cultural qualities of each country.

Overall, Coca-Cola’s and McDonald’s assessment of cultural differences and how to integrate them into product development, marketing and overall branding supports the claim made in the introduction that the new age consumers require specific and individual appeals (Chen, 2012; Olson & Pollard, 2004). These companies’ branding strategies indicate how communication campaigns must align with, in fine detail, the target culture for market success. Although Levitt’s idea of ‘think global, act global’ provides a fundamental basis for globalized marketing strategy, its practice will not keep a multi-national corporation competitive which, in turn, makes standardized communication strategy obsolete (Wilken & Sinclair, 2005).

Both Coca-Cola and McDonald's revisited branding concepts and used them to maintain their strength even in a changing global economic market. Coca-Cola's new product lines and thorough research into communication styles and behaviors of different cultures developed brand personalities and brand identities that aligned with the cultural values of the respective market they are in. Furthermore, drawing on Aaker's (1997) conclusion in her brand personality study, Coca-Cola matched brand personality to the consumer's personality. McDonald's developed a campaign that was mutually inclusive of the entire world but that each market could exclusively relate to. This strategy shows that consistent branding to all publics will prevent inconsistencies and consequently dilution of brand identity (Mathiensen & Phau, 2005).

Section II: New Media

The internet condenses time and geography thus accelerating the visibility of globalization to all cultures around the world; this means that globalization has become a social process where social and cultural traditions are challenged by the influence of new cultures (Chen, 2012). According to Chen, the internet has had a "drastic change on communication mediums and affected humans perception of the media, the usage of time and space, and the reachability and control of media" (p.1). These innovations— change in communication mediums and reachability of media – are the byproducts of enhanced digital communication or new media.

New Media: Fundamental Changes in Human Communication

Chen (2007) holds that new media affects society in three distinct ways. First, new media has influenced human cognition because there is a constant expectation and

demand for content. For example, the current news cycle is constant and the public expects immediate and continuous access to the latest reports.

Second, new media has created a unique social dimension that has eliminated the “traditional design for a large, homogenous audience” (Chen, 2012, p.1; Olason & Pollard, 2004). The quick proliferation and access to content allows individuals to find personally relevant and entertaining content that forces marketers to create an individual appeal with their product.

Finally, new media has changed our aesthetic appeal by its “interactivity, manipulation, the pre-purposing and repurposing of content across media” (Chen, 2007, p.95). The way individuals share and manipulate content alters the way in which individuals perceive and receive information they access as well as publish on new media.

These three changes, cognition, social, and aesthetic effects of new media, play an important role when brands develop a globalized marketing strategy. Traditionally, brands communicated their message through controlled mediums such as television and print advertisements. But the marketing world quickly adopted the internet as a way to access foreign markets quickly and cost-effectively (Würtz, 2006). But as the internet diffused within different cultures and globalization increased, there was a call for greater sensitivity to cultural differences because new media challenges how cultures traditionally define and shape their identity (Chen, 2012), and understanding the differences of each societal culture is one of the biggest obstacles and necessities to strategic global marketing.

Branding on New Media: Incorporating Cultural Style & Consumer Values

Just as Daft changed Coca-Cola's business strategy in Japan, multi-national corporations must tailor their message on the internet to cater to the country's communication styles as well. Thinking patterns, expression styles, and cultural context are three important cultural factors that influence how people behave in electronic media, and they are all 'manifestations of cultural values' (Chen, 2012, p. 4). Manifestations of cultural values were indeed present in Elizabeth Würtz's (2006) content analysis of McDonald's websites of different countries. For example, Würtz found that high-context cultures imitated a personal relationship and/or the context of a pre-existing relationship on the homepage. The Japanese McDonald's website (a high-context culture) played a short video of four men placing a massive "M" on the floor, after which they bowed. This video on the Japanese landing page resembled a human-like, personal presence.

Multinational corporations blur the lines between entertainment and advertisement (Santomier, 2008) by using the content available on new media to build a stronger brand personality. For example, Pepperidge Farm dedicated millions of dollars in their marketing budget to enhance their target audience's perception of the brand through a social media campaign "Connecting through Cookies" (Elliot, 2007). Pepperidge Farm started dialogue with consumers around a topic unrelated to the product or brand, how to improve your social life. Pepperidge Farm tapped into the emotion and personality of their consumers from the feedback they received and then used that information to build brand messaging and advertisements the consumer could identify with.

Social Media: Individual Use and its Effect on Multinational Corporations

Aside from its effects on culture, new media has also changed the relationship between

the consumer and brand. Social media, a product of new media, has created a virtual platform where consumers can generate and access first-hand, credible reviews of a brand. The user-generated content on social media results in a 'shift in the balance of power' from brand to consumer (Sinclair & Vogus, 2011).

Social media is a new phenomenon that creates a hybrid cultural space where individuals across the world can gather cultural and social information, build online communities and form intercultural relationships (Chen, 2012). The hybrid cultural space that Chen speaks of has produced a new outreach vehicle for an even more comprehensive and expanded marketing approach that multi-national corporations use (Santomier, 2008). Corporate use of social media as a global outreach vehicle is of significant social importance among consumers and is a way for corporations to practice viral and niche marketing. For one month in 2012, the Global Fortune 100 companies were mentioned a total of 10.4 million times on social media, and the average corporate community Facebook Page has increased by 275% since 2010 (Burson-Marsteller, 2012).

Although a fairly new facet of marketing and communications, research indicates that individuals' use of and interaction on social media is a direct reflection of native culture (Barker & Ota, 2011; Feng & Li, 2009). Barker and Ota (2011) compared social networking site use of Caucasian-American females on Facebook and Japanese females on Mixi Diaries. American females posted pictures of celebration and their favorite music, while Japanese females posted diary entries that nurture their pre-existing personal relationship with a short list of friends, a direct reflection of differing perspectives of communication (p.56). It is also important to know that internet traffic from users to official brand/company websites fell from 85% to 75% globally (Hutton & Fosdick,

2011). These two ideas – that is, that individual social media use is a reflection of cultural values and that traffic to official brand websites has decreased – should be important considerations when multi-national corporations are trying to communicate consistent brand identity through social media.

As traffic to official brand websites is falling, social networking sites are growing at an exponential rate of three times the overall internet growth rate (Nielsen, 2009; Sinclair & Vogus, 2011). The rationale behind increased activity on social media sites rather than on the official brand websites has actually nothing to do with poor communication styles on behalf of the corporation, but actually, a widespread, international distrust in conglomerate companies. Now more than ever, individuals value the recommendations of their peers and products they research on their own (Feng & Li, 2009; Sinclair & Vogus, 2009). Individuals are using social networking sites to mediate the conversation between brand and individual. Essentially, consumers are developing their own terms of engagement (Hutton & Fosdick, 2011). So, corporations are adapting.

It is shown that multi-national corporations have constantly dealt with new marketing trends. Whether multinationals adapt their strategy in marketing advertisements (Wilken & Sinclair, 2011), movie/television adaptations (Altarac, 2008), or on websites (Würtz, 2006), there is consistent evidence that they are communicating brand identity with a sound understanding of local culture, their value system, and communication style, which yields market success.

This literature review was designed to assess branding and culture and how multi-national corporations implement their strategies cross-culturally and how social media plays an overall effect. Several conclusions can be made. First, cultures are, as described

by Hall, high context or low context, and multi-national corporations take the value systems of each market, as defined by Hofstede, into account when they create culture specific advertisements as well as in website design (Chen, 2012; Würtz, 2006).

Second, by creating culturally specific advertisements and communication strategies, corporations are able to communicate their brand identity consistently cross-culturally thus avoiding a weak brand message. Strong brand messages equate to profitable market gains and brand differentiation in their product category.

Third, new media has enhanced globalization and has impacted cognition, social effects, and aesthetic appeals which culminate to play an important role in the information that consumers access and create via social networking sites.

Fourth, consumers are communicating with brands more on social networking sites rather than the official brand/product website, and the behaviors of individuals on SNS sites are a direct reflection of characteristics of the respective culture.

These four ideas play an integral role when trying to understand effective multinational branding on social media; however, there is no research on multinational corporate branding strategy and messaging on social media that incorporates these concepts. The subsequent research will address these information gaps surrounding multinational branding, intercultural communication and social media through the following research questions:

RQ 1: How do corporations tailor their brands specific to culture in an unregulated social media environment?

RQ 2: How do multi-national corporations brand on social media to connect and create and identifiable personality with each consumer?

RQ3: What are the different strategies the multinational corporations use on their social media pages and is their messaging consistent to avoid brand dilution?

METHODOLOGY

The research for this study used a cross-cultural, qualitative, textual analysis to examine how multi-national corporations tailor their brands specific to culture on social media and if they use consistent messaging across all pages. The research examined six country specific McDonald's Facebook pages to evaluate branding strategy and initiatives.

The research examined three low-context communication countries and three high-context communication countries as outlined by Hall. Then, the messages were assessed based on Hofstede's five cultural dimensions. The high-context countries used for the study are India, Russia, and Egypt. The low-context countries used are USA, Norway, and France. There will be a primary focus on the following objectives when examining the content:

- (1) analyze the kind of messages McDonald's posts
- (2) analyze the multi-media imagery posted by McDonald's
- (3) compare the messages to cultural variables defined by Hofstede and Hall
- (4) see if/how McDonald's interacts with consumers on posts
- (5) quantify the frequency of posts by McDonald's

The content analyzed was posted on the McDonald's Facebook pages from February 26 - March 28. The pages were translated by volunteer students from the American University campus. The translators have either grown up or spent several years in the respective country and are fluent or conversational in the language. This is important to note because they are able to identify culturally specific language or imagery.

Although there are many multi-national corporations with country specific social media pages, McDonald's was chosen for several reasons. First, McDonald's is a FMCG- fast moving consumer good (Wilken & Sinclair, 2001) which makes it more sensitive to market-by-market variation than most products. Choosing an expensive electronic or luxury product requires high consumer involvement and because of price, is not accessible to most of the population. McDonald's also has a large number of social media pages available. Unlike other brands that do not have a social media presence in Eastern countries, McDonalds has both a wide presence and extensive content to examine.

To understand the scope of the research, it is important to identify the core concepts of the McDonald's brand and the basic structure of Facebook.

The overarching theme of the McDonald's brand (McDonald's) is that it is the customer's favorite place and way to eat. McDonald's achieves this brand concept through exceptional customer service and maintains its core values as quality, service, cleanliness, and constant evolution and change ("Vision, Responsibility and leadership", n.d.)

The basic structure of the Facebook platform is to promote information sharing and social interaction. Facebook users actively participate through three basic features (Edgerank, n.d.), "Like", "Comment", and "Share". The heaviest weighted interaction feature is share, followed by comment and then like. Like is viewed as passive participation and holds the least weight while sharing is weighed the heaviest because it promotes a post to a whole new set of users. Although shares are the most valued interaction on Facebook, the number of likes is an accurate determinant of a post's appeal

and popularity. Thus, the number of likes, shares, and comments will be used in the analysis to gauge the level of user engagement with various posts.

RESULTS

The following are summaries of the content and messaging on the six McDonald's Facebook pages:

USA/Official McDonald's page

The official McDonald's Facebook page has over 28 million followers. Although there are many country-specific Facebook pages, if a country does not have an assigned Facebook page (i.e. Greece, Japan) the social media link on their country home page defaults them to this US Facebook page.

Although this McDonald's page is defaulted for countries without a country-specific page, it is very much geared to a US audience. In the time period the research was conducted, the March 19 post, which showed a product picture for McDonald's Hot 'N Spicy sandwich, gained the most traction with over 3,000 shares and 100,000 likes. The second most popular post once again promoted the Hot 'N Spicy sandwich, and the third promoted the McDonald's Fish McBites. The post with the least traction was on March 18, which announced the 2013 Morgan Wooten Player of the Year as a special event tip-off to the McDonald's All-American games. McDonald's sponsors these games every year to honor the nation's top high school male and female basketball athletes. The second least popular post was shared by McDonald's via John Martin's page in which Martin shared his excitement to perform at a McDonald's promotional event that evening. The third least popular post was an uploaded 30-second commercial about a woman that thinks her husband is trying to avoid sharing a Shamrock Shake.

The results indicate that US users are more engaged with posts that directly relate to McDonald's brand and its product line. Posts with secondary information about the brand do not stimulate as much user interaction.

The US McDonald's page integrated survey questions that are a unique and new Facebook tool (Figure 2). This was the first time the surveyor noted this type of interaction.



Figure 2: Survey Question Tool

A survey post was used a total of four times and stimulated mild interaction with McDonald's users. Three of the four times they were used in conjunction with the *Battle of the Dollar Menu* competition McDonald's hosted on the page. The competition requires users to participate and is modeled off the NCAA basketball bracket tournament, commonly known as 'March Madness'. The tournament is culturally specific to the US and many American users are aware of the national tournament.

The US page promoted a few items from their menu during the 1-month span. McDonald's mainly promoted the Hot 'N Spicy sandwich, Shamrock Shake, and Fish McBites, with the exception of the last two posts on March 28 about the McWrap. It is important to note the McWrap promotion was the start of a new cycle of products to promote that month. They never used the same language to promote items but did re-

use basic pictures. Their two most popular posts use the same picture but different language. Although different language, it uses the same appeals to highlight the product which are affordability and that the sandwich is 'bold' or 'wild' (See Figure 3).



Figure 3 Most popular USA posts

Of the 28 posts on the US page, seven posts used pictures/video of at least one person with a menu item. There are no posts that are a direct call to action for users to 'share' or 'like' and there is no interaction from McDonald's on comment threads. The comment threads are mostly negative about McDonald's and the quality of their product.

India

The official page of India was extremely interactive and posted a total of 108 times over the one month cycle. The McDonald's India page has a strong following with just a little over 1 million followers and an extremely active community. The most popular post was on March 13, with 35,666 likes and 2,459 shares. This is the highest number of likes and shares on any single post out of the researched pages (other than the McDonald's USA which is an outlier with over 28 million users and 104,000 Likes on one post). The March 13 post was a product picture of a breakfast sandwich and

promoted the upcoming Free Breakfast day on March 18. In the top ten most popular posts, dessert posts made up a total of five. Dessert posts gained a lot of traction throughout the month cycle and were usually offered as a free give-a-way and an incentive for users to come to McDonalds. The least popular post was a video uploaded on March 14, which garnered an insignificant 243 likes and 26 shares. The March 14 video post was a commercial of two men at work sharing their excitement for the March McDouble special. The second and third least popular posts related to a new location opening. Most of the posts in the ten least popular were unrelated to McDonald's menu items and promoted a new store opening.

McDonald's India page used the most culturally specific imagery in their posts when compared to the other pages. When promoting the new Kerala location, they often uploaded images specific to Kerala or relating to the region. For example, they used an image of a McDonald's container designed as a sailboat because Kerala is known for water transport and as a top tourist destination (Figure 4) and images of Kerala's landscape. It was the only site to use images of traditional dress or practice (Figure 5). The page developed and heavily promoted a competition surrounding the spiritual day of Holi, a widely celebrated and recognized holiday in India (Figure 6). Lastly, there were several posts that asked users how you knew you were an Indian. These posts were unrelated to the McDonald's brand but were about certain cultural values or practices (sometimes humorous) that only a native Indian can identify with (Figure 7).



Figure 4: Cultural Imagery related to Kerala



Figure 5: Cultural Imagery related to traditional dress/practice



Figure 6: Cultural Imagery related to Holi celebration



Figure 7: Cultural Language related to norms

An interesting trend was posts about females. There were a total of three, and the two about female public figures and their work with McDonald's landed as the third and twelfth least popular posts. The post recognizing Women's Day was in the bottom half of influential posts as the number 48 least influential post.

The India page was the only page to offer incentives programs and discount opportunities such as using a “Smile Card” to redeem for free food, participating in a competition to receive vouchers for menu items, and by offering free ice cream at the new location.

A lot of the language and imagery used on the India page can be described as happy, social, and fun. McDonald’s incorporated words such as joy, happy/happiness, smile, celebration, party, and excitement and used images of McDonald’s mascot, Ronald McDonald. There were several posts about enjoying McDonald’s with friends and family or visiting a McDonald’s location to enjoy the items together. Almost all posts promoting the March McDouble often used a play on the word double. For example, a March 6 post read, “*You might ‘double’ over with happiness! It’s going to be a Happy, Happy March*”.

Many of the posts encouraged interaction by asking the users questions about menu items or preference, using fill-in-the-blank feedback for opinions or asking if they will join McDonald’s on a health pledge or at an event. McDonald’s India never used a direct call to action, and almost all comments from users were answering questions and very positive. Users frequently would just post ‘I’m Lovin’ It’ as a comment under pictures of food.

Although it wasn’t regularly, there was interaction from McDonald’s on posts. McDonald’s India would respond to comments about poor service/experience and answer questions from users about what items are free, as well as questions about pricing, availability, and nutritional information/quality of food. The McDonald’s India page responded formally, almost like a letter. They began with the tagged name(s), an explicit

answer, contact information, thank you, and closed with the signature ‘McDonald’s India’.

Egypt

McDonald’s Egypt page has just 1.06 million likes and a strong following from its community of users. The McDonald’s Egypt page was unique in that it developed a competition to engage users and interest them in their product. In an effort to promote new menu items, such as the new ‘Asian’ sandwich or ‘Turkish’ sandwich, McDonald’s developed a character and storyline that were culturally specific to the product. For example, the storyline for “The Asian” was that a Chinese man was challenging Egyptians to a French fry eating competition with chopsticks. McDonald’s Egypt frequently posted and created a video about the competition. McDonald’s Egypt uploaded 5 posts engaging users with facts, questions or images about the Chinese culture. These posts were unrelated to any of the McDonald’s products (See figure 8.1 and 8.2) and used a total of 12 of the 30 posts to promote the competition.



Figure 8.1: Asian cultural storyline



Figure 8.2: Asian cultural storyline

The McDonald's Egypt users were extremely interactive and responded well to the competition. The most popular post was a video about the Asian competition uploaded on March 14, which garnered a total of 7,646 likes and 473 shares. The second most popular post was also a video on March 27, which announced the Turkish challenge. Overall, the top five posts that gained the most traction were about the Asian and Turkish competition. Although the competition and the featured sandwich comprised a majority of the posts, McDonald's Egypt also promoted breakfast items and posted friendly good morning messages or morning health tips. According to the translator, Morning Prayer is the most important part of the day so it is fitting to include breakfast posts in their social media messaging.

Although posts about the competition were the most popular over the 30-day cycle, the two least popular posts were also about the competition. The post about the Chinese origami-making practice (see Figure 8.1) was the least popular post with only 102 likes and 23 shares, followed by a March 19 post about the Asian landing in Cairo with a total of 126 likes and 17 shares. It is important to note that the least popular posts provided 'filler' information such as cultural facts about China or the location of the Asian competitor, whereas the most popular posts gave details about the competition or provided a post-event re-cap.

The McDonald's Egypt users were engaged with the competition and showed their competitive interest as well through their interaction. Even the language used by McDonald's was competitive. The caption for the March 14th video post read: *"When we introduced the Asian sandwich an Asian got mad and now he is coming to Egypt to challenge us! Help us defeat the Asian to enter a draw for the chance to win a trip to*

Turkey". The users responded quite positively to this with a total of 741 comments and one user commented on March 29, "*I am Egyptian and challenge anyone in anything*".

The McDonald's Egypt page showed the most interaction with its users than any other page researched in this study. On almost every post McDonald's Egypt interacts with users by responding to questions directly, reaching out to unsatisfied customers and even telling users when they answered a question correctly. They engaged users in comment threads by asking "Have you tried the sandwich yet" or "Did you like it" and always interacted in the language of the user which could be formal Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, or English. McDonald's Egypt was extremely polite with their users and vice-versa; Egyptian users did not comment too negatively about a product and if they were issuing a complaint, they added that it might have been a mistake or how much they enjoy McDonald's.

Russia

The McDonald's Russia page is the most rudimentary when compared to the other researched pages because of its use of low-quality images with basic graphic design (See figure 9.1, 9.2, & 9.3). The McDonald's Russia page has a small community of 7,612 users. The most popular post on the McDonald's Russia page was on March 25 (Figure 9.1) which was second with the highest number of likes but it garnered the highest number of shares, 16, and nearly four times the amount of comments when compared to the post with the highest number of likes. The March 25 post was about the quality of McDonald's coffee beans, the plantations from which they are harvested from, and how important the social welfare of their workers is to McDonald's Russia. The top five most popular posts were about the easy and convenient service McDonald's provides or facts

about McDonald's or facts relating to the food McDonald's sells. For example, the March 7 post was an image of a McDonald's pole high in the air and the caption described the hamburger as the "most democratic food" and then went into detail about the most expensive hamburger in the world (which happened to be in Las Vegas, NV).



Figure 9.1: Basic imagery on McDonald's Russia page



Figure 9.2: Basic imagery on McDonald's Russia page



Figure 9.3: Basic imagery on McDonald's Russia page



Figure 10: Engaging users on McDonald's Russia page

The posts with the least traction were about the Golden Puck youth hockey tournament. Similar to the All-American Basketball tournament sponsored by McDonalds in the USA, the Golden Puck youth hockey tournament is a Russian elite hockey tournament sponsored by McDonald's. McDonald's posted tournament standings, a picture album, and final result information but these posts received little to no interaction from users. In fact, the top three least popular posts all related to the Golden Puck hockey tournament with zero shares on all posts and a combined 13 likes.

The McDonald's Russia page uses unique messages which almost never related to McDonald menu items. A majority of the posts are fact-based rather than promoting their menu items or brand. Of the 29 posts, seven of them were about children or were direct appeals to children; one post, uploaded on February 27, shared that McDonald's was the number one distributors of toys worldwide. The McDonald's Russia page also posts about the nature of their service, like how many locations are open for 24-hours or that free Wi-Fi is available in all locations. Several posts are pictures of individuals going through a McDonald's drive-thru in different ways (a man in a luxury car, a man on a flying broom, and a man on a donkey at an Arabic McDonald's). This was interesting because the translator noted that going through a drive-thru or 'running-in' is an American behavior and uncommon in Russia.

McDonald's Russia engages users in a unique way. During the one month cycle, three posts used pictures of a letter with a question on it and then McDonald's would answer it in the first comment (See Figure 10). The questions asked were about the McDonald's food distributors and their locality, how McDonald's food is appropriate for children but, of course, always up to parental discretion, and the quality and detailed

process of the food preparation. The users on this page did respond to some posts and were not always negative but their answers were sarcastic, according to the translator. But this wasn't the only way McDonald's encouraged interaction with users. McDonald's Russia usually ended their posts with a question and even did a series of posts asking users for their 'confessions'. Although the users were not always responsive they were sensitive to some posts. For example, on the March 8 post, which wished users a Happy Woman's Day, a very important holiday celebrated in Russia, one user immediately asked why the date was not written in the Russian style but in the American style. An interesting aspect of McDonald's Russia's interaction with its users is that they would often put an end to the conversation and use a very pragmatic tone. In one comment thread to a user on March 25, McDonald's Russia responded to negative commentary with, *"You perceive McDonald's as aggressive and negative. We respect your point of view but don't consider further dialogue constructive"*.

France

The McDonald's France page, with a little over 1.1 million users, was very simple with only 20 posts during the one month cycle. User commentary was fairly positive, and there was a strong emphasis on service. The three most popular posts were product images that promoted a new series of French cheese sandwiches. The most popular post was uploaded on February 26 and garnered 1,437 likes and 92 shares. The second most popular post, which was posted on March 12, used the same image as the February 26 post and garnered 1,384 likes and 81 shares. A common trend in the McDonald's France page is that the most popular posts were specifically about McDonald's menu items. The least popular post was a text-only post that expressed excitement for spring and then

asked users where they prefer to eat their McDonald's, in the restaurant or outside. The post, uploaded on March 21, received zero shares and was liked a total 623 times. Of the ten least popular posts seven are text-only posts and four of the ten are about the upcoming weekend.

The McDonald's France page had a clear emphasis on service. Many of the posts asked questions about flavor preference or where they preferred to eat. For example, the March 28 post was text only and asked users a simple question, "Do you prefer your sandwich with or without pickles?" This post was very popular with 2,163 likes and the highest number of comments for any post on the page totaled at 2,380. But it is not one of the most popular because it received only 39 shares. Although McDonald's France mostly promoted menu items, their online order link was posted three times and language like 'order peacefully' was used. According to the translator, service is very important and the McDonald's France locations have employees take orders at the table and have separate McDonald's Café stores that serve breakfast items, coffee, and pastries (similar to a USA Starbucks or Dunkin' Donuts).

An interesting component to McDonald's France page was posts promoting *AirMag*, a magazine exclusively available at McDonald's locations (Figure 11). The magazine (which is also available online through a link on Facebook) covers mostly American cinema and French pop culture and is possibly targeted for children and young adults between the ages of 8-24.

The McDonald's France page was very simple when compared to the other researched pages. It lacked imagery and used several text-only posts; the posts were direct and related to menu items with captions like, "*The great desire for cheese is back!*"

Check out our new recipes this week” (Figure 12). McDonald’s France did not hesitate to recycle the same content. Figure 12 below was posted on February 26, March 4, and March 12.



Figure 11: *AirMag* magazine exclusively at McDonald’s France



Figure 12: Basic appeal post on McDonald’s France

The McDonald’s France users were engaged even though the content wasn’t as creative as other pages, appeals were simple, and posts were recycled. But on almost every post, multiple users commented about the Big and Tasty sandwich and questioned McDonald’s directly about when it will return to the menu. McDonald’s offered no answer about the Big and Tasty sandwich and never interacted with users on any of the comment threads during the cycle.

Norway

The McDonald’s Norway page has a growing Facebook community with 129,500 users and a total of 22 posts during the one month cycle. The most popular post, which was posted on March 11 and garnered 450 likes, was an image of a McDonald’s meal and the caption read, “*The weekend is over, but only four days left until Friday. Which menu*

items suits you best on Monday?” In fact, the most popular posts on the McDonald’s Norway page were either asking users about upcoming holiday and weekend plans or discussing what day of the week it was. There were several posts about the Easter Holiday, which is a national break for Norway. Even to the translator’s surprise, on March 13, McDonald’s Norway posted about the service industry’s weekend night, which is traditionally a Wednesday night and referred to as “Little Saturday”.

The least popular post, which was posted on March 7 and garnered only 17 likes, was a link about childhood environmental education. Although this was the least popular post, some of the most popular posts related to health or the environment.

An interesting trend in the data was that posts about coffee were among the least popular, which according to the translator, would make sense because most Norwegians drink iced coffee, not hot coffee.

There was no obvious trend in least popular posts because themes of the least popular were also themes for the most popular posts. For example, one of the least popular posts was about environmental education but one of the posts that gained the most traction with 443 likes, which was posted on March 23, was about McDonald’s participation in Earth Hour.

The McDonald’s Norway page used an image of a McDonald’s menu item or logo on a majority of the posts and used their slogan *Kom som du er*, which translates to ‘Come as You Are’, on three posts, the most out of any of the researched pages (Figure 13). Although the caption was unrelated to the specific product, there was obvious McDonald’s imagery throughout the cycle. For example, the March 27 post wishes a

Happy Easter and asks users about Easter plans, but the McDonald's logo is prominent and visible (Figure 14).



Figure 13: Direct product imagery and use of slogan on McDonald's Norway



Figure 14: Direct product imagery on McDonald's Norway

The McDonald's Norway user commentary was fairly equal with a mix of positive and extremely negative comments, similar to that of the USA. McDonald's Norway only interacted with users three separate times. Two of those times McDonald's Norway was joining in on a count which seemed to be playful with no real reason (Someone commented 1, another person commented 2, the thread continued and McDonald's answered 7). The third time they interacted with users was during a negative debate about food quality and preparation, to which McDonald's Norway responded with a link to an article about the local Norwegian food providers and their use of all-natural ingredients.

DISCUSSION

The results section discussed the overall messaging and posts of the respective Facebook page. The following discussion will examine the results through the cultural

lens as described by both Hall and Hofstede and answer the proposed research questions of the study.

RQ 1: How do corporations tailor their brands specific to culture in an unregulated social media environment?

The high-context culture McDonald's pages reviewed were Egypt, India, and Russia. Of the five dimensions outlined by Hofstede, the most common cultural dimension on all three pages was collectivist values. Although executed differently, all three pages used 'we' messaging. The India page used inclusive and celebratory language, posted specifically about Indian tradition and norms, and the high frequency of posts can be paralleled to the brand building a relationship and connection with its users. Although the Egypt page does not use inclusive language like India, the page projects national pride by developing an Egypt versus outside country competition around the brand. An appeal to Russia's collectivist values is not as apparent as Egypt or India's but is evident through the language and theme of the posts. Rather than promoting a specific product, McDonald's Russia prefers to stimulate conversation or use facts to foster a relationship with the user.

In the three high-context countries, McDonald's doesn't use social media to directly promote the brand and new products; rather McDonald's is branded as a part of the social community. McDonald's uses the brand as a vehicle to build a relationship and stimulate conversation with their community of Facebook users in high-context cultures. McDonald's India, McDonald's Egypt, and McDonald's Russia establish a personal connection, whether through games or showing their value in the social community to grow a deep relationship. These qualities, personal connection and deep relationships are

indicative of high-context and the collectivist cultural dimension (Mooji & Hofstede, 2010; Würtz, 2006).

On the other hand, the McDonald's page in the low-context countries, France, Norway and USA, were not as concerned with developing a community and the majority of messages promoted specific menu items and used explicit messaging about the brand. Almost every post incorporated the McDonald's logo and was directly related to the menu items. The low-context country pages were not as explicit in promoting individualist dimensions, such as self-actualization (Mooji & Hofstede, 2010), but the communication style was direct and with no alternative goal behind each post; each post explicitly promoted the brand either through the imagery or text used.

Differences were also noted along the cultural dimension of masculinity versus femininity. Norway, which is one of the most feminine cultures (Hofstede, 2001, p. 286), used messaging that integrated McDonald's with social activities such as weekend trips or holiday breaks. Feminine cultures value quality of life and free-time, unlike masculine culture like the USA. Just as Norway projected feminine qualities, Egypt and the USA projected masculine dimensions, such as performance and achievement, by incorporating competition into their branding strategy on their respective Facebook pages.

The cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance was noted in the communication strategy of certain pages. India, a low scoring uncertainty avoidant culture (Hofstede, 2001, p. 194) showed this quality in the overall themes and strategy in their posts. Low uncertainty avoidant cultures, like India, accept imperfection and there isn't a need for established rules. The posts on the India page did not implement a specific strategy, other than to interact, and the message tone was very relaxed and care-free. This was unlike

high uncertainty avoidant cultures such as the USA and France, (p. 194) that had an obvious strategy and explicit reasoning for each of their posts.

The power distance dimension was also present on certain pages, but was not always consistent with the countries' power distance scoring described by Hofstede. The most consistent with Hofstede's scoring and clearest examples of power distance were on the Russia page. Russia, the highest scoring- power distant country, exhibited power distance through their authoritative commentary with negative users and their portrayal of the McDonald's brand as an important and valued member of the community, whether as a work environment or toy distributor.

Perhaps the most interesting conclusion is that McDonald's interaction in high power distant cultures like India and Egypt were extremely responsive to users and addressed negative commentary with an answer on how to help, which is the opposite of high power distant cultural behavior. This was even more surprising when compared to the McDonald's pages of low power distant countries like USA and Norway, which had little to no interaction with its users. McDonald's France, a high scoring- power distant country, had low interaction with users and failure to respond to the hundreds of comments about the Big 'N Tasty which, along with McDonald's Russia, was one of the only country pages to positively correlate with Hofstede's description of high power distant cultures as having superiors being inaccessible (Hofstede, p. 318). This conclusion may suggest that power distance is not an explicit cultural dimension on social media due to its high interactivity and availability to a wide-range of individuals. It is not exclusive to one segment of society, but rather to almost anyone with little regulation. There is

more research needed on this cultural dimension and if it is at all important to social media marketing.

The cultural dimension of long-term versus short-term orientation was not explicit on the researched pages when compared to the other four dimensions. This dimension reflects the culture's orientation towards the present time versus the future and often relates to religious ideals and respect for tradition. Although India had posts relating to tradition and religion, it did not reflect the characteristics of this dimension.

RQ 2: How do multi-national corporations brand on social media to connect and create an identifiable personality with each consumer?

The Facebook pages reviewed reflected cultural traits of the respective country. The high-context countries, India, Egypt and Russia, created an inclusive environment and the low-context countries, France, Norway, and USA, used short, explicit messaging that directly related to the brand. As stated in the literature review, thinking patterns, expression styles, and cultural context influence how individuals behave on electronic media (Chen, 2012) and these factors were identified in the cultural analysis above. The pages incorporated the McDonald's brand in ways that only individuals in the respective country would understand, whether it was posting about the products and an upcoming national holiday or by acknowledging cultural norms in their posts.

The researched pages developed their posts based on cultural factors and included qualities that users were able to identify with. But of course, some pages were better than others at promoting the McDonald's brand rather than just interacting with users. Although Russia did communicate and upload imagery consistent with cultural values, the page lacked a personality and it was simply a page of facts and information. In collectivist, high-context cultures like Russia, the context and situation is imperative to

effective communication and sometimes the concept of a brand is too abstract to understand (Mooji & Hofstede, 2010). But, where Russia failed, Egypt thrived. McDonald's Egypt, also a high-context culture, did not promote the brand, but rather promoted a storyline, characters, and social values which then created an identifiable brand with its users, which is the most important step to effective branding (Richelieu, Lopez, & Desbordes, 2008).

Q3: What are the different strategies the multinational corporations use on their social media pages and is their messaging consistent to avoid brand dilution?

Lastly, it is also important to discuss how and if the researched pages incorporated the core message of the McDonald's brand into their Facebook messaging. The core concept of the McDonald's brand is to be the consumer's favorite place and way to eat. Although each country used different messaging, all the researched pages included posts about service, and questioned users, either directly or indirectly, about their preference of how they eat to what tastes they prefer. All the social media pages, except for McDonald's USA, responded to negative commentary about food quality and provided further information to validate McDonald's as a quality and nutritional food provider.

But the McDonald's brand value of constant evolution and change lagged on some of the social media sites. The Russia page failed to promote any new product items and used basic and dated imagery to engage with its consumers. The India page, although highly interactive, failed to promote new product items and only promoted the same basic items, such as soft-serve ice-cream, and used basic imagery of sandwiches. On the other hand, the Egypt, France, and USA pages effectively incorporated McDonald's evolution and change values in their messaging by promoting new menu items, using current and

favorable imagery, and even engaging users through different types of media like videos, surveys, and magazines.

Conclusion

The main objective of this research was to determine if the multinational corporation McDonald's developed their brand based on culture and to identify if, within the different countries, it implemented cohesive and effective brand messaging to avoid brand dilution. The research confirms that the McDonald's Facebook pages are reflective of native culture and support prior research studies that both individuals and corporations interact on electronic media based on their respective cultural dimensions (Barker & Ota, 2011; Würtz, 2006). The results of the research also show that on a brand's Facebook page, the posts that gain the most traction and are favorable to consumers are those that directly relate to the brand or its product items, regardless if it is described as high context or low context. Although on some pages, posts unrelated to the product may have garnered traction and engaged users, the most popular posts were directly associated with the brand.

But, for effective, global branding, a multinational corporation must not only communicate based on culture. They must effectively integrate all the core concepts of the brand with cultural dimensions the respective country aligns with. Engaging users is important, but the most successful Facebook pages developed posts, imagery, and a personality that its users were able to identify with, which then yielded a positive brand identity.

The cultures that most effectively communicated the McDonald's brand were McDonald's USA and McDonald's Egypt. They promoted new products, used culturally

specific imagery and values, found ways to engage users with the brand that was specific to how the culture communicated, and incorporated all the core values of McDonald's in their messaging over a one-month cycle. Unlike USA and Egypt, the McDonald's Norway, India, France, and Russia pages used culturally relevant and engaging posts, but they failed to communicate all the core values of the McDonald's brand.

In conclusion, this body of research provides insight to communication and marketing professionals on effective multinational branding on social media sites and to better understand intercultural communication. Furthermore, the enhanced media environment that we live in demands a constant expectation for relevant content (Chen, 2007), and this research explicitly details what types of content are relevant to high-context or low-context culture and the branding strategies that yield engaged consumers.

Although this was a comprehensive research study of six country specific Facebook pages, further research should be done to examine the online branding strategies of successful multinational social media pages (like USA and Egypt) and if the messaging complements off-line advertisements and branding in print advertisements and in-store experiences. Additionally, there is more research to be done in the field of multinational branding on other social media sites like Twitter and Pinterest as well as country specific social media platforms like China's Sina- Weibo. This research study was limited by the perceptions of the translator and the researcher. The research was constricted to evaluate McDonald's because of the availability of consistent content. This is a limitation to evaluating branding strategies because McDonald's has an established and extremely strong international presence whose image will not be affected drastically on social media. To further explore cross-cultural communication on social media, future

research should include other multinational companies that do not have as strong of a visibility as McDonald's.

The field of intercultural communications will continue to change as new technologies are introduced. And there will be countless more corporations that enter the global market and perhaps one or two will even share the same success and brand recognition as McDonald's in the next generation. But, this comprehensive research delivers tangible and effective strategies in multinational branding and in intercultural communication that can help communication scholars and professionals to develop successful and effective communication strategies for future multinational corporation campaigns.

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