

**Marieke de Mooij (1998). *Global marketing and advertising. Understanding cultural paradoxes.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 0-8039-5970-2 (pbk.) (316 pp.)**

Marieke de Mooij starts her book with an anecdote. After the battle of Waterloo, the duke of Wellington supposedly said to Napoleon, "You fight for power, we fight for honor", upon which Napoleon replied: "Yes, one always fights for what one does not have." This anecdote is relevant in several respects to what De Mooij tries to tell us in her book. First, the anecdote exemplifies the differences between two people from different countries. France and England may be geographically very near to each other, culturally they are sometimes worlds apart. Second, these differences in culture are reflected in the issue they value (power or honor). And third, one does not tend to value the things one already has.

In her book, De Mooij discusses a number of interesting topics among which are a discussion of what culture is, along which dimensions cultures can differ from each other, and what kind of problems one has to deal with in conducting cross-cultural advertising research. Instead of trying to cover all the topics that are addressed by De Mooij, I will describe and evaluate the book by what I consider to be its focal point: the question whether cultural differences are relevant to the efforts of marketers and advertisers in a global context.

This question is debated heavily ever since Theodore Levitt argued

that multinationals should profit from the homogenization of needs across the world. As a result of this homogenization, people around the world would be motivated to buy the same products. Companies should profit from this by standardizing their marketing approach. That is, they should sell the same product in the same way all over the world. Due to the economies of scale advantage, such an approach would enable the company to sell more at a lower price. Levitt substantiated his claim by referring to successful global brands such as McDonalds, Coca Cola, and Levi's.

De Mooij claims that Levitt is wrong and she provides some forceful arguments to prove her point. She addresses, amongst others, the idea that the growing number of telecommunication satellites turns the world into a global village homogenizing the knowledge, attitudes, and needs of all people. She points out that although it is possible for many people to view, for instance, CNN, the number (and popularity) of local and regional television channels increases as well. The latter development may lead to a growing number of local villages instead of one global village. De Mooij also criticizes the concept of a global brand. Even products such as Coca Cola are not fully standardized. In the Middle East, for instance, Coca Cola contains more sugar than in the rest of the world. McDonalds sells different products in each country (McCrocket in The Netherlands, a salmon and shrimp salad in Spain). With respect to advertising, she argues that the

audience and the ad's creator have to share cultural conventions in order to understand the full meaning of the ad. If cultural differences exist, differences in the ad's meaning and its appeal will arise. Next, De Mooij sets out to discuss the nature of culture and cultural differences. She draws heavily on the work of Hofstede who distinguishes five dimensions along which cultures can differ. Insightful is her discussion on how these cultural dimensions correlate with certain aspects of consumer behavior. For instance, she reports a correlation as high as .90 between the number of personal computers owned by people in the twelve wealthiest countries worldwide and the score of these countries on Hofstede's Individualism-Collectivism dimension. Also, the number of people who buy a second-hand car is strongly correlated with the extent to which they are member of a culture that is not afraid of uncertainty. These and other figures are rather forceful arguments in support of the claim that cultural differences have an impact on consumer behavior.

Although cultural differences in consumer behavior are interesting, the issue of cultural differences in the production and perception of advertising is probably of more interest to scholars in communication research. The second part of the book is devoted to this issue. De Mooij discusses the relation between culture and the functioning of advertising. She shows how cultural differences are reflected in differences in verbal and nonverbal communication styles, preferences for informational or

emotional content, and conceptions of what advertising should accomplish.

Next, she discusses aspects of advertising in which cultural differences can be reflected. First, the issue of appeals is discussed. An appeal is regarded as "something that makes the product particularly attractive or interesting to the consumer", examples being security, esteem, and pleasure.

These appeals are strongly related to values. For instance, an important value in individualistic cultures is to distinguish oneself from other people. Frequently, advertisements appeal to this value using slogans such as "Be an original" or "There's only one style. Your own." The ad promises consumers that the use of these products will help them attain this desirable value.

One would expect that the appeals used in advertising reflect the most important values of a culture. However, that is not always the case, and De Mooij explains this phenomenon by what she calls the value paradox. The value paradox is the result of the gap between the desirable and the desired. The gap between the desirable and the desired runs parallel to the difference between what one ought to do and what one wants to do. For instance, in some cultures one is expected to be modest and humble about one's achievements, whereas on the other hand one wants to show off with one's achievements. Both values can be appealed to in ads.

The value paradox can also arise as a result of the fact that some values are taken for granted in a culture. For

instance, in a collectivistic culture, people are member of a group that provides them with companionship. Therefore, appealing to companionship in such a culture may not be very effective because this value is already attained. In an individualistic culture, on the other hand, people may feel lonely as a result of their efforts to distinguish themselves from others. Companionship may appear desirable to them. As a result, appeals to companionship, a collectivistic value, are used more frequently in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures. With this in mind, De Mooij discusses the type of appeals that are used in different cultures.

Apart from the type of appeal used, cultural differences are also reflected in the form of advertising. De Mooij discusses the classification developed by Giep Franzen and uses a slightly adapted version of this classification to analyze print ads and television commercials. She reports differences in, for instance, the role of presenters in different countries. In some countries the presenter is frequently an expert, whereas in others the presenter is often ridiculed. She uses these results to characterize what she considers the advertising styles of several countries (such as

the US, Great Britain, Germany etc.) and relates this characterization to the cultural dimensions of these countries. These characterizations are thought provoking; however, it is unclear to what extent they are based on solid empirical data.

De Mooij succeeds in giving a lucid account of why marketeers and advertisers should be aware of cultural differences. She convincingly shows how cultural differences influence consumer behavior and advertising practices. These differences in advertising practices suggest that advertisers from different cultures have different intuitions about what makes an ad convincing. However, it is possible that they are wrong. Virtually no research is reported on the question of whether the type of appeal and advertising form chosen, are indeed the most effective in that culture. Such research would be a welcome addition to the studies reported on by De Mooij. Nevertheless, her book constitutes already a valuable contribution to the literature on international advertising.

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