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VALUES AND SYMBOLS: AN INTERCULTURAL ANALYSIS
OF WEB PAGES ON THE INTERNET

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Communication Studies


by
Aura Constanza Mosquera
December 2004

VALUES AND SYMBOLS: AN INTERCULTURAL ANALYSIS
OF WEB PAGES ON THE INTERNET

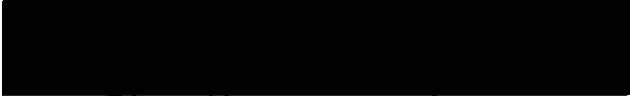
A Thesis
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12-3-4
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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at the American cultural values and symbols present on the Web page sites of a software organization and how these reflect those cultural values and symbols of Latin American society. Specifically, this thesis examines the cultural values and symbols displayed in four of the organization's Web site links, Home, Products, Services, and Industries. A total of 11 terminal and instrumental values were identified. Several values and symbols included in the Web site pages strongly reinforce the U. S. American cultural values. The author argues that the content of the Web site pages may influence or change the values of its Latin American visitors and concludes that the organization's Web site pages display a plethora of U. S. American cultural values and symbols, which is a vehicle through which hegemony and cultural imperialism can be spread.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my dear husband, Nicholas,
and our beloved sons, Sebastian and Dominic.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

Human beings have always been interested in the exchange of products and services since the beginning of time. Product and service exchange has developed throughout time conceiving and revolutionizing marketing. The American Marketing Association defines marketing as "the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives" (2004, para. 1). According to Berkowitz, Kerin, and Ridelius (1986), marketing has two main objectives: to assess the needs of prospective consumers and to satisfy these needs. By assessing consumer needs, marketing professionals look carefully at prospective consumers to understand what they need. By satisfying consumers' needs, marketing reaches consumers by looking at a series of controllable factors such as products, prices, promotions, and places.

There are several factors that influence marketing activities. The organization is the main factor and within the organization, top management, and the

marketing department are the key factors that play a role in marketing activities. Outside the organization, shareholders of a business firm, or publics of a not-for-profit organization and its suppliers, and environmental factors such as social, technological, economic, competitive, and regulatory also shape an organization's marketing activities (Berkowitz, Kerin, & Ridelius, 1986). Marketing generally occurs when (1) there are two or more groups (individuals or organizations) with unsatisfied needs, (2) there is a desire and ability on their part to satisfy them, (3) there is a way for these groups to communicate, and (4) there is something to exchange. Organizations use marketing as a process to "develop long-run master strategies for survival and growth" (Berkowitz, Kerin, & Ridelius, 1986, p. 32). This strategic management process must define the organization's businesses or missions, specify the organization's objectives, and identify the organization's opportunities.

All marketing plans include three strategic phases: the planning phase, the implementation phase, and the control phase. During the planning phase, the situation analysis (e.g., where you have been, where you are now,

where you will be), the goal setting (segment markets, identify alternative marketing opportunities, select target markets), and the marketing program (develop the budget including revenue, expenses, and margin profits) are taken into consideration. During the implementation phase, the marketing program is executed and the marketing organization designed. During the control phase, it is necessary to compare results of marketing programs with the plans to identify possible deviations and to act on these deviations correcting negative ones and exploiting the positive ones (Berkowitz, Kerin, & Ridelius, 1986).

One marketing tool used in contemporary transactions is the Internet. Modern organizations use the Internet as a marketing tool to attract consumers and persuade them to purchase their products. Because the Internet can be reached globally, visitors of a particular Web site page can be located anywhere in the world. For instance, a consumer in Europe or Asia can visit a U. S. -based site and purchase a desired product. Conducting business over the Internet is becoming an alternative to traditional media such as the telephone through telemarketers and television through shopping channels. Internet commerce,

electronic commerce, or e-commerce is the "buying and selling of products, services, or information via computer networks, mainly the Internet ... to support trading of goods and services ... and to create new market opportunities through electronic channels"

(Gunasekaran, McGaughey, & McNeil, 2004, p. 2).

According to Stephens (2001),

E-commerce is among the most significant shifts in the history of commercial enterprises. Its benefits include opportunities to define and to dominate new markets, globally as well as nationally, lower transaction costs, improve productivity, and gain a greater market share. (p. 68)

E-commerce has become the most common way of conducting business today because of its efficiency and productivity (Hoffman, & Novak, 1997; Sulaiman, 2000). It is the fastest way to reach consumers and for consumers to reach the organizations in which they are interested in dealing. However, the Internet is also a means to reach to other cultures.

Background of the Problem

The topic selected for this thesis is the examination of cultural values and symbols present in a commercial Web site page of ESRI and to what extent these

cultural values and symbols reflect Latin American cultural values and symbols. Culture has been defined in different ways, but not a single agreed upon definition exists. Goodenough (1961), for instance, argues that culture "consists of standards for deciding what is ... for deciding what can be ... for deciding what one feels about it ... for deciding what to do about it ... and for deciding how to go about doing it" (p. 522). From an anthropological perspective, culture is "always both traditional and creative; that is both the most ordinary common meanings and the finest individual meanings" (Williams, 1989, p. 4). Furthermore, culture can be treated as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another ... culture in this sense includes values, a system of values are a core element of culture" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 9). Because cultural meanings are created by collective groups and not by individuals, culture refers to shared meanings because "culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and 'making sense' of the world, in broadly similar ways" (Hall, 1997, p. 2).

Culture is assumed to be a collectivity; as a consequence, individuals in each culture share common behaviors or values. A value is a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs to others (Kluckhohn, 1961). Values deal with concepts such as evil and good, dirty and clean, dangerous and safe, ugly and beautiful, unnatural and natural, irrational and rational, and moral and immoral assuming that each value has a plus and a minus pole. Values can be classified as a relationship with other people, with things, and with the inner self and God (Hofstede, 2001). Values are embedded in cultures, thus making cultures aware of their surroundings as well as their needs and wants.

Because people in each culture feel the necessity to satisfy their needs and wants, marketing activities need to be created to solve consumer's problems. Singelis and Brown (1995) argue that there is a link between culture and behavior because "culture affects the development of an individual's psychological make-up, which in turn, affects communication behavior" (p. 355). Individuals learn different patterns of interaction based on the norms, rules, and values of their culture through

socialization (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim, & Heyman, 1996).

The consumerism movement started out of need to "increase the influence, power, and rights of consumers in their dealings with institutions of all types"

(Berkowitz, Kerin, & Ridelius, 1986, p. 83).

Organizations today take into consideration consumers' thoughts and ideas to develop their marketing concept.

Culture is known to have an effect on consumer behavior (Gattiker, Perlusz, & Bohmann, 2000; Korgaonkar, & Woling, 2002; Lee, 2000; Luna, & Gupta, 2001; Simeon, 1999; Singelis, & Brown, 1995). For instance, Singelis and Brown (1995) argue that researchers must examine how culture affects individual level processes and how they affect communication to develop further theory about culture's influence on communication. Lee (2000) develops and tests a framework for the investigation of cultural influences on consumer purchasing behavior by examining the psychological processes that intervene. The model was empirically tested in Singapore, Korea, Hong Kong, Australia, and the United States. Data were analyzed at the pooled, cultural, and individual difference levels. Theories of individualism/collectivism were applied to

the framework to derive and test specific cross-cultural hypothesis such as the impact of referent past experience and referent expectations and affordability in purchase intentions.

Luna and Gupta's (2001) model in understanding consumer behavior across cultures suggests that certain manifestations of culture such as values, heroes, rituals, and symbols can affect an individual's consumption behavior. However, little attention has been paid to the cultural aspects of a Web site (Luna, Peracchio, & de Juan, 2002). Luna, Peracchio, and de Juan (2002) provide a cognitive framework to examine the effects of cultural manifestations on Web site efficiency. These four cultural manifestations, values, heroes, rituals, and symbols were used because "they lend insight into how e-marketers can make their sites congruent with visitors' cultures" (Luna, & Gupta, 2001, p. 398; also see Hofstede, 2001). Nevertheless, this reasoning suggests that culturally congruent Web sites are those that include verbal and non-verbal content. This type of Web site should be congruent with a visitor's culture and its manifestations to "provide visitors with the possibility of choosing a culturally

appropriate click stream" (Luna, Peracchio, & de Juan, 2002, p. 400). This suggests that for an organization's Web site to successfully attract consumers or visitors, it must appeal to the consumer and the consumer's culture.

One culture of interest constitutes the majority of South America. The modern Latin American culture has been narrowly analyzed from an ideological perspective, so little understanding of this culture is known (Brunner, 1993; Calderon, 1993). For instance, Calderon (1993) believes that "Latin American cultural personality is ambiguous as multiple metamorphic as well as dynamic" (pp. 1-2) and whose cultural values have evolved since the colonial times. Accordingly, Populism is the most genuine social and cultural creation of Latin America in the 20th century modifying the people's culture, their sexuality and their ways of loving, thinking, dancing and talking (Calderon, 1993). On the other hand, Brunner (1993) defines Latin American cultural heterogeneity as a double phenomenon: one of segmentation and segmented participation in the global market of messages and symbols originating from North American hegemony, and the other on the differential participation of group and

individual local codes of reception that are transmitted from several fields such as advertising and pedagogy.

What this means is that the international market messages are being introduced into the local cultural framework leading to changes in local traditions. As can be seen, Latin American culture is being influenced by other cultures, specifically North American culture. However, this does not imply that both cultures share the same values. A vast majority of Latin American cultures score a low index of individualism. Individualism "describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that prevails in a given society" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 209) reflecting the way people live together, which has a plethora of implications for values and behavior. Among the Latin American countries with a low individualism index are Guatemala, Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru, El Salvador, and Chile (Hofstede, 2001). This contrasts with the United States, a country with the highest individualism index. Other indexes such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculine roles are also associated with the level of individualism present in a society or a cultural group. Hofstede's analysis of national cultures

in individualism provides researchers with a new paradigm to understand cultural behavior across nations.

Hofstede's work also helps draw conclusions of values and symbols present in Latin American culture.

Hofstede (2001) argues that the term value is used in all social sciences with different and sometimes unrelated meanings. However, values can be classified as the desired, what people actually desire, and the desirable, what people think they ought to desire. Several researchers have tried to further classify values (Eysenck, 1953; Eysenck, 1954; Roberts, & Hart, 1997; Rokeach, 1972; Schwartz, 1992). Schwartz (1992) conducts the most extensive research on values and classifies them into 11 categories: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, spirituality, benevolence, and universalism. These values serve both individual and collective interests (Schwartz, 1992). However, Roberts and Hart (1997) propose a more recent coding system that includes ten cultural values. These values were the result of a study conducted to understand differences in cultural value orientations of consumers in the United States and Mexico. Roberts and Hart's adapted value table appears to

be a complete and reliable source for the analysis proposed for this research because it was tested in the two cultures currently proposed, that is the United States and Latin America, in this case represented by Mexico.

Statement of the Problem

The literature reveals that the Internet has become the center of extensive research. This is due to the fact that the Internet is the newest technology being used for marketing purposes. Consumers around the world are becoming fully engaged in conducting businesses over the Internet. Internet consumers become aware of products faster than consumers relying on any other media such as radio or television advertisements. The Internet can reach markets all around the world, especially those in developing countries. Even though business conducted over the Internet in developing countries has just started, organizations are beginning to pay attention to these markets because they represent a large business opportunity. For that, organizations should consider that cultural differences exist between the local and the international markets. Culture is an important aspect of

consumer research, be that in Europe, Asia, or Latin America. To appeal to these consumers, organizations should consider the way their Web site pages attract or detract potential consumers.

The Environmental Systems Research Institute

A well-known organization that uses the Internet to reach consumers worldwide is Environmental Systems Research Institute, hereafter ESRI. The ESRI Web site was created to reach consumers interested in using their main product, a computer technology known as GIS. ESRI was founded in 1969 as a privately owned business that specialized in land use analysis projects. Originally located in an historical home among orange groves in Redlands, California, the worldwide headquarters of ESRI occupies several multilevel buildings and several acres in the same city. The early mission of ESRI focused on the principles of organizing and analyzing geographic information. In the 1980s, ESRI concentrated in developing and applying tools that could be set up in a computer environment to create a geographic information system. This is what is known today as geographic information system (GIS) technology. Today, ESRI has

become the largest research and development organization dedicated to GIS in the world by focusing on its user community. Over the years, a unique culture which is user-focused and emphasizes a team-based approach has developed. Today, ESRI employs more than 2,700 people, more than 1,400 of whom are based in Redlands, California, at the world headquarters. ESRI is privately held, debt-free, and has no plans to go public or change ownership. The company's focus remains on producing excellent software and delivering exceptional service to users (ESRI press release, 2001).

ESRI provides consulting, implementation, and technical support services through its headquarters in Redlands. Its eleven regional offices throughout the United States are located in Olympia, Denver, St Louis, San Antonio, Charlotte, Washington DC, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, and Redlands. Its international distributors are in more than 90 countries, including, Argentina, Russia, Sri Lanka, Australia, Belgium, Korea, Brazil, Canada, Italy, and Korea (ESRI press release, 2001).

ESRI provides GIS users with what they need by listening closely and incorporating their feedback and

recommended improvements. ESRI provides users with standard telephone support as well as moderated lists and discussion forums on the Internet and a variety of regional and specialty user groups. ESRI also hosts the largest GIS industry event in the world, publishes the two largest circulation periodicals in the industry, and operates the leading GIS book publisher. ESRI software is the standard in state and local government and is used by more than 24,000 state and local governments including Paris, France; Los Angeles, California, USA; Beijing, China; and Kuwait City, Kuwait. ESRI fosters relationships with more than 65 software, technology, data, hardware, system integrator, and consulting companies to ensure product compatibility and to explore new technologies. ESRI works closely with major technology partners such as Microsoft, Oracle, and Compaq (ESRI press release, 2001).

Every industry benefits from ESRI's GIS software. From retail, transportation/logistics, real estate, finance, and environmental agencies to all aspects of government, ESRI GIS software can integrate different systems to save valuable resources, visualize an organization's assets, and streamline workflow processes.

ESRI has nine main industries that contribute to the organization of the world: Business, Communications, Defense and Intelligence, Education, Engineering, Government, Health and Human Services, Natural Resources, Transportation, and Utilities (ESRI press release, 2001).

ESRI is an appropriate organization to study because it is recognized throughout the world. This organization deals with people from different cultures not only at its headquarters, but also with its users and business partners from all over the world. Daily, ESRI deals with users from different cultural backgrounds and the organization's success has to do with the way employees deal with such a diverse user community. The researcher will analyze the official Web site for ESRI located at www.esri.com. Only the links to Home, Products, Services, and Industries will be the target of this analysis. These links are chosen because they offer a closer look into what ESRI offers its visitors.

Purpose of the Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to identify what cultural values and symbols can be drawn from the ESRI official Web site pages and how they reflect Latin

America's cultural values and symbols. The Internet is a marketing tool that allows ESRI to reach consumers all over the world including those in Latin America. The Internet has a great impact on developing countries. However, only a few studies have focused on the Internet's repercussions in Latin American, African, or South East Asian countries. How a Web site page is designed also determines its efficiency. Web pages that include features of one's culture could be more effective than those that do not. The objective of this study was important for proposing new standards of communication through the Internet.

Brief Overview of Methods and Theories

This study uses a single methodology called Value Analysis. This method is useful and appropriate to address the research questions proposed in this study. Because the purpose of this study is to analyze both the values and symbols present in a Web site page, the researcher believes that the best method to apply is the value analysis. Value analysis allowed the researcher to find out those beliefs and attitudes present in a value system of a particular culture. Value Analysis is useful

because it helps the critic to believe that culture is the result of the language used by communicators involved in the process (Sillars, & Gronbeck, 2001). As can be seen, Value Analysis helps understand what aspects of culture have an effect on communication that occurs through the use of the Internet.

As for theories, the researcher uses two theories: The Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and the Value Orientation Theory (VOT). Communication Accommodation Theory is useful for this research because this theory focuses on the language used by communicators to increase or decrease communication distances. On the other hand, Value Orientation Theory is used because this theory specifically focuses on how values affect our daily interactions with others. Value Orientation Theory complements Communication Accommodation Theory in the sense that values embedded in a culture has an effect when people from that particular culture try to convey messages to the people of other cultures.

Outline of the Remainder of the Thesis

The remainder of the thesis is organized as follows:

- Chapter II: This chapter explains CAT and VOT by reviewing and providing a rationale in terms of their direct utility to this study. The chapter concludes with the research questions.
- Chapter III: This chapter includes an explanation of the Value Analysis as a critical method. Further, a review of literature is included to justify its significance for this examination.
- Chapter IV: This chapter includes an analysis of the Web site pages and findings as they relate to the research questions.
- Chapter V: This chapter summarizes the preceding chapters and presents the conclusions, suggestions, limitations of this study, and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As any other modern organization, ESRI uses the Internet to attract consumers all over the world. Its Web site has the objective of targeting particular groups interested in using the GIS technology because it is faster than any other traditional media. ESRI uses its Web site as a marketing tool to attract new users and get them interested in using the GIS technology to "help them quickly and efficiently manage and use GIS to make the world a different place" (ESRI press release, 2001). ESRI's main interest relies on users applying the GIS technology to help industries organize their geographic databases.

The Internet as a Marketing Tool

A great number of studies have examined the use of the Internet as a marketing tool (see e.g., Auger & Gallagher, 1997; Gupta & Mathur, 2002; Hoffman & Novak, 1997; Kim & Lee, 2002; Korgaonkar & Woling, 2002; Liebermann & Stashevsky, 2002; Moodley, 2002; Simeon, 1999; Srikanthiah & Xiaoying, 1998; Teo & Tan, 2002). For

instance, Hoffman and Novak (1997) conclude that the Internet has the potential to become a more efficient market place because it offsets the opportunity to fully inform consumers about goods and services as well as give more details than any other traditional media.

Teo and Tan (2002) argue that large and small businesses use the Internet as a marketing tool to make consumers aware of their products and sell them over the Internet, which created global marketing. In their analysis on Internet marketing strategies of business to consumers, the authors declared that business carried out in the Internet "involves attracting customers to the companies' Web sites and retaining them for repeat patronage" (p. 259). They believe that the main concerns of online marketers, when taking into account Internet marketing strategies, are to establish brand equity and contribute to their financial success. In their study, the authors present a model that will assure that Internet Web sites' effectiveness and success evolve around five elements: attracting users, engaging users' interest and participation, retaining users, learning about their preferences, and relating back to users to provide customized interactions. These elements appear to

be essential for Web sites to provide customers' satisfaction with the advertised products they are interested in or are willing to purchase.

Following this trend, Auger and Gallagher (1997) argue that "Internet-facilitated commerce represents one of the most exciting and potentially significant emerging market opportunities available today" (p. 5). Factors such as access to an affluent customer base, lower information dissemination costs, lower transaction costs, broader market reach, and increased service are some of the benefits that may be achieved by firms using the Internet as a commercial tool (Auger & Gallagher, 1997). Low development and maintenance costs, an interest in experimenting with a new marketing tool, the desire to promote products and build the company's image, financial considerations, benefits in obtaining and disseminating information, and competitive considerations are all motives that had an impact on customers who decide to go on line (Auger & Gallagher, 1997). Customers' preferences for choosing a particular Web site should be regarded as the main mechanism for attracting them into a company's Web site. When using this strategy, the company will start a close relationship between itself and the

customer because larger firms have a "higher level of interest in improving the firm's overall image through use of the Web site" to satisfy their customers (Auger & Gallagher, 1997, p. 71). This reasoning suggests that a Web site also helps organizations improve their images as well as businesses with customers.

Similarly, Hoffman and Novak (1997) argue that "marketing activities are difficult to implement in their present form and must be reconstructed into a paradigm more compatible with new media environments like the Web" (p. 46). It is important for organizations to improve their marketing strategies to satisfy their customers because "firms must understand not only their customers, but also the environment in which they interact" (Hoffman & Novak, 1997, p. 47). Accordingly, successful marketing efforts require a company to discover and meet customers' needs profitability and engage in marketing activities consistent with the emerging strategies that result from using the Internet (Hoffman & Novak, 1997). The Internet appears to be a very efficient tool for marketers to achieve their short- and long-term goals. The Internet has the potential to become a more efficient market place because it offers the opportunity to fully inform

consumers about goods and services as well as give more details than any other traditional media (Hoffman & Novak, 1997).

In a study addressing how consumers use the web, Korgaonkar and Woling (2002) state that marketers tend to divide the market into smaller groups of customers with similar needs and characteristics. They are typically divided according to demographics, geographic, psychographics, benefits sought, and product and service usage. The authors argue that organizations should consider their customers according to their needs if they are not classifying them into a single group and marketing their needs globally instead of individually. Korgaonkar and Woling (2002) note that "consumer usage patterns of the Web are significantly related to consumer Web advertising beliefs, attitudes towards Web advertising, shopping patterns, and demographics" (p. 201). Therefore, it is important to take into consideration the consumer when designing an organization's Web site.

Simeon (1999) argues that there is a need for an integrated approach to evaluating Internet strategies in a variety of business environments. It is expected that

"cultural differences and institutional factors will have an impact on how information and services are delivered" (p. 298). The author presents a model that examines domestic and international Web sites. The attracting, informing, positioning, and delivering (AIPD) approach is used to compare the Internet strategies of some Japanese and American banks. Simeon believes that the "main assertion of the AIPD model is that in order for a firm to develop or maximize the strategic potential of its Web site, it should enhance and integrate the site's overall capacity to attract, inform, position and deliver" (p. 299). Simeon concludes that a "firm's approach to attracting, informing, and positioning will be greatly affected by its strategic objectives as well as the nature of the business, social, and cultural environments in which it operates" (p. 305). Simeon maintained that by using the AIPD model as a guide, companies could coordinate their strategies more effectively and establish a site with strategic potential for both the domestic and international markets. A more individual approach of Internet marketing is requested when companies deal with two different worlds. Because significant differences exist between the domestic and

the international markets, not only at the economic level, but also at the cultural level, organizations should emphasize a different approach according to the target market needs.

Lightner, Yenisey, Ozok, and Salvendy (2002) conducted a study to define online shopping behavior and preferences among Turkish university students. Transaction security, information privacy, and credit card security, accurate and detailed product information, navigation and site organization speed, and negotiation, product, and price comparison were among the indicators that a new technology of online shopping are issues among this population. The study is compared to the shopping behavior and preferences among American students. The authors find that (1) Turkish subjects are more interested than Americans in the speed of retrieving information, (2) price comparison and perceived accuracy of information are more important to the Turkish students than to the American students, and (3) Turkish students are more concerned with Internet security than American students. The authors propose that for the design of e-commerce for use by Turkish university students to (1) change the perception of security in e-commerce sites,

(2) provide bidding possibilities for product purchase, and (3) develop technology to provide the perception of physical feelings for products. The authors conclude that further investigation is required to discover how much of the differences between Turkish and American students are due to shopping behavior preferences, site design preferences, or technology issues. It can be seen from this study that Internet preferences are closely related to one's cultural and economic background.

In addition, Liebermann and Stashevsky (2002) conducted research to investigate what are the perceived barriers to Internet use and e-marketing by both Israeli users and non-users. Nine risk components are identified: (1) Internet credit card stealing, (2) supplying personal information, (3) pornography and violence, (4) vast Internet advertising, (5), information reliability, (6) lack of physical contact, (7) not supplying Internet products purchased, (8) missing the human side in Internet purchases, and (9) Internet usage addiction. A model used to analyze the variables that affect perceived risk elements is proposed. These elements are demographic traits such as gender, age, marital status, and education. Liebermann and Stashevsky (2002) found that

there is a relationship between the demographic traits and the usage behavior effects. As can be seen, other elements apart from economy and culture play a role in Web site effectiveness.

Kim and Lee (2002) conducted a study to investigate the design factors that influence substantially the performance of e-commerce systems. The authors argue that some design factors, such as content, structure, interaction, and presentation, influence the user's perception of service quality level, which in turn has an impact on the final performance of the e-commerce system. The way a Web page is designed has a great influence on the customer's preference for a particular Web page because "the overall quality of an e-commerce system can be measured by the level of service quality that customers perceive in that system" (Kim & Lee, 2002, p. 187). Internet commerce should be regarded as an integrated service that includes several factors, such as web design in contrast with traditional software that constitute an individual product (Kim & Lee, 2002, p. 187). A survey was employed to analyze the critical design factors that have an influence on customer's preferences for a particular Web site. The authors found

that the information phase was the most important phase among the four transaction phases (information, agreement, settlement, environment).

A second study was conducted to identify the critical design factors that are closely related to the service quality of the e-commerce site. The five service qualities, tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, were significantly related to the design factors of e-commerce systems. According to the results, the information phase was the most important among the four market transaction phases. Concrete design factors, which were important to the five dimensions of the service quality of e-commerce systems in the information phase, were found to be closely related to the final performance of these systems (Kim & Lee, 2002). When designing a Web site, organizations should follow a step-by step process to ensure their Web site will satisfy their customers.

Accordingly, Sulaiman (2000) states that e-commerce involves five different activities, that is, advertising, marketing, order and delivery, payment and customer support, and services. Sulaiman (2000) investigated the trend of the e-commerce applications use among

organizations in Malaysia as well as the factors that hindered them from using more e-commerce applications. Sulaiman concludes that e-mail is the most widely used e-commerce application because it is probably the cheapest to implement. Further, Sulaiman finds that organizations used homepages or websites to display information about the products they offer. E-commerce applications are used to improve customer-support service and customer relationships (Sulaiman, 2000). However, security and financial concerns were found to be barriers for implementing e-commerce. Sulaiman (2000) concluded that factors hindering organizations in adopting e-commerce, especially in developing countries, is the transformation of legal and regulatory environment.

Gibbs, Kraemer, and Dedrick (2003) argue that in organizations today there is pressure to compete at the global level, calling for the adoption of e-commerce and the Internet, which are important vehicles contributing to the globalization process. In their study about e-commerce diffusion, they include both developed and developing countries (France, Denmark, Germany, United States, Brazil, Mexico, China, Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan). They conclude that for B2B (business to

business) e-commerce global competition and participation in global production networks create strong pressure to adopt e-commerce, while B2C (business to consumer) are more affected by variables specific to the national and local environment, such as consumer preferences, retail structure, and local language and cultural factors. This conclusion suggests that:

Digital divide between countries may limit the potential value of B2B e-commerce more so than B2C. A country's position in the global economy is largely dependent on location, or labor cost so that the impacts of B2B e-commerce may be limited. However a digital divide may be turned into a digital opportunity for local firms who understand local language, customs, and culture and are close to the end users so they can discover and produce useful content and services. (p. 16)

Corbitt (2000) declares that for an organization to implement e-commerce successfully, the organization must

- (1) be fully committed,
- (2) have an executive sponsor,
- (3) have an operating sponsor to provide quick feedback across the organization,
- (3) have a supply of hardware and software support, and frequent access to it by users,
- (4) have fast interaction of software changes throughout the organization,
- (5) training,
- (6) feedback from managers, and
- (7) have positive evaluation of costs and benefits of the information process being used.

Corbitt

states that "politics, power and influence are also important to consider in the success or failure of electronic commerce within organizations" (p. 128). This reasoning suggests that organizations must develop closer ties with the local governments and develop common interests with them to attain organizational success.

Gattiker, Perlusz, and Bohmann (2000) state that additional research is needed to enhance our understanding of the theoretical and empirical differences and similarities between nations and cultures, and how they may affect the assessment of moral issues in conjunction with the Internet. The authors argue that attitudes about the Web and Web behaviors differ across cultures. For instance, in their study the researchers found that American students pay more attention to having their privacy protected while using a Web site and are less prone to Web surfing at work for private purposes than their European counterparts. They also argue that older people spend less time on the Web, do more surfing at home than at work, and are less likely to surf the Web due to perceived risks. They state that the Internet community might represent a community with different values and that its size might affect Web

behaviors. Gattiker and his associates conclude that the "Internet allows firms to revitalize the personalized dimension of retailing, distribution, and servicing of clients by being able to do one-to-one selling irrespective of the customer's location" (p. 137). They suggest that to "take advantage of the new opportunities being offered by Web technologies to organizations and individuals requires a better understanding of how people feel, what they believe and, how these elements affect behavior" (p. 138). Targeted consumers' attitudes and beliefs are primordial when designing a Web page to ensure the organization's market success.

The Internet and Developing Countries

A few studies have also tried to examine the impact that the Internet has on developing countries (see e.g., Moodley, 2002; Panagariya, 2000; Pare, 2003; Sprano & Zakak, 2000, Srikantaiah & Xiaoying, 1998; Tigre, 2003). For instance, in their study about the impact of the Internet in China and India, Srikantaiah and Xiaoying (1998) conclude that for developing countries to achieve faster economic growth, they should (1) implement electronic information delivery systems; (2) be more

aware of the Internet and how important it is for policy makers both at the executive level and the political level, and (3) raise literacy levels. The use of the Internet in developing countries is still at a beginner's stage. Internet marketers from the developed countries should keep this into account when targeting developing countries. On the other hand, marketers in developing countries should be aware of how fast the Internet technology changes and the new possibilities it can bring to their customers.

When dealing with the repercussions of the Internet in the developing world, Moodley (2002) argues that "Internet-based business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce promises to have a profound impact on the economic relationship between the industrially advanced countries of the north and the less developed economies of the south" (p. 31). Marketers in the developed world should be aware of these differences when offering services to marketers in the developing world because the "potential of B2B e-commerce to promote economic development in the third world is an issue which needs to be rigorously researched" (Moodley, 2002, p. 31). Most of the research on consumer behavior targets the U. S. market forgetting

that markets in the developing world are increasing and becoming more important to the world economy day by day.

Sprano and Zakak (2000) recommend that private organizations look to invest in developing countries and that governments develop policies and regulations that support the establishment of a reliable technical infrastructure upon which thriving e-business can be built. Panagariya (2000) discusses the multilateral (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [GATT] or the General Agreement on Trade in Services [GATS]) and national aspects of electronic commerce in developing countries. The authors argue that "the developing countries interested in promoting this medium may have to speed up their efforts to build the telecommunications industry and to create financial infrastructure necessary for electronic transactions" (para. 3). Tigre (2003) argues that the "Internet presents both a window of opportunity for economic and social development, and a threat to further widening the gap between developed and developing countries" (p. 33). Further, Tigre posits that "consumers are increasingly demanding products from Web sites located in their own countries" (p. 41). There are several reasons for this trend. The first is the

language. Accordingly, consumers are more willing to make purchases in sites designed in their own language. The second is logistic. Local deliveries seem to be faster than overseas deliveries. The third reason deals with legal and statutory facts. Users are more familiar with local rules and practices feeling more secure when buying locally. When dealing with international consumers, an organization's Web site must take into account these consumers' local cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs to ensure a successful customer relationship.

Organizations tend to apply their customary way of conducting business when dealing with international customers. Tigre (2003) concludes that the application of and access to the Internet and the World Wide Web are likely to enable a reduction in overall transaction costs that is sufficient to facilitate entry into new global markets by developing country producer firms.

Pare (2003) argues that the "wisdom of B2B e-commerce is that its implementation has the capacity to enable producer firms in developing countries to sell their products and services more easily in external markets by potentially reducing the transaction costs they must incur to participate in international trade"

(p. 123). Pare stated that "the application of and access to the Internet and the World Wide Web are likely to be sufficient to reduce transaction costs associated with trading in international markets to a level that create new trading opportunities for many developing country producer firms" (p. 123). Pare proposes a methodology that will provide a means for critically assessing some of the claims about the implications of B2B e-commerce for producer firms located in developing countries.

Much research has examined the link between the Internet usability and culture (see e.g., Croft, 1995; Dop, 2001; Hongladarom, 2002; Kacen, & Lee, 2002; Kaynak, 1985; Kaynak, & Venkataraman, 1992; Luna, Peracchio, & de Juan, 2002; 2003; Roth, 1995). For instance, Kaynak (1985) reports that decisions faced by international marketers have to do with the task of comparing marketing systems in countries in which these marketers have an interest with the methods of marketing, which are applicable in the home country. Consequently, short- and long-term marketing strategies relevant to the international environment can be developed.

Kaynak and Venkataraman (1992) state that "the basic nature of marketing does not change from domestic to

international marketing, but marketing outside national boundaries does create certain opportunities and pose some special problems. International marketing, unlike domestic marketing, requires operating simultaneously in more than one kind of environment, coordinating these operations, and using the experience gained in one country for marketing decisions in another country" (p. 245). This reasoning suggests that local marketing will help international marketing in avoiding making mistakes that will have a negative effect on the consumer. Later on, Kacen and Lee (2002) analyze the consumer impulsive behavior in non-western cultures. Their study shows that both regional level factors (individualism-collectivism) and individual cultural differences (independent-interdependent self-concepts) influence impulsive purchase behavior.

Following this trend, Hongladarom (2002) states:

The Internet itself has become a powerful ideological tool capable of altering how cultures and societies view themselves and their worlds. Local cultures face the problem of finding a balance between becoming totally immersed in the Internet, facing the possibility of losing their identities, and keeping the Internet out altogether, which would mean that the cultures in questions would have to be isolated from the rest of the world. (p. 241)

Hongladarom's main purpose was to look at how the Internet has an impact on social and cultural aspects of a culture. Hongladarom argues that despite new technologies, local cultures must learn to retain their identities while dealing with the Internet and the world.

In electronic communication, the message sender cannot hear the tone of receiver's voice or see his/her body language, which can cause misunderstanding between sender and receiver. Therefore, Dop (2001) designed a study to investigate the belief that cross-cultural differences can deny some of the benefits of using e-mail for international communications. The author argues that culture could have a strong relationship on trust when dealing with people from other cultures.

In a study conducted by Croft (1995), the author explains how information technology also poses many challenges to communicators such as logistic barriers, cultural hurdles, and language barriers. Language and culture should play an important role in developing new technologies. Language is a primordial element of culture and reflects the culture itself. Therefore, language usage should be also taken into consideration when designing international Web sites.

Similarly, Roth (1995) reports that although managers consider some cultural and socioeconomic conditions of foreign countries in forming their international brand images strategies, and those conditions moderate the market share effects of their grand image strategies, managers could enhance brand performance by broadening the information they use in making global brand image strategy decisions.

Saphiere (2000) generates a list of attributes to keep in mind when working with intercultural groups. The list includes tips such as: (a) being mindful and comfortable with silence, (b) encouraging different viewpoints, (c) avoiding debates, (d) observing and telling stories, (e) knowing yourself, (f) normalizing diversity and acknowledging that values are a system for decision-making, and (g) estimating one's timeline and then doubling it. This list seem to be useful for interpersonal encounters; however, they can be also applied when designing an organization's Web site.

Luna, Peracchio, and de Juan (2002) examine some site content characteristics that can lead Web site visitors to an optimal navigational experience, or flow, in a cross-cultural context. A cognitive framework

focuses on the effect of culture on attitudes toward the site and flow. The authors suggest that the congruity of a Web site with a visitor's culture is a site content characteristic that influences the likelihood of experiencing flow. More recently, Luna, Peracchio, and de Juan (2003) examine the effects of language, graphics, and culture on bilingual consumers' Web sites and product evaluation. The authors suggest that attitudinal measures are influenced by the interaction of Web site language with two types of congruity: graphic and cultural congruities.

Web Page Design

An abundant number of studies have been published regarding Web page design (see, e.g., Hager, Kibler, & Zack, 1999; Kotamraju, 2002; Ozok & Salvendy, 2001; Pinna, 2000; Proctor, Vu & Salvendy, 2002; Teo, Oh, Liu, & Wei, 2003; Van Schaik & Ling, 2001;). For instance, Ozok and Salvendy (2001) developed a methodology to measure all aspects of computer interface consistency and assess the impact of linguistic inconsistency of interface design on user performance. They found that text structure, general text features, information

representation, lexical categories, meaning, user knowledge, text context, communicational attributes and physical attributes contribute to Web design consistency. Language and graphic consistency seems to decrease errors in Web design, thus, increasing Web page efficiency.

Proctor, Vu, and Salvendy (2002) argue that to help ensure that user's interactions with the Internet are successful, preparation of content and its presentation to users must take into account (1) what information needs to be extracted, (2) the way this information should be stored and organized, (3) the methods for retrieving the information, and (4) how the information should be displayed. This article discusses the generic problems facing content preparation and evaluates current methods available to help remedy them, as well as identify areas in which more research is needed.

Teo, Oh, Liu, and Wei (2003) argue that "little is understood as to what Web design features contribute to Web users' attitude, a major component of the usability of a Web site" (p. 281). They add that companies and designers need to make sure that the Web site the consumer is interacting with is user friendly to derive maximum benefits from commercial Web sites. They argue

that "despite the growing interest toward web usability, little is understood about the outcomes of Web design features and their contribution towards Web users' attitudes, a major component of Web usability" (p. 282). Their study focused on investigating the effects of interactivity level on users' attitude towards commercial Web sites. Teo, Oh, Liu, and Wei examine the potential Web features that will improve commercial Web sites' usability, which has a central focus on human-computer interaction. They conclude that satisfaction might be the largest contributing factor in forming user's perceived Web site value.

Interactivity level also influences the effectiveness of information delivery on a Web site. Teo, Oh, Liu, and Wei (2003) also find that both cognitive elements (value) and effective elements (satisfaction) contribute to attitude formation, which implies that a higher perceived value of a Web site contributes to the formation of more favorable attitudes towards it. They suggest that "e-commerce merchants should no longer place secondary importance to interface design and Web site features over other product-related factors" (p. 300). This reasoning suggests that a product by itself is not

the only important subject in marketing but also how this product is presented in a Web site.

The literature reveals that the Internet has become the center of extensive research. This is due to the fact that the Internet is the latest technology being used for marketing purposes. Consumers around the world are becoming fully engaged in conducting businesses over the Internet. Internet consumers become aware of products faster than consumers relying on any other media such as radio or television advertisements. The Internet can reach markets all around the world, especially those in developing countries. Even though business conducted over the Internet in developing countries has just started, organizations are on the way to paying attention to these markets because they represent a large business opportunity. For that, organizations should consider that cultural differences exist between the local and the international markets.

Understanding Latin American Culture

Some research has examined the culture of Latin American countries and their cultures (see, e.g., Arbera, 1995; Brody, 1994; Brunner, 1993; Calderon, 1993;

Gorlier, 1998; Gouveia, Albuquerque, Clemente, & Espinosa, 2002; Macune, 1997; Masiello, 1996; Sarlo, 1999; Schwaller, 1992; Turner & Elordi, 1995). For instance, Turner and Elordi (1995) analyzed the ways in which popular participation plays a role in the contemporary process of economic reform in Latin America. For that, using data from the World Values Study from the early 1980s and 1990s several Latin American nations, namely Chile, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, were compared to understand the contemporary values and their role in economic reform. The most basic values in the World Values Study, freedom and equality, were compared. The authors conclude that urban residents in these four countries chose the value of individual freedom over that of social equality. These residents strongly opposed state ownership of enterprises during the 1990s. Different patterns of values occur within each country. Brazilians support value of equality as well as economic freedom for individuals and a more open government. Mexican attitudes and values were closer to those of the United States than those of Argentines, Brazilians, or Chileans. The upper class are more committed to the value of freedom and the middle class value jobs that allow for

personal initiative, while the working class support equality. Overall, individual freedom is more valued than equality of social condition or income distribution favoring private ownership or a mixture between owners and workers.

Gouveia, Albuquerque, Clemente, and Espinosa (2002) examined social identities (identification with in-groups and geospatial units) in Brazil and Spain. In this study, participants were given five different questionnaires to measure individualism/collectivism, values, in-group identification, geospatial identification and demographic information. Results confirm that the importance attributed to social values is correlated with traditional in-group and local geospatial identification, and that values predicting social identities are different across cultures. For social human values, belonging and tradition were the most important to explain social identities. Geospatial identification was based on the values religiosity and belonging for Brazilians and tradition, social order, honesty, and power for Spaniards. The authors conclude that value constructs are important to explain attitudes, behaviors, and social identities.

Arbera (1995) analyzed the extent to which language is an integral part of culture viewing foreign language intrusion as an expression of cultural imperialism and a threat to the recipient culture's own vitality and ability to survive. Arbera analyzed the influence of English and North American sports language and their linguistic consequence in Latin America for adopting, modifying, and fusing foreign (mainly English) vocabulary in Latin American societies. These consequences have taken four identifiable forms: (1) direct incorporation of English terms, (2) phonetic transcription of English words, (3) the invention of equivalent terms by analytic translations, and (4) the use of figurative, synthetic, or phonetic translation that creates false cognates (Arbera, 1995). Arbera uses parody to make these analyses. The inclusion of a foreign sports language is an expression of cultural imperialism and students found this offensive and feel it is an attack to their language and culture. Language generally provides insights of the relationship between sports and socio-historical processes (Arbera, 1995).

In an analysis of changes in Latin America at the end of the 20th century, Macunes (1997) analyzed the

political transformation of Latin America in favor of democracy. The author argues that religion, society, and culture are still facing changes. However, racial and ethnic events are also on the rise. Latin America has been changing politically, economically, socially, and culturally as the same time global changes are occurring.

In their content analysis of television advertisements of three different markets, the American, the Hispanic American, and the Mexican, Roberts and Harts (1997) found that among ten cultural values analyzed (modernity, tradition, individualism, collectivism, hedonism, performance, "being", "doing", masculinity and femininity), there was a significant difference among the communities studied. However, the identified cultural value orientations of the Hispanic American community fell partially between the value orientations of the Mexican and the American communities. Advertising reflecting "well the commonly-held values of its target audience will clearly result in a better delivered promotional message" (Roberts & Harts, 1997, p. 97). This conclusion may lead one to believe that the same could be applied to Internet marketing. If a Web page reflects the visitor's cultural values, it will have a more positive

effect than one that does not contain commonly held values. Gregory and Munch (1997), who examined how consistencies in collectivistic values affect attitudes and behaviors towards advertised products within a collectivistic culture such as Mexico, support these conclusions. Advertisements that show consistencies in local cultural norms and roles are viewed more favorably and purchase intention is higher than for advertisements that show inconsistencies (Gregory & Munch, 1997).

Culture is an important aspect of consumer research, be that in Europe, Asia, or Latin America. To appeal to these consumers, organizations should consider the way their Web site pages attract potential consumers. One way to attract potential consumers through Web site pages is taking into consideration the visitors' cultural background. When organizations design Web site pages that reflect cultural values of the target market, these pages have more effects and as a consequence, consumers will be a more potential market to attract and purchase the products because they share some cultural values.

Theoretical Approaches

As the purpose of this research is to identify the cultural values and symbols present in the ESRI Web site pages, two communication theories will guide the research. Specifically, the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and the Value Orientation Theory (VOT) are relied upon for this investigation.

The Communication Accommodation Theory

Giles (1973) first introduced the concepts of convergence and divergence as strategies speakers use to signal their attitudes to each other. Giles defined convergence, as the process that involves changing one's linguistic (language, dialect, vocabulary, speech style) or paralinguistic behavior (tone of voice, speech rate) so as to be more similar to one's conversational partner to seek approval, enhance comprehension, or show similarity. As divergence, the author stated that speakers emphasize differences between their own and their partners' speech.

Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, and Coupland (1988) further developed the concept of accommodation by merging Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) with Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory (ELIT) to form Communication

Accommodation Theory (CAT). This theory is primarily "concerned with the communicative moves speakers make in interactions relative to the operative social and psychological contexts and relative to each other's communicative characteristics" (pp. 157-158). Thus CAT is useful in understanding socio-psychological processes involved in communication acts. Specifically, CAT offers an approach in understanding how the Internet as a communication tool is related to the consumer socio-psychological contexts, more precisely values and symbols.

According to Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile and Hiroshi (1995), CAT contributes to our understanding of interactions such as linguistic practices and perceptions that occur between two cultural groups, by paying attention to the language, non-verbal behavior and paralanguage used by interlocutors to realize those linguistic moves used to decrease (converge) or increase (diverge) communicative distance. By using CAT, Gallois et al. argue that the theory will help explain episodes of intercultural communication as well as predict them based on features of the communicators. They further explain that CAT "is a cross-contextual theory that

emphasizes the communality in motivation, communication strategies, and reactions to the behavior of others that characterize communication across all kinds of intergroup encounters" (p. 116). Gallois et al. argue that CAT is useful to apply to intercultural research because "it recognizes both objective and subjective features in intercultural communication since it is concerned with predictions that are not situated within a static input-output model of interaction" (p. 124). They added that CAT "predicts the motivated communicative process of convergence and divergence thus making it an objective theory that highlights subjective dimensions of intercultural interactions" (p.124). CAT as an objective theory allows the researcher to draw objective conclusions in intercultural research giving more credibility to the research.

Gallois et al. also argue that the CAT is a theory that understands communication processes as interpersonal undertakings. They argue that this theory provides "an account of interpersonal interactions, with their motivations, antecedents, and consequences, in intergroup settings, including intercultural ones" (p. 125). Because members of various cultures have communication styles and

rules, miscommunication is bound to happen. Since culture has an influence in interpersonal relationships, "theories of intercultural communication must incorporate features of cultural variability" (Gallois et al., 1995, p. 125). This theory "can deal with culture both as a predictor of communication and as something manifest in the process of communication (e.g., language, vocabulary, accent)" (p. 126). Also, CAT "acknowledges the importance of context in intercultural communication and take more account of the sociostructural context" (p. 126). This reasoning suggests that CAT is a theory that acknowledges linguistic differences of people involved in any communication process, even on the Internet.

A number of studies have used CAT to understand sociolinguistic patterns in an academic context (Jones & Gallois, 1995; Jones, Gallois, Callan, & Barker, 1999), language style differences in graffiti (Green, 2003), during middle childhood (Robertson & Murachver, 2003), in bilingual conversations (Heinz, 2003), adolescent intergroup perspective (Fortman, 2003), in culturally heterogeneous groups (Oyoke, Hartel, & Callan, 2002); in intracultural dyadic groups (Li, 2001; Ling & Cegula, 1994), speech style (Willemyns & Gallois, 1997), and

nonverbal strategies (Gregory Jr., & Webster, 1996). For instance, Robertson and Murachver (2003) examined children's gendered language during middle childhood and how this is influenced by linguistic and social context by applying CAT. On the other hand, Heinz (2003) examined the differences in American English and German backchannel behavior and investigated backchannel behavior in interactions between monolingual and bilingual Germans. Heinz conducted two studies: the first study documented significant differences in the frequency and placement of backchannel responses among monolingual German speakers and monolingual American English speakers. Results show that German speakers produce fewer backchannel responses and place these responses less frequently in overlapping positions than American speakers. The second study revealed that native Germans who have become equally proficient in American English, when they speak to other native Germans in German, produce a higher number of backchannel responses and more often in overlapping positions than do monolingual Germans.

Some studies have used CAT to study communication patterns and behaviors (see, e. g. Buller & Aune, 1992;

Buzzanel, Burrell, Stafford, & Berkowitz, 1996; Gregory Jr., & Green, 2001; Harwood, 2000; Meyer, 2001; Meyerhoff, 1998; Watson & Gallois, 1998; Willemyns, Gallois, & Callan, 2000; Williams & Giles, 1996; Williams, Giles, Coupland, Dalby, & Manasse, 1990). For instance, Buzzanel et al. (1996) illustrate the applicability of CAT to situations involving messages left on telephone answering machines analyzing, thus, the immediacy of message convergence. On the other hand, Williams et al. (1990) examined the theoretical model of the communicative contexts of elderly social support and health using an outline of the proposed CAT. Later on, using CAT, Meyerhoff (1998) pinned down the evanescent links between speakers' identities and their linguistic behavior.

Evident in the literature, CAT is useful when applying it to a communication process within an intercultural context. CAT has been used to understand language behavior that occurs in multicultural societies. The language used in the ESRI Web pages affects its visitors thus having an effect on the company. Since CAT is directed to understanding linguistic behaviors among interactors, understanding linguistic behaviors of

international visitors to ESRI Web pages is necessary. Specifically, understanding linguistic behaviors of Latin American consumers will help the researcher understand the implications they have for the company's marketing strategies.

While CAT is typically used in dyadic, synchronous communication, this study extends the theory to Web site investigation involving asynchronous communication. This theory is useful in terms of cross-cultural communication in that cultural manifestations such as symbols, including language and graphics of ESRI Web site, will allow the researcher to understand how the cultural artifacts act as a means of dominating other cultures. Barker (2000) argues that this form of cultural imperialism "act[s] as vehicles for corporate marketing ... to produce and reinforce local attachments to US capitalism" (p. 115). Texts included in a Web site page that do not reflect other visitors' culture does not acknowledge the cultural differences, therefore, creating not only miscommunication but also can be seen as a way of U. S. businesses imposing their culture and ideologies on Latin American culture. Language is an artifact that carries a lot of cultural meaning because it is a tool to

communicate values and beliefs. What this study seeks to discover is how linguistic behaviors such as language and graphics of the ESRI Web site converges or diverges from the linguistic behavior of consumers in Latin America. If the symbols and language of the Web site emphasize similarities or differences to those of Latin American culture, and the impact they have in cross-cultural communication are also objectives of this research.

Regardless of the benefits CAT offers, the researcher believes that CAT focuses only on communicators' linguistic and paralinguistic behaviors. Attention on the effects of values on asynchronous communication is neglected and therefore a theory that emphasizes the nature of values is needed.

The Value Orientation Theory

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) stated that "value orientations are complex but definitely patterned principles, which include three elements of the evaluative process, the cognitive, the affective, and the directive elements ... that give order and direction to the ever-flowing stream of human acts and thoughts as these relate to the solution of 'common human' problems" (p. 4). Value orientations are classified based on three

general assumptions: (1) that there is a limited number of common human problems for which all peoples at all times must find some solution, (2) that while there is variability in solutions of all the problems, it is neither limitless nor random, but is definitely variable within a range of possible solutions, and (3) that all alternatives of all solutions are present in all societies at all times but are differentially preferred (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). Common to all human groups are five problems stated in the form of questions: (1) what is the character of innate human nature? (Human-nature orientation); (2) what is the relationship of man to nature? (Man-nature orientation); (3) what is the temporal focus of human life? (time orientation); (4) what is the modality of human activity? (activity orientation), (5), what is the modality of man's relationship to other men (relational orientation) (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). VOT suggests that societies develop these five orientations with no ordering of preferences. Human-nature orientation requires "constant control and disciplines of the self if any real goodness is to be achieved, and the danger of regression is always present" (p. 13). This orientation

deals with the evil, the good, and the mixture of the two. Man-nature orientation deals with how man relates to nature, be that of subjugation (people have little or no control over nature), harmony (people are an extension of nature), or mastery (people have a duty to overcome nature). The time orientation deals with how societies deal with their conception of the past, the present, and the future. The activity orientation "deals with people in the culture 'being' (passively accepting), 'being-in-becoming' (transforming), or 'doing' (initiation action)" (Jandt, 2001, p. 228). The relational orientation refers to how people relate to other people, namely how they establish interpersonal relationships linear, collateral, or individualistic. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) argue that the assumptions used to classify value orientations "postulate a variation in emphasis on the orientation of any given range" (p. 28) starting the relational orientation, which suggests the most variations in all the orientations. Ranking can be found among ethnic groups and social classes which tend to dominate and change others' values. Societies may have many types of variantly oriented subgroups which will not escape being influenced by the dominant ones or survived numerous

relationships to the dominant ones. (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). The authors argue that there is a reciprocal relationship between value orientations and the 'behavior sphere', "people who have a particular ordering of value orientations will give predominant positions to a particular behavior sphere ... and that the predominance of a particular behavior sphere is indicative of a particular ordering of value orientations" (p. 29).

VOT is necessary then for cultural change because it concerns the function of the variant pattern and the variant individual, which arise in society because of strains created by dominant orientations. These cultural changes are "the result of the interplay of internal variations and external forces, which are themselves variable" (p. 43). This reasoning suggests that dominant cultural values changing at the individual level are important for cultural changes to occur at the organizational level. VOT allows an understanding of how the dominant values present can be changed when variants outside and inside an organization are detected.

A great number of studies have used VOT to understand different social patterns such as

relationships in families (Anderson, 1990; McIntyre, 1999; Papajohn, 1979; Zern, 1969), in the academic setting (Fischman, 1996), and among regions in the United States (Gillin, 1995). For instance, McIntyre (1999) draws on the author's clinical work with different cultural groups in the US and Portugal to assert the need for a culturally sensitive family therapy. A Portuguese family is used to illustrate cultural understanding and its implications for a culturally sensitive family therapy with other Portuguese families. McIntyre defined the two main tasks for culturally sensitive family therapists as "to know their own culture" and "to know the culture of the family coming to them" (p. 91). Through the application of cultural value orientation theory to Portuguese and American families, McIntyre demonstrates how these value orientations are reflected in family organization in these cultures, influencing the family definition, distribution of roles and responsibilities, and discipline practices, among others. The relevance of these cultural influences for conducting family therapy with Portuguese families is described in terms of their attitudes toward seeking help, the processes of joining and accommodating, the definition of

the problem, and the intervention strategies used. This chapter concludes with some suggestions for facilitating a culturally sensitive family therapy, which may be used in working with families from other cultures. These conclusions can be also applied when examining Web site pages.

On the other hand, Fischman (1996) describes how long held theories about technical rationality impose restrictions on the development of intercultural competence. Research findings were based on responses of professional educators at twenty-two universities in thirteen states. Data was collected from June of 1993 through December of 1994. Participants were asked to respond to the film *A Different Place: The Intercultural Classroom*, which depicts cultural conflicts in a university classroom. The script for the intervention was based on VOT. Observations, field notes, group discussions, focus groups and tape-recorded interviews with participants who watched the film yielded data on which the subsequent analysis was based. The study identified the on-going conflict between rational and non-rational perspectives that continue to constrain professional educators from developing intercultural

competence. The responses to the film intervention demonstrate that the development of intercultural competence is restricted by cultural paradigms about education and research that delegitimize the understanding of non-rational elements. The findings of the study revealed: (1) an imperative to prepare interculturally competent educators; (2) the centrality of recognizing, accepting and legitimizing implicit aspects of culture--the subtle and unseen factors that influence the complex interactions among cultures, such as the role of emotions and value orientations knowledge in learning and teaching; and (3) the necessity to develop more effective training materials and educational practices that will foster intercultural competence development among college and university professionals.

Anderson (1990) focused on group work with families in Singapore. Singapore is an economically developed East Asian nation populated predominately by three ethnic groups: Chinese, Malay, and Indian. These groups have experienced a wider culture in transition, affecting their family group culture. Through the use of the sensitizing conceptual frameworks of family cultural reality and value orientation theory, a multicultural

perspective is presented and applied to group work with Singapore families. The framework can be applied to practice with the family and other small groups in similar multicultural contexts where members experience the effects of swift social change.

Papajohn (1979) examined the effect of culture change on the mental health of Greek-American families living in the Boston area through the use of VOT. A comparison was made between a sample of 34 families with a second generation schizophrenic member and a matched group of 17 families without a history of manifest psychopathology. A detailed statistical analysis of the data obtained through the use of the Value Orientation Schedule is provided. Among the results it was found that parents in the patient families were more likely to have adhered closely to traditional Greek value orientations, even after 40 years in the United States.

Zern (1969) conducted a cross-cultural sample of linguistically independent and geographically separate societies that were rated on the degree of group cohesiveness (with items such as presence or absence of localized clans, lineage systems, and extended family residence patterns), and values and norms describing

premarital sexual behavior. The more cohesive family units placed more restrictions on premarital sexual behavior; there was no relationship, between family structure and norms. This relationship, and others among the various indices, is discussed in terms of a limited application of VOT.

Jandt (2001) used VOT to describe several cultural patterns that are characteristic of the majority of people in the United States and have an influence on communication. Jandt concluded the following:

People in the United States generally believe in a supreme god or universal spirit and believe they can control nature. They have a lot of faith in science and technology and are materialistic. They place a high value on time and have future time orientation. Two beliefs related to human nature, rationality and mutability, are still believed by many Americans. One of the most fundamental beliefs of people in the United States is individualism. Americans also have an unshakeable belief in equality and are conformists. (pp. 254-255)

Jandt's study shows some of the primary values in people in the United States as classified by Hofstede (2001).

Cronen and Shuter (1983) use VOT to specifically identify the specific ways cultural values can influence communication variables. They argue that there is a need to "postulate a range of communication outcomes for a

specific communication variable when a certain value orientation is preeminent" (p. 109). They conducted several analyses of different cultures (Nigeria, the United States, Japan, and Italy) using assumptions derived from VOT. They conclude that this theory is useful because it: (1) emphasizes various continua of values at the level of culture, (2) is a structural theory that describes layers of social organization and examines the transformation by which the higher level of cultural values is made manifest in particular kinds of face-to-face social actions, (3) suggests that life scripts, relationships, episodes, and rules can be better understood and predicted if cultural values can be systematically isolated, and (4) offers possibility of establishing cultural linkage to isolated communication acts. In reviewing the literature, it is clear that VOT is a useful theory to rely upon for the proposed study. Identifying the dominant cultural values that an organization shows through its Web site is necessary to understand the communication effects they have on other cultures.

Lebedko (2003) conducted an analysis of the axiological profile of Russian and American cultures

using VOT. The author concluded that axiospheres in both cultures "consist of values and highly abstract concepts that are represented by a variety of verbal and nonverbals indicators of cultural specificity" (p. 198). Using VOT will allow the researcher to identify communication acts specific to each culture and how they relate to each other.

Using VOT in cross-cultural communication research allows understanding similarities and differences in communication patterns of two different cultural groups through the set of cultural values that are characteristic of each cultural group. VOT is used in this research to understand how cultural values can influence communication through the Internet. Furthermore, this theory is useful to understand the nature of human values, specifically the cultural values that can be seen in the ESRI Web site and how other cultures interact with these values. Since VOT focuses on the five problems suggested by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, it is important to understand how they relate to this research. These five orientations, human nature, man-nature, time, activity, and relational can be used to measure the values of ESRI's Web site as follows:

1. Time orientation: What aspects of time does the ESRI's Web site primarily focus? To maintain traditional values (past), to accommodate traditional values (present), or to change traditional values (future)?
2. Human nature orientation: What is the relationship of ESRI's Web site with the environment? Does the Web site imply its products are the only possible products (mastery)? Do they imply other products can be used (harmony)? Do they imply other products are better than its own (subjugation)?
3. Activity orientation: How does ESRI's Web site emphasize its values? Do these values emphasize the organization's values (Being)? Do they develop the organization's internal values (Being-in-becoming)? Do they emphasize external motivations of the organizations and those outside the organization (Doing)?
4. Relational orientation: How does ESRI's Web site show relationships with other people? Does a group of people discuss content of the Web site (collateral)? Does ESRI decide on the content alone

(lineal)? Does a particular group of people decide (individualistic)?

5. Man-nature orientation: Does ESRI's Web site reflect any goodness to achieve? Does it show its interest to help others (good)? Does it sometimes (mixture)? Does not reflect any goodness at all (bad)?

Both CAT and VOT are useful for this research. CAT focuses on linguistic communication patterns and VOT focuses on how values affect communication within a cultural group, thus affecting communication with other cultural groups associated or related to them. Examining cultural values and symbols in the ESRI Web site will reveal how they affect the messages conveyed in its pages as well as the role they play converging or diverging from Latin American consumers is important. These theories will help answer the questions addressed in this research.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to understand how cultural manifestations such as values and symbols contribute to or detract from a company's Web site

marketed cross culturally. The following research questions are posed:

- RQ1: What cultural values are present on the ESRI Web site pages?
- RQ2: What cultural symbols are present on the ESRI Web site pages?
- RQ3: To what extent does ESRI Web site's cultural values and symbols reflect Latin American cultural values and symbols?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS

As this study seeks to examine the cultural values and symbols present in a commercial Web site page of ESRI as well as the extent to which these cultural values and symbols are reflected in the Latin American cultural values and symbols, the need of two theories is essential. The Communication Accommodation Theory is helpful in finding out how the symbols found in this Web site converges or diverges communication distances. The Value Orientation Theory is essential in understanding how cultural values affect our daily interactions with people from other cultures.

Culture is defined as the collective programming of the mind that manifests itself in values, symbols, heroes, and rituals, and distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another (Hofstede, 2001). Each category or group of people possesses different cultural manifestations which has been the focus of analysis (see, e.g., Luna, & Gupta, 2001). For this particular analysis only values and symbols are examined.

Values are particularly important because of the three concepts explaining human behavior vis-à-vis beliefs, attitudes, and values, the act as life guides (Rokeach, 1973). Values can be classified instrumentally or terminally. Instrumental values, for instance, are "guidelines for living on which we base our daily behavior" (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 129). Terminal values are "the ultimate aims of life toward which we work" (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 129). Examples of terminal values include comfort, excitement, and pleasure. Examples of instrumental values include ambition, helpfulness, and intellectualism (Rokeach, 1973).

Like values, symbols come in a variety of forms. Hofstede (2001) declared that symbols are "words, gestures, pictures, and objects that carry often complex meanings recognized as such only by those who share the culture" (p. 10). Language, as a set of symbols, has been the center in cross-cultural research (see, e.g., Luna, Peracchio & de Juan, 2002; 2003) because "language is the most clearly recognizable part of culture and the part that has lent itself most readily to systematic study and theory building" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 21). Moreover, language as a symbol is used to express the concepts and

values rooted in any culture (Luna, Peracchio, & de Juan, 2002).

Language, however, is not the only set of recognizable symbols. Differences in perceptions of graphics and images have also been compared in cross-cultural research (Chu, & Martinson, 2003). Accordingly, symbols such as graphics and images "do not need to rely on language to describe them" (Chu, & Martinson, 2003). This reasoning suggests that symbols carry a plethora of cultural meanings and are used to convey these meanings. Symbols are also used to converge or diverge communication distances between two cultures. Symbols are generally used to convey messages within a culture or from one culture to another.

In conjunction with the Value Orientation Theory and the Communication Accommodation Theory (see Chapter Two), this research employs a methodology called value analysis. This is a useful and appropriate method to address the proposed research questions as evident in the following section.

Value Analysis

This research conducted a value analysis. The value concept has been the center of extensive discussion (i.e., Hofstede, 2001; Kluckhohn, & Strodtbeck 1961, Rokeach, 1972; Rokeach 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Rokeach argues that a value "is an enduring belief that a specified mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite mode of behavior or end-state" (p. 5). Rokeach classified values as instrumental and terminal values. Instrumental values refer to those beliefs concerning desirable modes of conduct. Terminal values refer to the beliefs concerning desirable end-states of existence. Rokeach (1973) classified a total of 36 values that can be found in American society as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Instrumental and Terminal Values (M. Rokeach, 1973.)

Terminal Values	Instrumental Values
A comfortable life (a prosperous life)	Ambitious (hard-working, aspiring)
An exciting life (a stimulating, active life)	Broadminded (open-minded)
A sense of accomplishment (lasting contribution)	Capable (competent, effective)

A world at peace (free of war and conflict)	Cheerful (lighthearted, joyful)
A world of beauty (beauty of nature and the arts)	Clean (neat, tidy)
Equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)	Courageous (standing up for your beliefs)
Family security (taking care of loved ones)	Forgiving (willing to pardon others)
Freedom (independence, free choice)	Helpful (working for the welfare of others)
Happiness (contentedness)	Honest (sincere, truthful)
Inner harmony (freedom from inner conflict)	Imaginative (daring, creative)
Mature love (sexual and spiritual intimacy)	Independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient)
National security (protection from attack)	Intellectual (intelligent, reflective)
Pleasure (an enjoyable, leisurely life)	Logical (consistent, rational)
Salvation (saved, eternal life)	Loving (affectionate, tender)
Self-respect (self-esteem)	Obedient (dutiful, respectful)
Social recognition (respect, admiration)	Polite (courteous, well-mannered)
True friendship (close companionship)	Responsible (dependable, reliable)
Wisdom (a mature understanding of life)	Self-controlled (restrained, self-disciplined)

The above value table is used to measure and analyze the values present in the ESRI Web site pages. This value

table is a reliable source because it reflects not only American values, but also universal values. However, for this study, it is specifically used to analyze what American values are present in ESRI Web site pages. The table also allows the researcher to understand perceived values in the U. S. culture. In addition, the table allows the researcher to understand cross-cultural similarities and differences with those perceived values present in Latin American culture.

According to Hofstede (2001), individualism-collectivism is a cultural dimension that reflects the social behavior of a society and has several implications for values and behaviors. Individualist societies include countries such as the United States, Australia, Great Britain, and Canada. Among the collectivist societies are countries such as Guatemala, Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, and Costa Rica. As can be seen, most of collectivist countries are located in Latin America. Therefore, in this research Latin American countries are treated as collectivist. Accordingly, this society emphasizes values such as family security, responsibility, and conformity to societal norms

(Hofstede, 2001). The values common of collectivist societies are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Value Table Common to Collectivist Societies
(Adapted from Hofstede, 2001).

Collectivist Values	Operationalization
Collectivism	Individuals are integral part of a strong group.
Family	Individuals have a strong emphasis on the family and family members.
Social harmony	Individuals avoid confrontations.
Conformity	Individuals conform to given societal rules.
Orderly	Individuals follow a set arrangement, design, or pattern.
Tradition	Individuals respect the past, customs and conventions
Performance	Individuals emphasize quality and high performance.
Social Status	Individuals are interested in the position in society.
Interdependence	Individuals depend on one another for survival.
Particularism	Individuals treat friends better than others.

The above value table in conjunction with value analysis is used to understand the cultural values present in the ESRI Web site pages.

Definition

Value analysis is simply a technique used to "interpret cultural preferences from the values in a text" (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001, p. 185). This method of analysis is useful because it helps the critic to believe that culture is the result of the language used by communicators involved in the process (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001). The role of the critic conducting value analysis is to "discover the beliefs, values, and value systems stated as a means of defining the culture and its human orientations to the material world" (p. 186). Value analysis is used to "examine the values and beliefs in a text to understand the cultural bases and orientations to social and material conditions embodied within it" (p. 186). Sillars and Gronbeck (2001) add that "values are human conceptions embedded in linguistic or visual signs" (p. 187). Signs can be written, spoken, visual, natural, attached to people, or acoustic. When using value analysis, the critic "looks at the text as part of the process by which culture defines itself and attitudes toward the extended world" (p. 187).

In using value analysis, Sandeen (1997) states that:

Value analysis is an especially useful tool to recognize and describe patterns within a text because it allows the critic to focus on messages inherent beneath the surface of many other program elements... it helps to make sense of a message that at first seems to lack cohesiveness. (p. 81)

Assumptions

Value analysis is based on four basic assumptions:

(1) that humans make sense of the world by identifying values with it, (2) that all texts can be interpreted for values, (3) that values and beliefs are linked together in cognitive systems, and (4) that value systems define the individual and the culture (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001).

One of the main advantages of using value analysis as a methodology is that "it allows a critic to distill from a broad textual base that spans a variety of subject areas" and it allows managing a number of core ideas or values for analysis (Sandeem, 1997, p. 81).

Steps Involved

Following Sillars and Gronbeck's model (2001), value analysis is a process that should include specific methods to get "the richest understanding of the beliefs and values in a text" (p. 204) from which to construct a value system. First, the critic must look at (1) what

words are used to articulate both positive and negative values, (2) what values are implied in belief statements without specific value terms, (3) what concrete values can be identified, and (4) what values are implied by the formal elements used.

Literature Review

A myriad of research has used value analysis to understand value systems of a different series of texts (see, e.g., Condit & Lucaites, 1993; Frenzt & Hale, 1983; Gans, 1980; Ivie, 1987; McGuckin, 1968; Nord, 1984; Olson, 1983; Sandeen, 1997; Trujillo & Ekdom, 1985; Vaughn, 1995). For instance, Nord (1984) discussed the editorial values of Chicago newspapers during the late 19th century to discover the uniqueness of newspapers as a business and to explain how that uniqueness helped shape the editorial values of editors and proprietors. Values such as public interest, consumerism, commercial and social harmony, and organizational conflict resolution were crucial to the times (Nord, 1984).

Olson (1983) analyzed four posters presented between February 20 and March 13 in 1943. These posters convey a simple but ambiguous message. The first poster, which was published in *the Post* on February 20, 1943, was called

"Freedom of Speech". This poster reflected American institutions such as the church, the work ethic, educational and judicial systems, political processes, the community, and the family. The second poster, "Freedom of Worship", reflected education and religion. The third poster, "Freedom from Want", reflected labor. The fourth poster, "Freedom from fear", like the second, reflected the educational system. Olson (1983) concludes that "political and religious values can be conjoined in icons and how such portraits in praise of a people can motivate political action" (p. 22). This reasoning suggests that value analysis does not only occur at the political level but at the cultural level as well.

Trujillo and Ekdorf's (1985) essay describes the American cultural values reflected in the institution of sport as seen in the medium of sports writing. Values displayed in baseball, as expressed in sports writing about the 1984 Chicago Cubs, were examined. Six sets of cultural themes, winning and losing, tradition and change, teamwork and individualism, work and play, youth and experience, and logic and luck were identified. The ways in which sportswriters use these themes as interpretive schema for describing and explaining the

1984 Chicago Cubs were examined. Trujillo and Ekdom (1985) conclude that sports writing not only displays these cultural values but also provides a vehicle through which pervasive but conflicting cultural values can be integrated.

Sandeen (1997) examined the value system present in *PM Magazine*, a 30-minute early evening weekday television program. The program emphasized and promoted a dominant personal success value system that revolved around recognition, achievement, financial success, excitement, and physical attributes. These value systems existed because it appealed to a particular demographic, making the program highly marketable to national advertisers. The value system functioned to reinforce existing traditional and conservative power structures within American society.

Conclusion

The literature reveals that value analysis is a useful and an acceptable method to apply to the research questions proposed in this study. This method has been extensively and accurately used in research that seeks to understand human interactions and relationships,

especially those occurring between two different cultures and the values embedded in each one of them. It is important to understand how dominant institutions affect the way other people think and see the world because it is not always the case that the ideas and thoughts of these dominant institutions can be applied to others. Each culture holds and lives by different values that tell different stories. The values inherent in one culture do not always apply in another culture. Trying to impose one's cultural values into another culture can create miscommunication, misunderstanding, and other problems.

CHAPTER FOUR
INTERCULTURAL INTERNET MARKETING:
A VALUES ANALYSIS

The goal of this analysis is to apply a value analysis to ESRI Web site pages to reveal, describe, and interpret the underlying value system and symbols. Data was collected from the official ESRI Web site located at www.esri.com. The links to Products, Services, and Industries were the target of this analysis because they offer a closer look at what ESRI offers to its national and international consumers. The cultural manifestations, values and symbols, are the units of analysis in this study.

ESRI, as the world leader in GIS software and technology, has dealings with people all over the world. Latin America constitutes one of its emerging markets where a great number of business partners and users engage daily with ESRI products via the official Web site. Since the Web site is a communication medium, it is important to investigate its contents to expose a number of underlying values to its global consumers. In this particular investigation, a Latin American perspective is

considered. Latin America was selected for this analysis because it is considered to be a territory few researchers have explored (Gorlier, 1998). In a globalized world, it is important for cultures to maintain their identities as well as to understand how other cultures function to improve cultural misunderstandings, specifically those concerning media communications. Understanding the cultural relationship between Latin America and the United States may lead people to understand not only the dynamics at the cultural level but also at the political level, the economic level, and even the social level, because they are all interconnected and one influences the other or at least have an effect on the other. It is also important to understand the dominant power relations between the two cultures. The Latin American market constitutes approximately 23 million consumers, which is a large market to reach by international organizations (Gorlier, 1998).

As a U.S. American company, one may speculate that ESRI's Web site transmits U. S. American values; however, cultural sensitivity may be sustained with the Web site contents as well. By identifying a value system, it can

be concluded that the company's ideology is important since it offers an insight into U. S. American culture, which currently maintains a large influence in the world, including Latin America.

Value analysis is a tool that helps recognize and understand values present in a culture and how these values are manifested and possibly influence daily lives. It is important to analyze the value system of a culture, because "... one may better understand how members of that culture define, perceive, and understand receiving social situations" (Cahn, 1985, p. 87). By examining the value system in the ESRI Web site, which represents a particular culture, one might be able to understand how other members understand social situations of the American culture because within the ESRI Web site, certain topics and ideas, such as the way a product is presented or the diversity of their employees, are manifested.

This research is useful to understand cultural beliefs and perspectives and their possible influence in another culture. Through value analysis, the cultural and social relations between various cultures can be understood. Cultural imperialism is defined as "the

domination of one culture by another, usually conceived of in national terms" (Barker, 2000, p. 115). Globally, the United States is considered as a dominant culture with a great influence in other cultures such as those in Latin America. Through its ideologies, influences, and domination, a great number of American values are imposed on cultures around the world. Take for example the globalization of U. S. American companies such as Pepsi, Coca Cola, Disney, and McDonalds; or the proliferation of U. S. American entertainment including film and television.

Each company perpetuates its values, which include those in their country of origin. Hence, a form of cultural imperialism is evident in these companies. These forms of imperialization are especially important in the Internet age. Companies such as ESRI may perpetuate U. S. American ideology through its Web site to its global consumers. Latin American consumers may, for instance, accept, incorporate, or replace their value system for those of the more dominant culture.

This chapter identifies the values within the ESRI Web site to understand if the organization supports and sustains cultural diversity or, like the aforementioned

companies, imposes another form of cultural imperialism. The analysis of the ESRI Web site will help global consumers understand that not only those values and beliefs of the dominant culture are important for developing technological tools, but also their local perspectives should be considered to add to a more global perspective of the world.

The Organization's Web Site Values

Within the ESRI Web site two sets of cultural values were identified--terminal and instrumental values. Instrumental values refer to those beliefs concerning desirable modes of conduct. Terminal values refer to the beliefs concerning desirable end-states of existence (Rokeach, 1973). Each of these value categories is comprised of different value orientations. The ways, in which the ESRI Web site depicts these values for describing and explaining its products, services, and industries, one can imply that these values can be culturally pervasive. The values present in the Web site can influence the ideology of a consumer by believing that American products are the best.

In conducting this research, a myriad of American cultural values and symbols are present in ESRI's Web site pages. These values and symbols differ from Latin American's values and symbols. Between the two cultures, the U. S. tends to be more individualistic than Latin America. Individualistic cultures focus more on achieving goals at the individual level than at the group level (Hofstede, 2001). The level of individualism present in a culture affects the people's values and beliefs. For instance, the more individualistic the culture, the more evident explicit communication is in that culture (Hall, 1976). The more individualistic the culture, the less important family groups are (Hofstede, 2001). Most of the cultural values present in the ESRI Web site are instrumental values, or values that concern desirable modes of behavior.

Observation of the Web Site Values

Rokeach (1973) classified U. S. American values into terminal and instrumental values. Instrumental values refer to those beliefs concerning desirable modes of conduct. Terminal values refer to the beliefs concerning desirable end-states of existence (See Table 1). Both

terminal and instrumental values followed Rokeach's classification of U. S. American values. Based on this, the following terminal values are taken into consideration for this analysis: comfort, excitement, accomplishment, peace, beauty, equality, security, freedom, friendship, wisdom, happiness, harmony, love, security, pleasure, salvation, self-respect, and admiration. The following instrumental values are taken into account: ambition, broadmindedness, capability, cheerfulness, cleanliness, courage, forgiveness, helpfulness, honesty, imagination, independence, intellectualism, logic, affection, obedience, politeness, responsibility, and discipline.

ESRI uses different terminal values to inform its users about its products, services and industries. These values may be used to accommodate traditional American values, such as privacy, modernity, and individualism because of ESRI's Web site focus on the present (Hofstede, 2001). The Web site indicates that the products, services, and industries are ready to be used at any time when consumers feel the need for a product. Consumers have easy access to the Web site. For instance, if there is a problem, a Web page where consumers can be

helped is immediately available. Most of the values underlying in the Web site express more positive than negative values such as capability, helpfulness, accomplishment, and comfort. For American consumers these values have a positive connotation because they bring in positive outcomes in their daily lives. However, these values are not necessarily positive ones for Latin Americans because none of them are significantly important in their value system.

Nonetheless, there is a value that could have a negative connotation in Latin American culture. Social recognition is construed as negative because collectivist societies do not generally focus on achieving individual goals, but the general focus is based on collective interests. Therefore, both instrumental and terminal values present in the ESRI Web site do not reflect the most common values present in Latin American culture. These findings indicate that ESRI continues hegemonically to transmit U. S. American values to its international consumers through its Web site. As a consequence, ESRI serves as an example of cultural imperialism. This organization fits into Schiller's cultural imperialism thesis. He argues that

the mass media fit into the world capitalist system by providing ideological support for capitalism and transnational corporations in particular. They act as vehicles for corporate marketing along with a general 'ideological effect' which purportedly produces and reinforces locals attachment to US capitalism. (Schiller, 1985 as stated by Barker, 2001, p. 115)

ESRI's use of the Web site as a mass communication medium does contribute to spreading U. S. American values and beliefs to the rest of the world. It is through the values found in the ESRI Web site that the company spreads hegemonic and cultural imperialism. ESRI seems to be another outlet to help spread U. S. American values.

This analysis also shows that the values found reflect the five problems, or orientations, common to all human groups: (1) human-nature orientation, (2) man-nature orientation, (3) time orientation, (4) activity orientation, and (5) relational orientation (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). Since the human-nature orientation questions the character of innate human nature, some of the values found on the Web site reflect this orientation because one of the organization's goals is to alleviate problems in every industry (petroleum, environment, agriculture, health) by the regular use of their software

which, in turn, helps consumers enable others to have a harmonious relationship with the environment. For instance, in the link to Home, specifically where essential information for executives can be found, ESRI states that

GIS allows us to view, understand, question, interpret, and visualize data in ways simply not possible in the rows and columns of a spreadsheet. Beautiful and interesting maps provide better decision-making tools and analysis and make a difference in our world.

In this scenario, through the human nature orientation, ESRI is focused on the alleviation of human problems and how to keep harmony with the environment.

This Web site also focuses on the "doing" of the activity orientation because some of the values found, such as capability, helpfulness, and imagination, emphasize both external and internal motivations in the organization. Internal motivations are seen in values such as helpfulness because the organization is interested in helping others to benefit from its products. For instance, in the link to Home, ESRI states that

GIS provides essential information tools for many levels of society. As executives, you need the best tools to be able to make

informed decisions, know where, when, why,
and how to take action, and share your
knowledge with others.

This shows ESRI's interest in helping other organizations to use its products and take advantage of them by providing "essential" instruments to do so. External motivations are observed in values such as broadmindedness because the organization is open to other products that can be used in conjunction with their for the benefit of the consumer. In the same link, ESRI affirms that "organizations around the world are leveraging their information technology (IT) investments by integrating mapping and geographic information system (GIS) technology." This affirmation specifies ESRI's needs to partner with other organizations to make its products more efficient and useful.

The values also reflect a type of relational orientation the organization has with other people, whether inside or outside the organization. This relational orientation can be observed through values such as accomplishment because ESRI offers a lasting contribution to the consumer and their social group. An example of this value can be seen in the link to information to businesses in which ESRI states that

We invite you to browse the best practices that have been empowered by the use of ESRI's ArcGIS product family and to think about how this powerful technology can improve your world.

Through this statement, ESRI wants to "accomplish" its most essential external motivation, improving the world through the use of its software.

Finally, values found in the Web site also reflect the man-nature orientation of the organization, that is, the relationship people have with the nature. Some of the values reflected on the Web site, such as accomplishment and comfort, reflect goodness to achieve. The next statement shows how ESRI attempt to obtain this value. This statement can be found in the link to essential information for GIS practitioners.

Our users are working on virtually all of the world's problems ranging from environmental conservation to land use planning and resource development.

Through the above statement, ESRI shows how important it is for the organization to work together with consumers to accomplish its objectives and make the relationship with nature a more comfortable one.

By identifying these themes and values, it is clear that two value categories are present. These categories are terminal and instrumental (Rokeach, 1973).

Terminal Values

Terminal values reflect beliefs concerning desirable end-states of existence (Rokeach, 1973). These values are generally aimed to achieve the highest levels of satisfaction to make one's existence easier. ESRI's Web site contains the following terminal values: comfort, excitement, accomplishment, pleasure, and social recognition.

Comfort. Rokeach (1973) describes this value as having a "comfortable life or a prosperous life". This value then reflects prosperity in life that makes life easy. For instance, on the Web site page that links consumers to the ArcGIS Web page, it states "ServerGIS products allow GIS functionality and data to be deployed from a central environment." The word "functionality" implies that by using ServerGIS, the user will have a simple and easy way to deploy the data. Another example is found on the link to the Web page to Grant programs where it states that:

ESRI's Corporate Alliance Program maintains relationships with leading software, data, hardware, and services organizations to deliver complete GIS solutions to our joint customers.

This indicates that words such "to deliver complete GIS solutions to" is a main asset that ESRI products deliver to its users. It is through ESRI software that other organizations can easily organize themselves because ESRI products can provide "solutions" enabling consumers a chance to achieve this purpose.

In the link to essential information for government, ESRI affirms that "E-government is using the Internet and GIS to create more effective government. The combination of readily available Internet access and maps lets governments provide a new level of service to both businesses and the public." By creating more "effective government", ESRI allows users interested in this industry to have "readily available" tools that "provides" a better service to their consumers allowing them to achieve a certain level of comfort that makes their lives somehow easier.

Excitement. Taking into consideration Rokeach's (1973) definition of this value as an "exciting life, a stimulating, active life," this value implies reflecting incentives and active roles in people's lives. This value was prevalent in the Web site. For example, on the link to systems integration services, it claimed that "ArcGIS

technology can be deployed on a range of mobile systems from lightweight to PDAs, laptops, and Tablet PCs." The ArcGIS technology offered that ESRI offers to consumers on this Web page, implies that users can employ it in a variety of systems such as "laptops and Tablet PCs" facilitating consumers to use it at any time because it can be "deployed on a range of mobile systems" which indicates a positive and exciting tool to apply anywhere the consumer wants to apply it.

Another example of the presence of this value in the ESRI Web site can be seen in the link to essential information for business where it is stated that

Whether you own a local delivery service or manage a financial institution with ATM locations around the world, GIS allows you to visualize and interpret data in ways simply not possible in the rows and columns of a spreadsheet. GIS can help your business save time and money, while improving access to information and realizing a tangible return on your GIS investment.

Here, ESRI's purpose is to show how the GIS software plays an active role in helping users achieve their objectives as well as how these incentives are reflected in their business by the use of the software.

Accomplishment. Based on Rokeach's description of this value as a "sense of accomplishment, a lasting

contribution", this value reflects a lasting contribution that either people or commodities can bring to the society. For example, in the ESRI Web site it was stated that "our Professional Services Group helps users move through the GIS implementation process quickly and efficiently through technology transfer." Thus, the company suggests that the employees involved in this group can help users achieve whatever users want by using the company's software therefore accomplishing the user's objectives, which is moving "through the GIS implementation process quickly and efficiently". Another example of how this value is reflected in the Web site can be found in the link to essential information for new users where it is stated that

On any given day, more than two million people around the world use GIS to improve the way their organizations see customers, evaluate situations, and conduct business.

This statement implies everything a user can accomplished by the use of the ESRI software and the lasting contributions to other people or organizations.

Pleasure. Rokeach (1973) described this value as having "an enjoyable, leisurely life". As a value, pleasure reflects how people can achieve satisfaction and

a more comfortable life. ESRI reflects this terminal value on the Web site page to products with a link to ArcGIS. This text stated that "ArcGIS is an integrated collection of GIS software products for building a complete GIS for your organization." This statement implies the satisfaction users can have if using the software because it helps to "complete" whatever is missing in the organization. Completion suggests satisfaction and pleasure, bringing more leisure into one's life.

Another example of how the value of pleasure is represented in the Web site can be seen in the following statement found in the link to essential information for new users where the following is stated

Welcome to ESRI and the GIS community of people who are making a difference in our world. GIS has evolved into a technology that can help people plan, design, engineer, build, and maintain information infrastructures that improve our everyday lives.

From this statement, it can be concluded that by providing the GIS technology, ESRI "helps" consumers to "improve our everyday lives" which in turn will bring satisfaction and a more comfortable life for those using the technology because consumers will be able to "plan,

design, engineer, build, and maintain information" that will bring more pleasure into their daily routines.

Social Recognition. Through Rokeach's (1973) definition of this value with two simple words such as "respect" and "admiration", ESRI's Web site reflects this value as the respect and admiration an organization or person can have by positive perceptions. Specifically, the site states that

ESRI continues to seek relationships with organizations by partnering in common task initiatives. ESRI has found the best way to forge relationships is through education and grant programs. Free software, hardware, and training bundles are available under the ESRI-Sponsored Grants.

This example (found in the Web site link to grant programs) suggests that ESRI enjoys a social status and recognition by "forging relationships" with other organizations helping users enhance their knowledge about the software's usability. By helping its users, ESRI is recognized as an organization that is interested in increasing the welfare of others.

Another example of how this value is represented in the Web site can be found in the link to essential information for GIS practitioners where it is stated that "GIS provides essential information tools for many levels

of society." It can be concluded from the former statement that not only ESRI wants its consumers to "respect" and admire its technology, but also the organization is interested in helping all levels of society which in turn will bring the organization even more recognition and respect.

In sum, five primary terminal values are evident in the ESRI's Web site--comfort, excitement, accomplishment, pleasure, and social recognition. These values foster U. S. American ideals about making people's lives easier. This idea is well spread within the culture, but this does not mean that the same values will be effective on other cultures.

Instrumental Values

Instrumental values reflect beliefs concerning desirable modes of conduct (Rokeach, 1973). These values are generally aimed at achieving certain behaviors that will be acceptable in the U. S. American culture. Instrumental values found in this analysis include ambition, broadmindedness, capability, helpful, intellectualism, and logic.

Ambition. Rokeach (1973) defined this value as people who tend to be "hard-working" and "aspiring". This

value reflects how hard-working and aspiring people use different strategies to achieve whatever they want to achieve. This is evident in the data under investigation.

For instance, the Web site stated,

While best known for our popular GIS software, ESRI is also a world leader in the application of GIS technology. Our Professional Services group helps users move through the GIS implementation process quickly and efficiently through technology transfer.

This statement suggests that not only ESRI itself has a great sense of ambition being a "world leader", but it also helps others incorporate this value into their own culture. Another example of the ambition value includes, "consulting services staff can support the design of efficient databases, applications, and systems to best meet your GIS needs." This suggests that the ESRI staff is ready to support others in whatever is needed, implying their hard-working attitude and ambition towards the improvement of others.

Another example of this value can be seen in the link to GIS solutions where it is stated that

GIS technology must constantly evolve to meet the changing needs of business, industry, government, and education. ESRI's strategy is to build a complete GIS comprised of a family of products that serve the entire spectrum of GIS

needs. We believe that ArcGIS will meet these needs with the following key technologies.

This example shows strong inspiration this organization has to achieve their goals by "changing needs of business, industry, government, and education". These are used as key strategies to "build a complete" technology that will help every consumer obtain their goals, and will help the organization's ambition, being the number one leader organization in the world.

Broadmindedness. Rokeach (1973) uses the word "open-minded" to best describe people who hold this value thus referring to the attitudes towards a person's or organization's new ideas. This value is also evident in the data under analysis. Specifically, ESRI's organizational culture reflects this value, which is stated on the Web site page link to "business partners" as "ESRI partners with leading technology companies to give you extendable solutions." This implies that the organization is open to partners with other organizations for the user's benefit.

Another example of this value can be found on the link to the GIS community where it is stated that

ESRI users are a community of GIS practitioners

and business partners; they share data, technology standards, and often the knowledge of building a GIS. The key ingredients of a successful enterprise GIS include strong GIS people, a community of users who focus the system on real information, development of standard data sets and use of a common architecture, and policies for data sharing.

From the above statement, it can be drawn that ESRI keeps a positive and open mind about its users and their relationship with the GIS technology, which brings in new ways of benefiting from this use.

Capability. Rokeach (1973) uses the words "competent" and "effective" to describe people who hold this value. Therefore, for the practicality of this study, this value can be described as one that reflects competency, effectivity and practical ability for a person or organization to achieve. ESRI's Web site page indicates that this value is observed because "GIS technology helps election departments all year long with tasks such as redistricting and sitting polling places." Through this value, the capacity of the organization itself and the capacities to be achieving by others when using the technology are suggested. To support the use of this value within the Web site, in the link to products overview, ESRI claims that it creates "tools that enables

you to build intelligent geographic information systems", thus emphasizing the organization's value system by enabling others to achieve high skill standards.

Another example of how this value is found in the ESRI Web site can be seen in the link to services on the main page where it is affirmed that ESRI's "fundamental purpose is to advance GIS, and support our users and partners". It can be concluded from this statement that ESRI is an organization that allows users and partners to practically use their technology, which is an effective and competent way of achieving goals, and objectives as can be reaffirmed in the following statement

By applying the latest GIS techniques and tools to all projects we pursue, we provide clients with effective solutions while advancing the state of GIS technology.

Clearly, the words "effective solutions" are supporting how the value of capability is shown in the Web site.

Helpful. Rokeach (1973) explains this value as "working for the welfare of others". This value is found in the way the organization aims at working for the welfare of others. The ESRI Web site reflects this value in the link to hardware bundles where different offers are available to the consumer implying how users and

organizations can benefit from the use of ESRI's products because "these offers can save you money when you configurate or upgrade your GIS system". ESRI's main objective here is to help consumers get organized with their geographic databases.

Another example of how this value is represented in the organization's Web site can be seen in the link to essential information for business. It is stated that "GIS can help your business save time and money while improving access to information and realizing a tangible return on your GIS investment." The word "help" in the statement clearly reflects this value and how ESRI praises itself in working for the welfare of its users, partners and the community at large. To confirm how strong this value is represented in the Web site, the following statement found in the link to support where it is said that

The ESRI Support Center technical resources are available to everyone. ESRI encourages you to participate and benefit from the experience and expertise of fellow professionals in the GIS community. Take advantage of a wide variety of resources online.

Expressed in this statement is the strength ESRI has towards this value. By providing consumers with a special

"Support Center", ESRI's intention of working for them is clearly expressed here. Being helpful is another of ESRI's main objectives as evidenced in the Web site, which consumers can achieve when they use the GIS technology.

Intellectualism. Rokeach (1973) describes this value in a person who is "intelligent" and "reflective". This value then indicates how the organization, through its products and services, offers intelligent and reflective solutions. ESRI's Web site page reflects this value in the link to products overview where it is claimed that "this architecture, coupled with the geodatabase, gives you the tools to assemble intelligent geographic information systems." This statement is straightforward in showing the high standards of ESRI's products because consumers can easily "assemble intelligent" databases when using this organization's products.

Another example of how this value is reflected in the organization's Web site can be found in the link to essential information for GIS practitioners where it is stated that

The combination of ArcGIS Desktop software with ArcSDE and ArcIMS provides an out-of-

the-box solution to store, manage, analyze, distribute, and serve collections of aerial photographs, satellite imagery, and digital elevation models as well as other types of raster data such as scanned documents and maps.

By providing "out-of-the-box" solutions, ESRI offers a large number of intelligent solutions to its customers when they apply its technology that create GIS solutions. It can be seen that ESRI's products tend to also offer reflective solutions in different geographic fields.

Logic. Rokeach (1973) describes a person who holds this value as "consistent" and "rational". This value indicates consistency and rationality over the organization's products. The ESRI's Web page where this value can be observed is the one that links the consumer to ArcGIS where it is argued that "the ArcGIS framework enables you to deploy GIS functionality and business logic wherever it is needed - in desktops, servers (including the Web), or mobile devices." This reinforces the value of logic within the organization clearly by showing the consistency and rationality of ESRI's products usability for different locations.

Another example of how this value is reflected in the Web site can be found in the following text

ArcIMS provides a highly scalable framework for GIS Web publishing. A wide range of clients, including custom Web applications, ArcGIS Desktop, mobile, and wireless devices, can all access ArcIMS data and services. Using ArcIMS metadata services, organizations can publish metadata along with sample images to Web sites.

The above example provides evidence how the value of logic is used in the ESRI Web site. Throughout a great number of links to different texts, ESRI is always consistent with its objectives, the use of its software, the applications of modern GIS technology, and its relations with customers.

In sum, five terminal values--comfort, excitement, accomplishment, pleasure, and social recognition--and six instrumental values--ambition, broadmindedness, capability, helpful, intellectualism, and logic are evident in the ESRI's Web site. These values foster U. S. American ideals about achieving acceptable behavior within the culture. ESRI, as a U. S. American-based organization, reflects many American values of which a great number have been described earlier. Because of its cultural background, it is most likely difficult for the organization to separate itself from the dominant cultural structure of American values. Even though ESRI

has the purpose of helping users and consumers "improve the world", some of the cultural values can be easily spread throughout its Web site. The Internet, in general, is ideological because it is used to introduce and reaffirm "social consensus on a broad set of cultural values" (Trujillo, & Ekdom, 1985, p. 264). Even though the ESRI Web site does not explicitly offer a view of U. S. American society and its values, a close analysis provides a greater understanding of the American cultural values through its Web site.

Latin American Values in the Web Site

Hofstede (2001) describes that the majority of the countries in Latin America can be treated as collectivist. Collectivist societies emphasize values such as social harmony, conformity, orderly, tradition, performance, social status, and interdependence (See Table 2). However, only three of the values associated with collectivistic societies were found: collectivism, social status, and performance.

Collectivism

Hofstede (2001) describes collectivism in societies where there is a "call for greater emotional dependence

of members on their organizations" (p. 212). He better expands this concept as "a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated onto strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (p. 225). This value has been operationalized as one where individuals are integral part of a strong group. This value is evident on the ESRI Web site page link to business partners where it is stated that "ESRI Business Partners and Third Party Programs offer a variety of GIS products and services to help you implement and maintain a successful GIS system". This indicates that not only ESRI as an organization, but its business parties and other organized programs can form a collective to "help" consumers "implement and maintain a successful GIS system".

Another example of how this organization uses this value in its Web site can be seen in the following text, which can be found in the link to the GIS community

ESRI users are a community of GIS practitioners and business partners; they share data, technology standards, and often the knowledge of building a GIS. The key ingredients of a successful enterprise GIS include: strong GIS people, a community of users who focus the system on real information, development of

standard data sets and use of a common architecture, and policies for data sharing.

The above paragraph demonstrates that all of ESRI users belong to a strong group which is described here as "a community of GIS practitioners". This offers the reader a sense of belonging to a group thus affecting the way these individual behave. For instance, sharing data and knowledge makes the group even stronger, creating harmony between the two groups, the organization, and its users. It also gives the sense that each of these groups depend on each other to achieve successful planned objectives. To confirm the use of this value in the Web site, ESRI argues that they work "closely with the GIS community to understand the data needs and functional requirements of a GIS." It can be concluded from this statement that ESRI and its users form a society in which each one depends on the other, are loyal to each other, and protect each other.

Social Status

Hofstede (2001) describes the operationalization of this value as where individuals are interested in the position in society allows. This value can be identified

in the ESRI Web site link to Grant Programs where it is stated that,

ESRI continues to seek relationships with organizations by partnering in common task initiatives. ESRI has found the best way to forge relationships is through education and grant programs ...

This indicates that by seeking "relationships with organizations", ESRI is concerned about its social status both inside and outside the United States.

Another example of how this value can be seen in the organization's Web site link to ESRI professional services

While best known for our popular GIS software, ESRI is also a world leader in the application of GIS technology. Our Professional Services group helps users move through the GIS implementation process quickly and efficiently through technology transfer.

In this paragraph, ESRI makes sure visitors to its Web site know the position the organization has worldwide. Not only the organization is popular for its software, but also it is also the "world leader", which shows ESRI's interest in having a high position in society and raising the standards by being efficient and fast.

Performance

In this value, individuals emphasize quality and high performance. This value is indicated in the ESRI Web site page link to ArcWeb Services where it is stated that

With ArcWeb Services you can: access terabytes of rich, up-to-date data anytime you need it, reduce your data storage and maintenance costs, easily used data and content within a desktop or Web application environment.

As a Latin American society value, the ESRI Web site represents performance because it indicates that by using this particular technology, consumers will be able to perform and create better databases.

An additional example of this value can be found in the link to services where it is stated that "by applying the latest GIS techniques and tools to all projects we pursue, we provide clients with effective solutions while advancing the state of GIS technology." ESRI assures consumers they can provide them with effective tools for developing projects to fulfill their individual needs successfully. It is concluded then that ESRI looks for creating good quality tools that will perform at their best when being used by consumers. The following extract also confirms how this value can be perceived in the Web site.

We can provide full service support to organizations through all steps of a project's life cycle, or we can provide focused support through technology transfer for individual steps or specific tasks. Because many of our consultants and technicians come directly from the GIS user community, they are sensitive to the needs of our clients.

Here, ESRI commits itself by "providing full service support" to everyone in need of their software.

The Organization's Web Site Symbols

This thesis also has the purpose of understanding how dominant societies influence their ideas into less dominant ones. Critics need to understand how cultures may be affected by the ideas and beliefs of more dominant cultures. This can be achieved by taking a closer look at the symbols included in the Web site. In his analysis of the role of culture in communication, specifically communications that crosses national and cultural borders, Cahn (1985) argues that a difference in symbol systems between members of two different cultural groups depends on the uniqueness of each group's socialization process. Cahn's model of cultural understanding consists of three factors common to all cultures: (1) cultural perspective, or form, structure,

or organization of things; (2) definition of the situation, or perception of a recurring social setting with particular spatial arrangements, certain participants, or a goal; and (3) communication behavior, or the system of sounds, gestures and symbols for the expression and comprehension of thoughts and feelings. Cahn applied this model to illustrate the role of culture in communication using three cultures as examples, Japan, United States, and Yugoslavia.

Cahn concluded that this traditional approach to intercultural communication is useful in understanding another's cultural perspective that will allow members of that culture to perceive social situations that act as context of that culture's communication behavior. Observations indicate that symbols ESRI uses in its Web site are congruent with the Web site's objective: to show its products and how they work, as well as a description of services offered and the major industries to which the products can be applied.

As market globalization continues, there is a convergence of ideas, cultures, values and even language in advertisements. From this researcher's standpoint, the convergence of substance and character in international

advertising is of great interest when these changes take place in countries which have remained as very traditional societies.

Chu and Martinson (2003) measured the level of visual understanding of symbols between students in Hong Kong and the United States. They sought to understand possible differences in visual perception and comprehension of symbols and to measure subjects' knowledge level about their own cultural images, as well as images of another culture. This suggests a significant interaction relationship between symbols and individual culture. Chu and Martinson measured the perceived differences of national and business symbols viewed by students from the United States and Hong Kong. The results indicate that there are significant differences in the perception of symbols representing each of the cultures examined. The authors conclude that the "nationality of symbols influences how the symbols are used" (p. 78). This conclusion indicates that people tend to use less an image from another culture if they do not know or understand the image.

Chu and Martinson's research demonstrate that people from different cultural backgrounds can interpret and

perceive cultural graphics and images differently. Their data collection through images that contain five pictorial business logos and five national symbols for each culture seem to be appropriate for cross-cultural analysis of symbols. Their reasoning suggests that the appearance of communication symbols change overtime by converging, symbols that look more alike to those of the other's culture or by diverging, symbols that are different from the other's culture. This means that communication symbols are sometimes used to either maintain or modify cultural identity.

As the cultural symbols present on the ESRI Web page are analyzed, its symbols are identified and analyzed to comprehend how they converge or diverge from symbols that represent Latin American culture. Observations indicate that symbols ESRI uses in its Web site are congruent with the Web site's objective: to show its products and how they work, as well as a description of services offered and the major industries to which the products can be applied.

Symbols to the following links were analyzed:
Product Overview, ArcGIS, ArcWeb Services, Hardware Bundles, ESRI Store, Services Overview, Systems

Integration Services, Corporate Alliances, Corporate Hardware Partners, and Industries Overview.

The following is an analysis of the pictures and drawings located in the links mentioned above. To start, at the top of this Web site page is a map of a region in France; however, only a small area of France is exemplified here. This is interesting to note since ESRI's objective is "the improvisation of the world". A worldwide map could be used to illustrate a more complete picture of the company's real interest. Showing a segment of France signifies a road map, which to any Web page's visitor may believe that this area could be located anywhere in the United States. This map contrasts with a map of the United States located in the Industries Web site page.

It is clear that a complete map of the United States is used here to show how the GIS technology can be used for democratic elections. However, it implies that the country is significantly more important than other countries in the world, because the latter are only shown by parts or regions leaving the visitor with the idea of the egocentric American views of their country as the most important place on earth.

On the other hand, the symbols used in the Web page links to Hardware vendors, which displays laptop computers, GPS systems, and map printers, gives the impression that technology is the most important survival tool of the modern world. It is curious how the tribal people in Africa or other native people around the world can survive without the technology being offered not only by ESRI, but the many others. Many of these organizations that deal with modern technology are unconsciously trying to dominate the consumer's mind with their products because the organization sends the message that these technologies are essential survival tools. This essentially and symbolically colonizes less dominant societies by letting viewers see that modern tools are the only solution to survival skills.

Despite the fact that the ESRI Web page is aimed at GIS users, the company hegemonically entices the global community to become more similar to the American society. If others succumbed to the ESRI's products and services they would be more American, but they would never be American. This U.S. based-Web site is seemingly reaching out to impose their values, ideas, and beliefs.

The symbols incorporated in the Web site page dedicated to the Services offered by the organization are described in the following paragraph. On the left hand side of this page, there is a picture of a group of people who seem to be helping users with the GIS technology. A diverse group of people ethnically, by gender, and by age, is evidently using the technology. A woman, an elderly man, and two young men assisting the other two people are depicted. Even though diversity is represented here, a lack of a few more characters representing international users around the globe, such as Latin Americans, could be included.

On the right hand side of the same Web site page, four boxes with four different pictures are seen. The first one is a map of the horn of Africa which to represent agricultural layers. The second one is map where northern Europe is included and the city of Paris. The third one is a series of buildings which seem to be connected by a dot, and the last one could be an example of water layers. These maps do not offer an explanation of what they are or what they mean in terms of the use of the technology. To the left side of the pictures is a caption offering a possible explanation of what these

maps mean. The caption reads "GIS is a collaboration of integrated technologies for sharing geographic knowledge." This layout follows the format of the other pages. However, the message is unclear.

Because it is known that there is a relationship between culture and language (Kashima & Kashima, 1998), it is important to analyze the linguistic effects of the English language. Certain linguistic features such as pronoun drop, single or multiple second-person pronouns, and single or multiple first person pronouns varies from language to language and are particular characteristics on a given language. As English is more characteristic of individualistic societies, these linguistic features tend to differ from the Spanish language, the language spoken in Latin America. For instance, English (language spoken in individualistic societies) requires speakers to use the pronoun *I* whilst Spanish (language spoken in collectivistic societies) does allow dropping these linguistic feature (Hofstede, 2001).

It is also important to note the relationship between individualism and ethnolinguistic vitality. Ethnolinguistic vitality has been defined as "that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and

active collective entity in intergroup situations” (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977, p. 325). People from individualistic societies see their language as more highly regarded than people from collectivist societies (Gudykunst, 1989). As a consequence, due the ethno-linguistic vitality, the ESRI Web site is likely to regard English as the language in which the messages should be conveyed.

Further, the English language as a symbol is used as the main communication tool, which also implies the language of the dominant society leaving those who do not speak the language in uncertainty or having to find other resources to find out what is going on in the Web site. By using the English language exclusively as the main medium of communication, the organization diverges from its Latin American users, which helps the organization to maintain differences as well as maintain its own identity (Chu, & Martenson, 2003). This is possible because CAT is a theory that “can deal with culture both as a predictor of communication and as something manifest in the process of communication (e.g., language, vocabulary, accent)” (p. 126). Language itself interferes with communication processes even when this communication is taken over the

Internet. A language that then becomes a foreign language, English in this situation, to a visitor in Latin America can score lower in ethnolinguistic vitality than using their mother tongue, Spanish.

As discussed in chapter three, CAT has been useful for understanding the communication behaviors that the ESRI Web site wants to transmit. CAT offered an approach in understanding how the Internet as a communication tool is related to the consumer socio-psychological contexts, more precisely values and symbols. The values and symbols presented in the organization's Web site go in accordance with the values and symbols of the U. S. American culture, which differ from those of the Latin American culture. In this study, CAT contributed to understanding interactions such as linguistic practices and perceptions that occur between the two cultural groups under study. When taking a closer look to the symbols, such as linguistic features, pictures, and drawings used, one can realize that those linguistic moves are used to increase (diverge) communicative distance.

A link to the ArcGIS Web page displays through its language that the use of this technology can work to people's advantage. Technology is predominately

associated with the developed world since these societies are more often not the ones with powerful capacity of developing new techniques for improving life standards. The human nature interaction of the U. S. American culture with its environment reveals that the use of products is aimed at dominating or mastering nature. The case can be extended to how the society intends to dominate and expand its ideologies to others that are less dominant. For instance, the idea the ArcGIS as a tool can be used "to implement a wide range of industry-focused solutions" implies that the ideology behind the tool is not limited. Not only that, but the fact that this technology has a large number of uses because it is "compatible and interoperable with other IT infrastructures". The same can be attributed to the next link, ArcWeb since both are popular technologies used for the "improvisation of the world". However, one may ask, 'what standards are being used for making the world a better place and what exactly this means?'

One may wonder if making the world a better place means that everyone should have similar values and beliefs that dominate the American culture such as having mastery over nature. On this Web page it is interesting

to note the title "ArcGIS Family of Products". This title implies the value of family security (Rokeach, 1973), which suggests taking care of loved ones and implies that ESRI's job is to take care of those in need, that it is the world itself, which needs to be improved and which improvement will make everyone's life better. The ESRI Web page title implies that the ArcGIS products act like a close knit family where every member has its role and cannot be separated. Besides, this family of products is supposed to guarantee the functionality of the software and users' satisfaction, therefore, bringing happiness to the entire world.

The ideologies underlying the ESRI Web site sustain power relations through the use of its language and symbols. Through its language and symbols, the ESRI Web site, as a dominant U. S. American institution spreads U. S. American cultural values and ideologies. This organization's Web site may influence the way Latin American users think about the U. S. American society as a model to follow and transform their lives. In addition to that, the communication process used in this Web site emphasizes that a large percentage of the Web site targets its American-based users, which then implies that

the Web site diverges from the needs of the Latin American users' needs.

U. S. American Cultural Values and Symbols vs. Latin American Cultural Values and Symbols

Hegemonic ideology is dominant in the ESRI Web site. Hegemony is spread here through both its values and symbols. ESRI helps spread U. S. American values and beliefs, which is a form of cultural imperialism. These values and beliefs also reflect power relations between the two cultures because when a culture attempts to spread its cultural values and beliefs in a way or another, this culture is trying to dominate less powerful ones, which reaffirms the global idea that the United States attempts to overtake and dominate the entire world. The following section compares the U. S. American cultural values and symbols with the Latin American cultural values and symbols.

First of all, three values reflecting Latin American culture were found in the organization's Web site--collectivism, social status, and performance--compared with ten instrumental (ambition, broadmindedness, capability, helpful, intellectualism, and logic) and

terminal (comfort, excitement, accomplishment, pleasure, and social recognition) values. Having a large disproportionate number of U. S. American values reflected in its Web site compared to the Latin American values confirms that the Web site does not take into consideration Latin American users' values and symbols to appeal to them through its Web site.

The Web site clearly diverges from the Latin American cultural values and symbols and appear making little effort to minimize cultural differences between the U. S. American culture and their Latin American counterparts. If consideration of these is taken into account, better and easier professional business between the two markets could result. Because Latin America is a growing market where new business opportunities arise constantly, more attention should be paid on the way their users are targeted. For instance, when U. S. American organizations decide to use the Internet to target consumers, a Web site where their values, beliefs, and ideas are included would be ideal. If this can be achieved by any U. S. American organization, Latin American consumers might feel more satisfied with the products because they may feel they are visiting a Web

site that shows much of their culture, one that is appealing to their eyes, one with which they feel more comfortable, and one that looks familiar to their culture. When an organization disregards the cultural values and beliefs of the target consumers, the organization does not reflect a cultural understanding in its Web site.

The cultural symbols found in the ESRI Web site pages have little relation to Latin American cultural symbols. Language itself is the most noticeable difference between the cultures. Even though English is considered a world language, few Latin Americans have a great knowledge of it creating another barrier between the two cultures. In regard to pictures as symbols, more familiar maps and graphics should be included. For instance, maps of South America and people of South American origin could be inserted.

CHAPTER FIVE
MUTUAL RESPECT AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY:
IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH FOR
INTERCULTURAL INTERNET MARKETING

Past studies that focus on the field of cross-cultural communication have carried out a plethora of research to progress in several areas of this field (see, e. g. Croft, 1995; Dop, 2001; Hongladarom, 2002; Kacen, & Lee, 2002; Panagariya, 2000). The present study enters a new field where several topics on new marketing and communication strategies meet which can help intercultural researchers to explore new fields. This study focused on understanding how cultural manifestations such as values and symbols contribute to or detract from a company's Web site marketed cross culturally. The objective of this study was important for proposing new standards of communication through the Internet.

Two theories contributed to the development of this study, the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and the Value Orientation Theory (VOT). The former was useful for this research because this theory focuses on the

language used by communicators to increase or decrease communication distances. This theory allowed the researcher to find out that certain linguistic features of the organization's Web site diverges from the linguistic features of the Latin American consumers creating more communication distances between the U. S. American culture and the Latin American culture. The latter was used because this theory specifically focuses on how values affect our daily interactions with others. The analysis of cultural values at the individual level is important for cultural changes to occur at the organizational level. VOT allowed the researcher to understand how dominant values present can be changed when variants outside and inside an organization are detected.

This research conducted a critical analysis of an organization's Web site called ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute), located in Redlands, California. This Web site allowed the researcher to closely analyze the cultural values and symbols present in the Web site and which are representative of the North American culture. A method of analysis was used to analyze which cultural values and symbols were present in

the Web site, value analysis. Value analysis allowed the researcher to find out those beliefs and attitudes present in a value system of a particular culture. Also, a critique of culturally structured relationships through narratives and language usage was used allowing the researcher to understand human interactions, create solutions about these interactions, and achieve a better understanding to solve any problems that could occur during and result from these interactions.

Results of this research showed that ESRI Web site's cultural values and symbols do not reflect a great number of the values and symbols representative of the Latin American culture. A disproportionate number of U. S. American values were found compared to the number of Latin American values that are reflected in the Web site. Specifically, Latin American values include collectivism, social harmony, conformity, family, orderly, tradition, performance, social status, interdependence, and particularism. ESRI Web site pages did contain only three of the Latin American values--collectivism, social status, and performance. These values do not constitute one half of the values that are representative of most Latin American societies. Hence this suggests that

cultural sensitivity does not play a role in the design of this organization's Web pages. Instead, a great number of U. S. American values are reflected. Examples of these values include both terminal and instrumental values such as comfort, excitement, accomplishment, pleasure, social recognition, ambition, capability, broadmindedness, helpful, intellectualism, and logic. This reaffirms the idea that the company reflects its country's values more so than its customers' from Latin American countries.

When designing a Web site page, a balance between the local and the international consumer's values and beliefs should be considered. This consideration is necessary for the organization to reflect diversity and mutual respect. Perhaps the model presented by Teo and Tan (2002), in which Internet Web sites' effectiveness and success evolve around five elements: attracting users, engaging users' interest and participation, retaining users, learning about their preferences, and relating back to users to provide customized interactions, could be applied in this case to help develop consumer satisfaction with the products they want to purchase.

Another outcome from this study shows that through the values found in the ESRI Web site page, this organization spreads hegemony and cultural imperialism. Globally, cultural imperialism has a negative effect in the world's economy. Cultural imperialism seeks to decrease cultural diversity taking cultures to follow a single economic and cultural system such as "consumer capitalism" (Barker, 2000). There are many cultures in the world that want to follow an economic and cultural system similar to that of the United States. Because the U. S. American values are spread through the Internet and other media, cultures such as those in Latin America should be also taught to embrace their own culture, history, identity, and traditional cultural values to avoid the establishment of U. S. American values. By recognizing their own values, culture, and traditions and how they got established in their culture, Latin Americans, and other less dominant cultures will help the spread of "consumer capitalism".

The United States is globally known as a consumer capitalist culture. When so many of the U. S. American values are found in a Web site, there is the possibility that less dominant cultures will copy this type of

economic system since cultural values are usually connected to the economy of a country. Because each culture has different family institutions, educational, economic, and political systems, cultural diversity must be considered. However, when copying a specific economic system, there is the risk of a decrease in cultural diversity. Culturally diverse societies offer a wider view of the world in which values and beliefs of other cultures are included, acknowledged, tolerated, and relationships are developed (Thomas, 1995).

Not only the ESRI Web site, but also all U. S. American organizations and institutions need to be more culturally sensitive and decrease communication distances between the U. S. American culture and the culture of its international consumers to avoid the spread of hegemony and cultural imperialism.

The research questions posed in chapter two were answered after conducting this analysis. The U. S. American cultural values present in the ESRI Web site pages included both terminal and instrumental values as proposed by Rokeach (1973), which are representative of the U. S. American culture. The values found included excitement, capability, intellectualism, logic, and

pleasure, to name a few. It can be concluded that the organization reflects U. S. American culture through its Web site. Another factor contributing to communication divergence is the use of English as the main language of communication. Individualist cultures have high regards for their own language compared to collectivist cultures. This ethnolinguistic vitality, which is a central tenet to CAT, allows organizations to employ dominant discourses through the language being another medium for spreading hegemony around the world. Because ESRI Web site's cultural values and symbols do not reflect a large number of Latin American cultural values and symbols, it can be concluded that values and symbols are then one way the ESRI Web site diverges from its Latin American consumers.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study may help researchers extend their area of research to others, such as asynchronous communication, involving the Internet. More precisely, this research is intended to explore those areas in intercultural communication research that can be useful at both the personal and organizational levels.

Specifically, the purpose of this study was to identify the cultural values and symbols that could be drawn from the ESRI official Web site pages and how they might reflect Latin America's cultural values and symbols.

This research also offers new alternatives such as how the Internet can be used as a marketing tool. Because the Internet is becoming more popular than any other traditional media, it can be useful for any organization targeting international consumers to really learn what the consumers' cultural needs and wants are and what most culturally appeals to them. As a consequence, the organization may attract more consumers and both may be satisfied with what they are giving or receiving. Because consumers are attracted to familiarity, any organization that takes familiarity into account should generally succeed. The Internet is a marketing tool that allows ESRI to reach consumers all over the world, including those in Latin America. The Internet is becoming a more usable and reachable technology in developing countries. It is time that more research focuses on emerging markets, such as Latin America, and the cultural repercussions of using technology, including the Internet, in these markets.

Furthermore, it is important to realize that the design of a Web page helps determine its efficiency. It is known that language and graphic consistency seems to decrease errors in Web design, thus, increasing Web page efficiency. Because little is known about the effects of Web page design and consumer satisfaction, more attention should be paid to this (Teo, Oh, Liu, & Wei, 2003). In addition, organizations dealing with international consumers should pay more attention to cultural differences, such as values and beliefs, to ensure that those international consumers are not misunderstood. Web pages that include features of one's culture could be more effective than those that do not because consumers can easily relate to things with which they are familiar or they can identify.

The objective of this study was important for proposing new standards of communication through the Internet. These standards include: (1) cultural consciousness and sensitivity of an organization dealing with international consumers, (2) use of appropriate language and graphics in their Web sites with which international consumers feel more comfortable, (3) designs that converge with the target market culture, and

(4) Web sites designed to equally include U. S. American values and beliefs and those of the consumers' cultures.

Certain economies have chosen not to import U. S. American products, which might symbolize the U. S. American way of living. Such cultures reject U. S. American recognized products such as MacDonal'd's and Coca-Cola. For instance, countries such as Syria have banned any related U. S. American products as part of its local economy. Until recently it was impossible to find Coca-Cola in local shops until businesspeople started importing such blacklisted products either from Lebanon or Turkey.

Limitations of the Study

This research has several limitations. First, this analysis is limited to only two cultural groups, Latin Americans and U. S. Americans. To create a wider critique of Web site pages, research involving additional cultural groups such as Asians or Europeans need to be conducted. However, as a Latin American, the author can relate to this market and it serves as one example in which to begin this research.

A second limitation is that only two of the cultural manifestations, values and symbols, suggested by Hofstede were analyzed. Rituals and heroes can be included in future investigations to gain a better understanding of how these four basic manifestations tell more about an organization's culture and reveal more details about that culture. It is through these manifestations in which culture influences behavior, as well as the ways culturally-determined knowledge is kept in our brains and expressed (Hofstede, 2001).

Another limitation is that the study is focused on an industry specific commercial company that offers products outside the mainstream commercial sector. Had the study been dedicated to more popular businesses such as the buying of clothes, cars, or other domestic goods, the results of the study might differ. While all research has its limitations, recognizing them is important. This study was designed in hopes that the findings will outweigh the limitations necessary in any research.

Lastly, due to the qualitative nature of this research, multiple readings and conclusions can be drawn from the Web site pages under investigation. This analysis could differ from other people's perspectives

and interpretations could be biased. It was also difficult to put some of the Web site messages into certain value categories. This is perhaps because the technical language used.

Implications for Future Research

The present study has several implications for future work. The outcome of this research may provide cross-cultural communication researchers with new ideas for intercultural communication over the Internet. A great number of studies on culture and consumer behavior have mostly focused on just one of the four cultural manifestations, primarily values, and secondarily symbols. Perhaps more research to include rituals and heroes could be taken into consideration. Other topics researchers might consider include the effects of asynchronous communication and how to minimize cultural misunderstandings between opposing cultures such as collectivist and individualist cultures. Such research can be valuable for people involved with Web page design, especially Web pages that target international consumers.

This research reinforces valuable theories such as value orientation theory, communication accommodation

theory, and hegemony. Hegemony implies that powerful cultures tend to exert domination over less powerful ones through its cultural ideologies such as values and symbols. This study may increase awareness of the issues involved in designing cross-cultural Web site pages that may appeal to people of other cultures and, therefore, may motivate and attract more visitors. It is essential to examine cultural meanings of values, symbols, and language of any Web site before it is available to consumers. This may allow consumers to feel closer to the products they want to purchase bringing success not only to them, but also to the organization that is selling the products.

This study can be useful to those U. S. American-based organizations that want to use the Internet to reach consumers outside the United States. These organizations should instruct themselves on more specific issues dealing with cross-cultural or intercultural communication to successfully reach other cultures, specifically those in the developing world. Increased awareness and cultural sensitivity ought to be encouraged within any organization targeting international consumers. It is necessary to take into account cultural

differences before designing a Web page because being aware of these differences may improve understandings between two cultures.

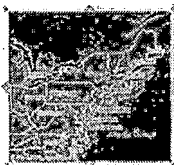
APPENDIX

THE WEB SITE PAGES

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- [GIS.com](#)

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Get Maps, Directions, and More Data with ArcWeb Services

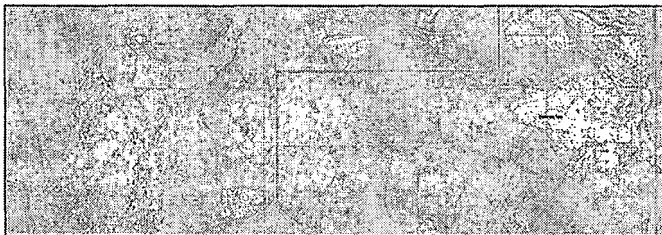
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ArcGIS Interoperability



Geographic Information Systems

Better Decisions Through Modeling and Mapping Our World



The British Columbia Topographic map series offer several ways to view the landscape from terrain and resource databases.

About this Map

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What's New at ESRI

ArcGIS Business Analyst Now Available

Access more than 1,000 2004/2009 demographic variables directly from the ArcGIS 9 platform. Business Analyst data also includes [Community Tapestry](#) segmentation, updated Tele Atlas (GDT)-street network, [Consumer Expenditure](#), and two new reports.

ESRI Learning Pathways Help Users Achieve Success

Learning pathways help guide you to the GIS training you need by providing a customized collection of instructor-led and Web courses for your area of study. Your ESRI training history is also available to track your progress.



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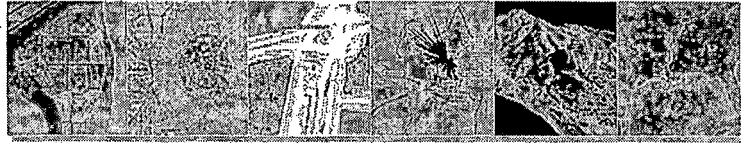
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- ▶ [Introduction to ArcGIS 9 by Jack Dangermond, ESRI President](#)
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Geographic Information Systems

A geographic information system is a system for management, analysis, and display of geographic knowledge, which is represented using a series of information sets such as maps and globes, geographic data sets, processing and work flow models, data models, and metadata.


Better Decisions Through Modeling and Mapping Our World

A GIS can produce information that answers specific questions and allows you to share that information with others. By visualizing relationships, connections, and patterns in data, you can make informed decisions and increase efficiency throughout your organization.

To get started, consider the questions you need answered and what you want from a GIS. In this section, you'll find essential information that introduces you to the tools and benefits available when you implement a GIS.


GIS by ESRI

GIS technology must constantly evolve to meet the changing needs of business, industry, government, and education. We are ready for these changes. Today, ESRI has more than 4,400 skilled employees worldwide who work with hundreds of business partners and tens of thousands of users. Each one makes a unique contribution to this remarkable technology. Each one makes a difference.



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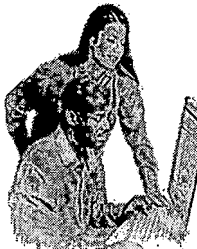
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Essential Information for IT Professionals



To fully realize the capabilities and benefits of geographic information and GIS technology, spatial data needs to be shared and systems need to be interoperable.

Geographic information system (GIS) technology is evolving beyond the traditional GIS community and becoming an integral part of the information infrastructure in many organizations. The unique integration capabilities of a GIS allow disparate data sets to be brought together to create a complete picture of a situation.


GIS provides essential information tools for many levels of society. As IT professionals, you need the best tools to be able to


- Coordinate and communicate key concepts between departments within an organization.
- Share crucial information across organizational boundaries.
- Manage and maintain a central spatial data infrastructure, often within a service-oriented architecture (SOA).

GIS technology illustrates relationships, connections, and patterns that are not necessarily obvious in any one data set, enabling organizations to make better decisions based on all relevant factors. GIS technology is also being used via the Internet and Web services.

[ESRI Web Site](#) | [ESRI Business Information Solutions](#) | [Geography Network](#) | [Distributor Worldwide](#)

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Tools you to intelligently geographically inform systems

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Announcements

ArcGIS 9 Now Available



- [What is ArcGIS?](#)
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Software
By Name
By Category

ArcGIS—an integrated collection of GIS software products for building a complete GIS for your organization. The ArcGIS framework enables you to deploy GIS functionality and business logic wherever it is needed—in desktops, servers (including the Web), or mobile information systems.

This architecture, coupled with the [geodatabase](#), gives you the tools to assemble intelligent geographic information systems.

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ArcWeb Services—a way to include GIS content and capabilities in your applications without having to host the data or develop the necessary tools yourself. The result is significant savings of time, expense, and computer resources.

More GIS Software—ESRI offers a wide range of solutions that are designed to meet your specific business needs. Explore a routing application for the Web, a production and maintenance system for digital cartographic databases, or a collection of software components that enable developers to build custom applications.

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By Name—list of all ESRI software products, information about ESRI technology, and links to more resources.

ArcGIS Family

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- [ArcInfo](#)

▸ [ArcGIS Extensions](#)

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▸ [ArcIMS Extensions](#)

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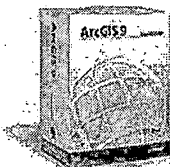
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Key GIS Concepts

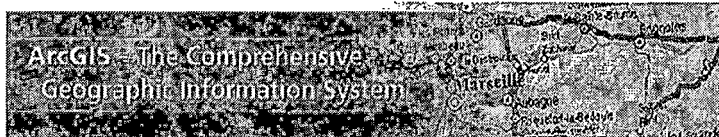
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ArcGIS 9 Now Available



• [Introduction to ArcGIS 9](#)
by Jack Dangermond,
ESRI President



ArcGIS Family of Products

ArcGIS is an integrated collection of GIS software products for building a complete GIS for your organization. The ArcGIS framework enables you to deploy GIS functionality and business logic wherever it is needed—in desktops, servers (including the Web), or mobile devices. This architecture, coupled with the geodatabase, gives you the tools to assemble intelligent geographic information systems.

Desktop GIS [→ Overview](#)

ArcGIS Desktop software products allow you to author, analyze, map, manage, share, and publish geographic information.

- [ArcReader](#)
- [ArcView](#)
- [ArcEditor](#)
- [ArcInfo](#)
- [ArcGIS Desktop Extensions](#)

Server GIS [→ Overview](#)

Server GIS products allow GIS functionality and data to be deployed from a central environment.

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- [ArcSDE](#)
- [GIS Portal Toolkit](#)

Embedded GIS [→ Overview](#)

ArcGIS Engine allows you to develop custom desktop GIS applications or embed GIS functionality in existing applications. These focused solutions can then be easily deployed throughout an organization.

- [ArcGIS Engine](#)

Mobile GIS [→ Overview](#)

ArcGIS

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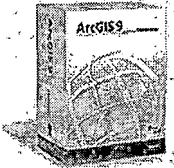
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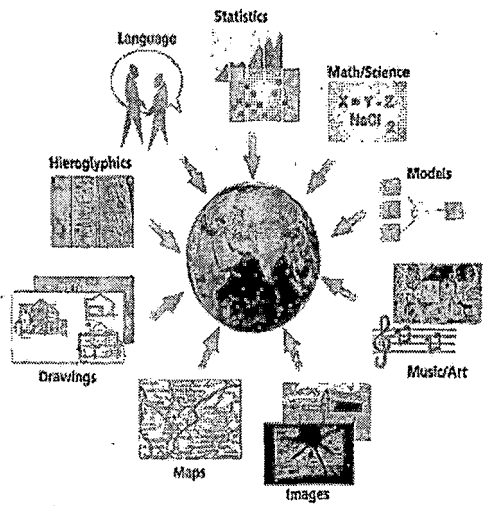
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Intelligent GIS

Historically, humans have learned to express knowledge and share it through many abstract forms. We continually explain our human experience and collective understanding using these abstractions—summaries of the larger body of knowledge. Abstractions, such as text, hieroglyphics, language, mathematics, music and art, drawings, images, and maps, are used to record and communicate our culture and civilization from generation to generation.



As humans, we use many abstractions to express and communicate our collective understanding of the earth and its systems. Geography provides a universal framework for abstraction and communication about place.

In the digital computing age, we've begun to capture everything we know and share it across networks (the World Wide Web). These knowledge collections are rapidly becoming digitally enabled. Simultaneously, GIS is evolving to help us better understand, represent, manage, and communicate many aspects of our earth as a system.



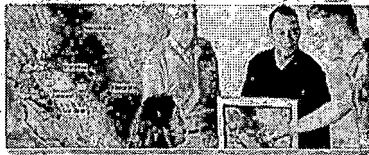
Services

GIS is a collaboration of integrated technologies for sharing geographic knowledge.



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Toolkit for spatial data infrastructure portals.
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ArcNews, Spring 2004
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Our Professional Services Group helps users move through the GIS implementation process quickly and efficiently through technology transfer.

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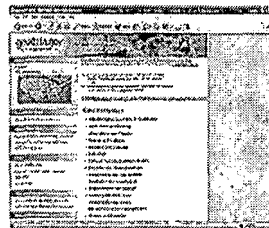
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Case Studies

Geospatial One-Stop

As part of the Geospatial One-Stop Initiative, ESRI developed a portal to make it easier, faster, and less expensive for all levels of government and the public to access geospatial information. The portal was developed quickly, building on ESRI's experience and standards-based commercial off-the-shelf technology.



The purpose of Geospatial One-Stop is twofold. The first purpose is to support the business of government. Almost every aspect of government, including, but not limited to, disaster management, recreation, planning, homeland security, public health, and environmental protection, has a geographic component and requires geospatial data and tools to appropriately manage it. The second purpose is to support decision making issues occurring in places (e.g., floods, events, crimes) because decisions addressing one issue often have broader implications, sometimes affecting entire communities. Geospatial information allows decisions to be viewed in a community context and can facilitate cross agency coordination.

www.geodata.gov

EU INSPIRE

The EU Geo-Portal is Europe's Internet access point to a collection of spatial data under the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE) initiative. The intent of INSPIRE is to stimulate the creation of a European spatial information infrastructure that delivers to its users integrated spatial information services. These services will allow users to



Industries

The application of GIS is limited only by the imagination of those who use it.



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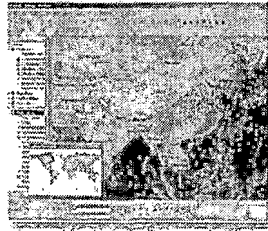
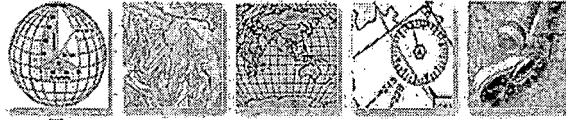
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Data Management

A database-driven cartographic production system allows you to create multiple representations of the data for multiple product outputs.

Cartography is the art, science, and technology of making maps.

Cartographic organizations and their managers must determine how to employ each of these elements to clearly and cost effectively communicate the mapping requirements they are challenged with. ESRI technology provides the software tools to efficiently apply science and art effectively to the cartographic process.

Many organizations involved in production cartography worldwide use ESRI software, including national and regional mapping agencies (both civilian and military) and commercial providers. Examples include

- [National Geographic Society](#)
- [American Automobile Association](#)
- [Rand McNally](#)

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