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A Cross-National Comparison of Corporate Web-Site Communications; An Examination of the Services Sector

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A CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISON OF CORPORATE WEB-SITE COMMUNICATIONS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE SERVICES SECTOR

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A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF CORPORATE WEB-SITE ADVERTISING: AN EXAMINATION OF THE SERVICES SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Despite the trend toward increased marketing in the electronic medium, there is still a lack of comprehensive research. Especially noteworthy is the lack of research on equivalence of electronic information across both industries and national boundaries. The literature is replete with findings from studies surrounding consumer and B2B goods advertising promoted through print and TV mediums; however, this study suggests that previous findings and methods may not be directly transferrable to service advertisers in an electronic medium. The specific design characteristics inherent with the web medium combined with the inherent limitations surrounding cultural indices suggest that new methods and measures are required. This study proposes that a newly developed one-dimensional construct that incorporates socioeconomic, media, and technology variables can be applied to better evaluate differences in web-based information content. It is suggested that this new indicator can support a clearer and more systematic procedure for use in cross-national communication studies than previously used methods.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The internet has been described as one of the most significant and important marketing tools for the global marketplace. From humble beginnings, the internet has evolved into a critical medium used to advertise, inform, and sell to a diverse set of a firm's stakeholders across a globally dispersed community. It is estimated that internet shoppers spent $419.7 billion in online retail sales (excluding travel) in the year 2007(e-Marketer, 2008). That figure is expected to increase to $711.4 billion by the year 2010 and does not include the potentially greater volume of business-to-business transactions. As a business tool, the World Wide Web (the component of the internet capable of supporting multimedia and interactive communications) has been touted as having a similar influence to business strategy as that delivered through the invention of the telephone (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999). Discussion on the Web's impact on marketing strategy has steadily increased. One major area of interest in scholarly journals is to evaluate the Web as a marketing strategy tool. These studies seek to qualify suggested strategies and recommendations regarding how the internet might improve a firms marketing performance. Of the approximately 1.15 billion current global internet users, 16.35% reside in the US, and accounted for 32.6% of the total online revenues generated in 2007. By 2010, it is projected that the share of total e-revenues generated by US users will fall to 30.0% as other regions of the world expand their internet activities.

Comparison of Communication Design Characteristics: Web vs. Print

The web is classified as a hypertext medium. This suggests that text, graphics, video, sound, and animation can be used either alone or in any combination by the marketer. The use of these items in combination supports the claim that communications on the web are presented in a multimedia format. This capability is important to marketers because the combined use of multiple communication vehicles has been useful in establishing and maintaining a firm's image. The use of internet tools is seen as an opportunity to provide "atmospherics" effects into web advertising (Fink & Laupase, 2000).

Unlike mass media channels such as print, television, and radio, the hypertext medium also supports communications in an interactive format. The interactive capability of hypertext changes the static nature found with traditional communication forms. Receivers of communication now have the opportunity to participate in the exchange of information. Each individual that receives information on the web can control the amount, rate and depth of the information. Communicating on the web provides firms with the opportunity of direct interpersonal communication with audience members through tools such as e-mail, online chat rooms, and discussion boards.

The general capabilities of multimedia delivery and interactive communications may provide more benefit than just adding new opportunities in relation to existing communication channels. Some authors contend that the experience generated for the consumer through the use of web technologies may support different reactions and behaviors from their experience with the more static forms of communications found with traditional mass media channels (Raman &Leckenby, 1998; Gallagher et al, 2001). In particular, Hoffman &Novak (1996) suggest that an adaptation and, in some cases, a redevelopment of communication models be explored for use in web message construction. They contend that in a hypertext environment, recipients are changed from relatively passive “targets” of marketing strategies to more active participants in the marketing communications process. Drawing on consumer and advertising research, they suggest that these characteristics have a direct impact on the recipient’s motivation to process information from the web. They contend that the change in motivation to process web information is first influenced by situational involvement, whereby the processing of information is likely to result in goal-directed behavior. This is followed by an increase in the level of enduring involvement, whereby information processing is likely to result in increased experiential behavior. Hoffman & Novak (1996) explain that increased concentration surrounding web communications yields “increased learning, exploratory and participative behaviors, positive subjective experiences, and a perceived sense of control over their interactions". Raman & Leckenby (1998) found modest support for the notion that both forms of involvement acted as antecedents to their duration of web site visit measure, and that in-turn was found to influence the overall attitude toward the message generated on the web.

The quantitative differences associated with the hypertext environment relate to the conditions through which the audience is exposed to the communication. With traditional mass media, consumers have always had a degree of negative control over exposure to communications. They could elect to turn the page away from a print message or change the channel. However, with the capabilities of the hypertext medium, audience members now have more control over when and where they can be exposed to a message. The various search engine and browser tools available on the web give audience members increased control over message exposure and attention. Similarly, with increased control over the timing and place of exposure, audience members can determine if they want to return to a website, thereby exposing themselves repeatedly to its content. Most scholars agree that communications effectiveness depends, in part, on whether a web site is successful in bringing audience members back for repeated exposure to communications.

The interactive capabilities inherent with the web are often credited with providing opportunities for audience members to repeatedly visit a site. Ghose and Dou (1998) found that the greater the interactivity in a site, the greater the likelihood that the site would be included in the Lycos top five percent list (an independent assessment of the best websites). This suggests that interactivity is desirable, at least from the viewpoint of the rating agency. The strategies used to improve the interactive capabilities of a site include the use of tools such as loan repayment schedules, games, and user forums in addition to variations to marketing stimuli that have been promoted through traditional media such as coupons, surveys, dealer locations, and contact information.

In short, there are a number of both qualitative and quantitative differences suggesting that the strategies guiding the placement of content and message themes used in traditional media categories may not be directly transferrable to an online medium.

TABLE 1

Comparison of Communication Design Characteristics

Characteristics	**Print Communications**	**Web Communications**
General Capabilities	• Static	• Multimedia (“Atmospherics”) • Interactive • Animation
Qualitative Differences	• Accidental Exposures • Lower Attention • Passive Evaluation	• Intentional Exposure • Higher Attention • Direct Evaluation
Quantitative Differences	• Limited Exposure	• Repeated Exposures

Marketing Benefits of Web Communication Strategies

The reviews of the structural design characteristics in the previous section that distinguish the hypertext medium from its traditional counterparts support a variety of potential implications for the marketing strategist. A review of the inherent benefits associated with web communications, both from the customer's perspective as well as from the firm's point of view, has provided many scholars with a basis to offer new insights and recommendations for web-based communications strategies. It is suggested by many authors that the benefits offered through the internet and through interactive communications create significantly more opportunities to interact with customers and form relationships, and thereby forming a stronger position relative to competitors (Namasivayam, 2003).

Taking a similar view, Achrol & Kotler (1999) suggest that customers will enjoy an increasing capacity to become organized through the core benefits derived through the internet. They argue that this will require marketers to evolve as agents of the buyer rather than the seller, and adopt the role of customer consultant though information management. They cite examples such as Baxter Travenol in hospital supplies, McKesson in pharmaceuticals, Travelocity in travel arrangements, and Amazon in books and consumer goods.

The literature surrounding the benefits derived from web communications and their implications on marketing strategy is diverse, however, much of the research thus far has focused on the increased capacity of marketers to distribute and manage information to customer groups. These findings are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Overview of Benefits Derived From Hypertext Media and Interactive Communications*

Core Business Function	Benefits Derived
Mediating Information	• Allows for faster, cheaper, more personalized interactions • Dramatically reduces customer search costs and supports purchase decisions made on behalf of the customer by intelligent software agents • Supports "24 X 7" communications regardless of where the audience initiates the interaction
Brand Mediation	• Brokers information concerning product uses, performance, new technologies, and consumer experiences and lifestyles
Managing Customer Communities	• Supports seamless communication over any distance; both local and global • Evolving beyond a single, limited channel (a single PC) to exploit a range of new, high capacity fixed and mobile networks

*Source: adapted from Achrol & Kotler (1999)

What is Standardization in Communications?

Despite the popularity in its use, the term "standardization" is often used in a general context, describing the degree of fixed positioning of a firm's marketing mix in relation to its competitors or to a proposed ideal standard. At one extreme are companies that use one global marketing mix. This level of standardization encompasses the product, communications, and distribution channels and promises the lowest cost to the firm. At the other extreme is an adapted marketing mix, where the firm adjusts the marketing mix elements at the target market or even the local level. Between the two extremes, many possibilities exist. Most brand communications are adapted to some extent. Even global brands such as Toyota, Coca-Cola, and Dell will undergo some changes in their promotion and communication strategies in foreign markets. These changes will usually be represented in two categories: adaptation of the message theme and/ or adaptation of the information content contained in the message.

Adaptation of the message theme refers to the degree to which the company uses one message in all of the markets that it serves. Message variation will occur with changes in language, name, and colors. Exxon used “Put a tiger in your tank” with minor variations and gained international recognition. Colors are usually changed to avoid taboos in certain countries. Purple is associated with death in Burma, while white is considered a mourning color in India.

The second possibility is for the firm to use the same communication theme but adapt the specific content of the message execution to each local market. The Camay soap company during the 1990’s featured a beautiful woman bathing in all of their television commercials world-wide. However, the company chose to include minor visual adaptations across national markets. In Venezuela, a man was seen in the bathroom; In Italy and France, only a man’s hand was seen; and in Japan, the man waited outside. These variations were provided to better align the company’s message and image to the expectations and cultural values that prevail within each particular country.

The question of the degree to which standardization of communications is applied within service sector categories has received less attention from researchers. Albers-Miller & Stafford (1999) evaluated services in the utilitarian and experiential categories and identified differences in communication strategies across their sample of countries, but no significant differences in regards to service sectors. Szymanski et al (1999) investigated the question of whether competitive strategy and industry structure variables impact the decision to standardize communications. Their results revealed that the effect of strategy and structure variables generalize across the markets studied, implying that industry type does not deliver a main effect on communications delivery.

Relationship of Communication Objectives to the Standardization Decision

Although the literature regarding the standardization of website content remains scarce, previous researchers have suggested that the communications found in the cyber market differ from that found in traditional media (Massad et al, 2001; Tucker & Massad, 2005). The distinction between communication objectives and communication content seems to sometimes be blurred on the internet. For example, a majority of company web sites provide information about the companies and their products and services. From the point of view of the visitors to the site, the company and service information is content, while from the companies' perspective, it may be intended to be communications aimed at stimulating brand awareness or brand attitude. This study explores the question of whether content is standardized in a hypertext environment. The intention of the service provider for including the content, however, might influence the degree of standardization found across a broad range of sites and service categories.

Brown (2003) found that the online communications objectives of most organizations in his study were to provide brand awareness information followed by content to strengthen attitude toward the brand. Relatively less information was provided to encourage interactive marketing, purchase facilitation, or category need. His study focused on the online sport industry and the generalizability of the findings is not known.

The applicability of traditional communications models to online marketplaces has also generated interest since the advent of the internet. These studies approach the issue of whether traditional methods to measure communication effects remain relevant to the online environment. This position is supported by the notion that the fundamental goals of the players in online markets are similar to those in traditional environments and therefore traditional methods are transportable to the online environment. Tucker & Massad (2005) contend that an approach that incorporates consumer behaviors is needed in online studies to properly measure the effectiveness of information content in meeting communication objectives. In their model, labeled Hierarchy of Internet Communications Effects, web site hits contribute to the brand awareness measure and bookmarking a site is incorporated into the brand awareness measure. Similarly, they suggest future research opportunities that investigate objectives such as awareness, preference, and intent to purchase in relation to behaviors such as clicking through, bookmarking, and bidding activity with respect to auction sites.

Benefits and Risks Associated with Standardized vs. Local Communications

One of the primary motivations for firms to pursue a standardized communications strategy is to seek a consistent image of the firm and its brand across multiple markets. It is widely accepted that a uniform brand image across markets can enhance overall brand equity (Okazaki, et al, 2007). Potential benefits derived from cost savings are also often cited as an advantage of standardization, as well as the efficiencies in reaching cross-market segments (Taylor, 2002). Perhaps the genesis for the interest in standardization strategies stems from the groundbreaking article by Theodore Levitt (1983). He provided the basic rationale for global standardization with the contention that the world is becoming a common marketplace in which people, regardless of where they live, desire the same products and lifestyles. Today, proponents of standardization refer to the development of the web, the rapid spread of communications technology around the world, and the linking of technologies to promote the notion that the needs and wants of consumers are converging. This convergence, in turn, has created global markets that can best be reached with standardized communications.

The marketing concept, however, holds that consumer needs vary, and therefore, marketing strategies will be more effective when they are tailored at the target market level. This concept applies to foreign as well as domestic markets. Although there is no doubt that the increasing frequency of travel and communications have reduced the effect of consumer differences, worldwide tastes, habits, and preferences have not approached homogeneity. Some authors contend that in many consumer industries, a large group of consumers have emerged that rejected standardized product designs, performance, and communications. It Is also suggested that consumer and market trends are emerging to counterbalance the forces of standardization. Of particular interest is the idea that today's consumers are not buying individual products, but procuring components to solution systems. With advances in wireless and internet technologies, for example, the TV set is now becoming part of a home entertainment and information system that is comprised of many products. These transformations are forcing companies to adapt their standard physical-oriented products to more flexible and locally differentiated systems of products that are complimented with locally adapted service modifications.

TABLE 3

Overview of Benefits and Risks Associated with Standardized vs. Local Communications

	Standardization	**Adaptation**
Benefits	Uniform brand image Increased brand equity Cost savings Penetration of cross-market segments Convergence of global preferences	Target market specific Subculture adoption rates are improved Advances in technology will minimize additional expense Customer preferences for product-system solutions are better met
Risks	Market homogeneity measures are abstract Additional opportunities for competitors Cost savings may not reflect administrative requirements	Increased brand management requirements Differences in customer preferences may not be clear Greater sensitivity to external factors

Importance of the Research

It is clear that the amount of money invested in online communications and promotion is evolving faster than most other channels, and that online promotion is evolving at a faster rate than the research aimed directly at on-line marketing (e-Marketer, 2006). Despite the increase in importance of messaging on the web, however, little research is available to identify and understand the differences in web communications across national borders, especially in the services sector.

Standardization versus adaptation in communication has long been the subject of debate, and this situation is expected to continue. However, the amount of progress made in understanding the context surrounding standardization has been questioned. Much of the standardization literature focuses on whether to standardize or adapt communications in a given market as opposed to which aspects of communications can be standardized and under what conditions (Taylor, 2002; Okazaki, et al, 2007). There have been relatively few empirical studies that evaluate standardization from the perspective of communications managers. An issue that remains largely unexplored is whether host country factors play a role in determining whether standardization is occurring in the hypertext environment. The communications literature suggests that firms are likely to develop their strategies in line with prevailing host country cultural indices. However, there is little evidence to suggest whether marketing executives perceive host country environmental influences as drivers of their communications strategy. Additionally, the use of culture as a reliable indicator has been questioned (Kale, 1991). The drawbacks of simply relying on culture indices to explain differences in communication content are heightened when studies surrounding technology are pursued due to the technological variables that can impact communication content. This study attempts to respond to these gaps by first proposing the development and application of a socioeconomic and technology (SET) score to help explain differences in creative strategies and information content across national borders. The SET measure is then used to examine the web-based implied communication strategies of firms competing in the services sector in five separate countries that are diverse across a variety of national socioeconomic and technology indicators. This analysis will help to reveal whether marketers prefer web site features of local, adapted, or standardized web sites.

Focus of the Dissertation

It is the goal of this research to pursue understanding in three key areas: First, by developing a new score based on socioeconomic and technology variables, it is expected that a more reliable procedure will be developed to evaluate web-based information content and creative strategy in cross-national studies. This study is not limited by the presumption that cultural dimensions are the sole environmental driver of communication strategy. The impact of other critical environmental factors such as market factor variables and media structure characteristics are incorporated into a one dimensional measure that is thought to be useful in explaining communication standardization strategies. Secondly, by investigating the services sector, this study contributes to a largely unexplored segment of the web-based communications literature. The growing importance of services is evidenced through their rising share of the US GDP and their increased contribution to international trade. Lastly, this study will focus totally on web-based communications via the service provider's home page. Several previous studies have evaluated the impact of only cultural variables on communications in the print and TV mediums; however the degree to which previous findings are transferrable to the web medium is unclear.

The overarching issue surrounds the question of whether standardization of web content in service categories varies across countries. This has been the conclusion drawn in many previous studies where static media types have been evaluated with tangible product categories. This position, however, is not consistent with the notion that the specific design characteristics inherent with the web medium may influence the degree of standardization across different creative strategies and information content variables. It is a goal of this project to provide insight into these two divergent positions.

More specifically, this study seeks to examine the three more prominent categories of creative strategy delivery in addition to five separate informational content variables that are assumed to be the most appropriate information elements with respect to the delivery of service. The communication manager's employment of the following elements will each be evaluated in relation to existing host country influences:

1) The level of rational reasoning used

2) The level of emotional reasoning used

3) The level of symbolic metaphor used

4) The emphasis on price and value

5) The emphasis on the quality of service delivery

6) The emphasis on service performance levels

7) The emphasis on the ease of availability of the service

8) The emphasis on special offers used to incent purchase of the service

9) The level of elevation generated across country and service sector groupings

10) The level of differentiation experienced across country and service sector groupings

By examining the elements listed above, this study is expected to contribute to the existing literature about the marketing of services online in four significant ways:

A) It will identify perceived differences in communications between countries with different socioeconomic and technology characteristics

B) It will incorporate a broader base of comparison of countries, beyond cultural variables

C) It will identify differences in communications strategies used in separate service categories

D) It will help to qualify the degree to which previous findings regarding the standardization of advertising content in the more static mediums can be transferred to the online medium.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter Two begins with a review of the literature for the marketing of services, with an emphasis on the characteristics of services that distinguish them from traditional products. The potential impact of each of these characteristics on web communications is then offered. This section is followed with a review of the role of information content on marketing strategy, the impact of environmental variables on business communications, and the primary dimensions used to define country classifications. The need for a composite indicator to incorporate the multitude of host country socioeconomic and technology achievement variables is then offered, followed by the procedures used and results obtained while developing the SET score for this study. Finally, the need for additional empirical research in this area is made clear through a presentation of the previous studies that were completed to form the current understanding of the factors impacting standardization in communications.

Chapter Three begins with a historical development of the use of communication strategies and information content variables in communications research. This is offered to provide a clear definition of the constructs proposed for inclusion in the study. The chapter concludes with an explanation and defense of each of the hypotheses proposed in the study.

Chapter Four presents the research methodology. This chapter includes a discussion of the selection criteria supporting the sample of countries used, the criteria used to enlist the categories of service firms, and the method used to guide the process of data collection. This is followed by a discussion of the method of analysis, a review of the assumptions, and lastly, a review of the limitations of the method and the research is presented.

Chapter Five presents the analysis of the data and a discussion of the reliability and validity of the measures, and provides a review of the hypotheses testing. A section is also included that compares the findings of this study to previous research that relies solely on cultural characteristics to explain the relative level of standardization found in the more static mediums. Chapter Six delivers a discussion of the findings, implications of the findings for online business communications, and suggestions for extending the research.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter contains a discussion of several topics that are central to the parameters and implications of the study. First, a classical examination of the inherent differences found with services that demand consideration when formulating communication strategies is offered, followed by a general review of the accepted differences between the marketing of goods and services. These differences are then evaluated within the context of the web medium to identify general differences in service category communications. The role of environmental factors on communications strategy is then provided, with an emphasis on the impact of technical achievement, socioeconomic indicators, and media structure on executing communications strategies. The development procedure for a one dimensional score to represent the multitude of host country environmental variables is then provided. This is followed by a short discussion surrounding the application of the score. An overview of the previous research that primarily surrounds the use of cultural variables to explain similarities and differences found in communications is then provided. Finally, a typology of advertising content variables is presented with a discussion to support the choice of the specific items that were included for evaluation in this study.

Differences Between the Marketing of Goods and Services

The idea that services marketing differs from the marketing of goods is widely accepted throughout the marketing literature. There remains considerable debate, however, as to how service marketing differs from the marketing of goods and the degree to which these differences can be adopted across different categories of services. It is clear that when services include such diverse activities as banking, retailing, consulting, and wholesaling, then there are very few characteristics that are shared by all services (Lovelock, 1999; Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004). What is clear, therefore, is that service providers face marketing strategy and communication issues not frequently encountered in other sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture.

Common among most definitions of service is that four fundamental differences between goods and services exist: intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985; Edgett & Parkinson, 1993; Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004). The following section includes a definition for each of these characteristics, and provides strategic implications for the online marketing strategist.

The unique characteristics of services have been much discussed. The purpose of this paper is not to revisit these service characteristics per se but to explore their implications for online communications. The goal, therefore, is to determine if additional learning can be applied to the communications of service offerings in the online environment.

Intangibility

Perhaps the most agreement among scholars regarding the differences found between goods and services is that services do not usually provide tangible outputs, and that the receiver of the service cannot know the exact outcome of the transaction (Lovelock, 1983; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985). The concept of intangibility presents the marketer with a few unique challenges, such as the inability to protect the service delivery process through patents, the inability to store services, and the difficulties surrounding the setting of prices for services. These challenges brought through intangibility are thought to raise the level of uncertainty of buyers, primarily because physical evidence is not available to support expected results (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985). To reduce uncertainty, buyers will look for evidence of value. They might draw inferences about the value of the service from the place the service is offered, the people delivering the service, the equipment used, symbols, or the price of the service. In essence, the service provider's task is to manage the tangible evidence that surrounds the delivery of the service. The concept of intangibility is expected to provide an even greater challenge to online service marketers. Whereas traditional service providers seek to add physical evidence such as equipment, personnel, and service locations to intangible service delivery, online advertisers must rely solely on information and creative execution strategies to develop evidence of value to their intangible offers.

Interesting insights into the intangibility problem were introduced by de Chernatony & Segal-Horn (2001) and surround the issue of brand building in relation to service intangibility. They suggest that the visual power of icons, for example, offer online marketers with opportunities to convey service brand benefits. Their point is that service brands represent something tangible while the service provided remains intangible. It has also been suggested that online marketers should leverage the multimedia capabilities of the web to communicate not just the benefits of the service brand but also the processes that that consumers will be involved in when they co-produce service offerings. The Disney theme park site is one example of online communications that emphasize the processes supporting service consumption.

Inseparability

This characteristic suggests that the production and consumption of the service offering occurs simultaneously. In these instances, consumer participation in the production process is unavoidable (Namasivayam, 2003). If a service is indeed inseparable, then the provider becomes part of the service. Because the client is also present as the service is produced, provider-client interaction and involvement becomes a special feature of services marketing. Services with high inseparability characteristics also become extremely difficult to produce at high volume levels

Several marketing strategies have been offered for dealing with the limitations surrounding inseparability. Because both the service provider and the service recipient must be present during service delivery, it is difficult for providers in some categories to improve service delivery volumes or gain efficiencies of scale. The service provider can learn to accommodate larger groups through facilities upgrades, as in the case of larger hotel ballrooms and restaurants. Many specialized service providers, such as surveyors, have learned to work more efficiently, usually by increasing their competence in using computer technology. Lastly, service providers can train additional service providers and build up client confidence, thereby reducing the dependence on any individual provider. The impact that service inseparability has to services that are marketed online is not clear. It might be argued that the online medium increases the perceived risk of the service on the part of the recipient, due to the lack of any tangibility cues as explained above. However, the online medium might also be expected to act as a scheduling, or booking, mechanism and thereby increase efficiencies for both the delivery as well as the consumption of the service. The internet, in essence, might act as a standardization agent in the procurement of services.

Variability

The third characteristic deals with the variability in the delivery and performance of the service. Similar to inseparability, variability relates to the issue of the standards of service delivery. Because services depend on who provides them and when and where they are provided, standardization of service delivery is not feasible. Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry (1985) first identified two important characteristics surrounding variability in services. They noted that perceived service quality varies based on provider, consumer, and time inputs; and that the more labor intensive the service, the more likely it is to be variable in its outcome. Several authors have pointed out that no two customers are exactly alike and therefore will have unique demands and experiences with the service offering. Lovelock & Gummesson (2004) suggested that the presence and behavior of other customers during service delivery and variations in external conditions, such as weather, crowding, and locations could impact consistent delivery of service offerings.

Strategic options for addressing variability in services focus on three areas to increase levels of quality control:

1. Invest in organized pre-planned service offerings to support standardized service-performance processes throughout the organization (Levitt, 1972, 1976)

2. Invest in good hiring and employee training procedures. From a systems perspective, the use of service blueprints to understand and improve the service delivery process is encouraged (Lovelock & Yip, 1996). These processes must then be clearly communicated to prospective customers on the web site.

3. Monitor customer satisfaction metrics. This emphasis results in service delivery being evaluated by the way the service is delivered internally. Free (1999) suggests encouraging a service delivery culture whereby staff

recognizes how they should interact with customers in an effort to support sustainable differentiation.

The impact of the variability characteristic to online services marketers is an interesting question. Although empirical evidence is not available, anecdotal evidence suggests that the online medium can help to decrease the level of perceived service variability, if not the actual level. A cursory review of online travel sites, including commercial airline sites, reveals some similarity in the methods and information used to communicate service quality and performance standards. The reason for this consistency is unclear. Companies obviously want to expand the use of marketing information that they feel is working effectively in their market(s). Competitors might also be efficient in identifying effective delivery techniques of communicating service performance standards and adapt their information accordingly, thereby creating a standardization effect across the industry. The impact of service variability on online advertising, therefore, remains an area that deserves additional attention by researchers.

Perishability

Services are said to be perishable because they cannot be stored. This characteristic poses the biggest problems for service marketers when demand fluctuates (Zeithaml et al, 1985). It has also been suggested that service capacity implies a greater capability to supply service quality (Bang, et al, 2005). The firms' capacity strategy, therefore, directly impacts service strategy. In most service sectors, superior service is linked to higher capacity, because the firm's capacity is what allows it to deliver the aspects of service quality (Parasuraman et al, 1985).

The strategies for dealing with the challenges brought by perishability are more firm management centered than marketing centered. The goal of these strategies is to maintain greater consistency of demand (Lovelock, 1983). On the demand side, it has been suggested that differential pricing can be effective in shifting demand from peak to off-peak periods. Cultivating nonpeak-demand through the introduction of related, yet distinct service categories have been explored, such as in the case of restaurants offering breakfast menus to compliment their standard dinner menu offerings. Strategies designed to deal with capacity constraints arising from fluctuations in the firm's capacity to supply service are not as well defined. Managing a part-time workforce to serve peak demand periods is often cited as one alternative, although hiring and training issues are critical to minimize the variability in service delivery that this strategy might introduce.

More recently, the use of technology has been used to support increased consumer participation in service delivery, especially in the areas of reservations and check-out/ payment procedures. It appears that this is the area that can be impacted by online marketers. By increasing the participation of service recipients in service administration processes, service firms can more effectively deal with service capacity constraints.

The Impact of Service Characteristics on Marketing Strategy

It has been suggested that these inherent characteristics of services, combined with the tremendous growth in the interest and impact of services on the world's economy, has initiated a transition from a goods-centered to a service-centered delivery of marketing strategy (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Bolton, 2004; Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004). In particular, Vargo & Lusch (2004) reference this philosophical transition as an evolution to "a new dominant logic for marketing". At its core, this change in the assumptions and strategic inputs used to develop marketing strategies for services is linked to the perceptions of value creation that are generated from the characteristics of services that were previously described. The list of potential business resources that are impacted by this philosophical shift is long, encompassing the breadth of the firm's strategic inputs. Table 4 illustrates the shift in marketing philosophy that has evolved in recent times to accommodate the fundamental differences in services marketing.

TABLE 4

Overview of the Critical Components Affecting Goods vs. Service Marketing Strategies*

Business Strategy Component	Traditional Goods-Centered Strategy	Emerging Service-Centered Strategy
Primary unit of exchange	Goods are exchanged.	Customers exchange to acquire knowledge, skills, and convenience
Role of deliverables	Goods represent end products. Producers use materials to produce goods	Goods may be used as intermediate resources to develop value creation processes
Role of customer	Recipient of goods	Co-producer of service delivery. Marketing becomes an interactive process with the customer
Determination of value	Value is determined by the producer	Value is perceived and determined by the consumer
Firm-customer interaction	The firm directs acts to the customer to create transactions	Customers are active participants in service co-production
Source of value growth	Derived from surplus of tangible resources	Derived through the exchange of specialized knowledge and skill

*Source: adapted from Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004; Namasivayam, 2003

Perhaps the most striking element found in Table 4 is the increased role that the consumer plays in the emerging service-centered marketing strategy paradigm. It is accepted that service recipients may have more or less interaction with a service provider depending on the nature of the service delivered; however, Namasivayam (2003) identifies customer interaction as “points of marketing" and suggests that service providers can be broadly divided along this dimension.

It is within this context that websites are particularly relevant to emerging service communication strategies. Perceiving the consumer as a co-producer and the service provider as a facilitator in the service production process highlights the emphasis on consumer choice in the delivery of the service. This suggests that service providers not only ensure that consumers have appropriate choices, but that they have the information and resulting knowledge to make informed decisions regarding their choices. It is presumed that the internet, with its enhanced interactive and qualitative capabilities, is ideally positioned to deliver consumers information from which informed decisions can be executed. Managers, in turn, can automate some aspects of service delivery while increasing satisfaction levels to their customers.

The Role of Involvement on Service Choice Processes

A substantial amount of literature has focused on the effects of involvement on consumers' reactions to communications (Petty et al 1983; Hopkins et al, 2004). Most researchers agree that the level of involvement reflects the degree of personal relevance of the message to the recipient. If the message is personally relevant, the recipient is expected to process the information at a deeper level than if they were to find the message not personally relevant. Service choice processes are expected to have a relatively higher level of involvement due to the uncertainties evolving from the four inherent characteristics of services that were reviewed earlier, especially those services that are higher on the intangibility and inseparability dimensions (Zeithaml et al, 1985). In the online communications environment, Hopkins et al (2004) examined how the effects of attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention were each moderated by consumer involvement.

Molesworth & Suortti (2002) further suggest that the relative level of high involvement might be market segment specific in those segments that view online shopping for services as a new innovation that can be accepted or rejected. They classify online shopping as a discontinuous innovation, meaning that it creates dramatic changes in search and evaluation behaviors and requires new skills to be utilized. Discontinuous innovations, they argue, have a profound effect on consumption patterns of new services, and on search and evaluation behaviors of previously adopted services. This suggests that service firms seeking relative advantage in these segments must seek to reduce the functional barriers associated with shopping online. Although the hypertext environment is often credited with delivering the capability of media rich messaging in several formats, the discontinuous innovation aspects of shopping online, especially in higher involvement categories, might support a standardization strategy in message delivery and content.

The Impact of the Web on Service Communication Strategies

Apart from the theoretical research aimed at understanding the relative levels of involvement and other behaviors associated with evaluating web communications, several studies identify the implications of these findings for the communications manager. It is suggested that consumer attentiveness to the communication can be improved through the use of the multimedia and interactive capabilities inherent with the hypertext environment (Hopkins et al, 2004; Kim et al, 2007; Molesworth & Suortti, 2001).

Hopkins et al (2004) suggest that online communications of low involvement products with few distinguishing attributes might benefit from executional tactics such as animation or sound because these require the use of senses to process the message. Executional choices associated with the functionality of the website also may play an integral role in influencing consumer perceptions and behaviors. The interactivity of a website may offer a wide range of benefits to the consumer as well as the marketer such as customized communications and service information, personalized image presentation, and entertainment. More importantly, the interactive nature of web sites has been credited with positively affecting critical consumer responses such as the desire to browse the site and make a purchase online (Fiore et al, 2005; Kim et al, 2007). Research shows that 3D virtual product presentations provide an improved experience due to vivid sensory information, contributing to the effect that Fink & Laupase (2000) labeled as atmospherics. It is thought that providing more effective ways of examining service attributes (e.g. zoom-in, multiple views, animation) may lead consumers to become more involved in the online shopping experience, resulting in a desire to stay and return to the site.

Classification of Service Categories

As the importance of services began to grow, scholars started to develop classification schemes that could address the distinct nature of services. A broad range of service classification schemes were introduced into the academic literature. These different schemes used characteristics such as degree of customer contact, employee/ customer interface, customer involvement, tangibility, nature of delivery, customization, and others. Silpakit and Fisk (1985) used two specific dimensions: (1) degree of customer contact; and (2) degree of customer participation. Lovelock's (1983) approach provided a more detailed typology, including five 2 X 2 matrices, each of which could be used to develop its' own classification scheme. Subsequent research by Lovelock (1999; Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004) suggested a consolidation of service categories to better reflect the reality of a goods-services continuum. These studies place more focus on the service act and the types of value received by the recipient of the service. In this classification scheme, services involving physical acts to customer's bodies (such as healthcare) are classified separately from physical acts to owned objects (as in the case of maintenance and repair). Similarly, services delivering nonphysical acts to customer's minds, such as entertainment, are classified separately from services surrounding the processing of information.

Stafford & Day (1995) recommend the use of an experiential-utilitarian continuum for overcoming weaknesses that they encountered with other classification systems. More recently, Tarn (2005) concludes that intangibility is the most cited and critical topic of services in the literature. He offers suggestions on how to raise the tangibility of services through marketing-based activities rather than through the traditional operations-based activities.

To conclude the review, researchers agree that a classification scheme is necessary, primarily to develop a manageable number of service marketing segments. There is still considerable debate, however, as to the dimensions that best identify the segments for marketing strategy purposes. There remains little evidence to suggest that any of the classification schemes listed above are generalizable to all services.

Despite the undercurrent of skepticism about the generalizability of a specific service typology, the issue demands consideration, especially in empirical studies. Lovelock and Gummesson (2004) suggest that the tangibility characteristic is more applicable when evaluating internet-based service delivery. This position is shared, with minor modifications, by Tarn (2005). These authors maintain that as the internet has supported growth in highly intangible services such as banking and insurance, it may have also sharpened the consumer’s recognition of just how much tangibility exists to deliver other online services, such as airline travel and mobile phone services. They contend, therefore, that the tangibility spectrum better distinguishes online service categories because the consumer’s evaluation processes are more closely aligned on the tangibility dimension.

The Importance of Information in Communications

The role of information is central to an evaluation of communications. Information as a concept carries a diversity of meanings, from everyday usage to technical applications. The view of information as a message came into prominence with the publication in 1948 of an influential paper by Claude Shannon, “A Mathematical Theory of Communication”. This paper introduced the idea that the concept of information could extend beyond theoretical usage and actually be defined and measured. This, in turn, supported agreement among scholars that information patterns could be defined, measured, and used to help explain other events and occurrences.

The information generation process is often described by the transfer of knowledge and data (information content) from a sender to a recipient (Steinwachs, 1999; So, 2004; Bang et al, 2005).The components of the process work together to form a system to support the transfer of knowledge. The primary components of the information system include the sender of the information, the recipient, the information content, and the information channel, or medium, that is selected by the sender to transmit the information content (Steinwachs, 1999). The purpose of this system is to reduce an expected state of uncertainty that is held by the recipient. The recipient seeks information to solve a problem for which external data (information) is needed. The inherent uncertainty associated with this task is therefore reduced by the sender when the right pieces of information are transmitted to the recipient.

The study of information content in print messages became a big interest to researchers because of the increase in international trade (So, 2004). In several studies, “informativeness” is referred to as the extent to which advertisements focus on the recipients’ practical, functional, or utilitarian needs for the product (Resnik & Stern, 1977; Mueller, 1991; Okazaki & Rivas, 2002).

The Resnik & Stern Classification System

Resnik & Stern (1977) first proposed an information content classification system based on 14 criteria that are considered informative and that help consumers to make an intelligent and rational buying decision. An “informative ad” was defined as containing at least one of these “cues”. The Resnik and Stern scheme has been replicated and adapted by several different authors, and continues to be used in current studies. A definition of each of the information content variables proposed by Resnik & Stern (1977) is included in Table 5.

TABLE 5

Review of Information Content Variables

Information Cue	**Definition/ Examples**
1. Price or Value *	Refers to product cost (including “open pricing”).
2. Quality *	Emphasis on product characteristics that are distinguishable from competing products. Dimensions of quality can include workmanship, engineering, durability, quality of materials used, etc.
3. Performance *	Emphasis on what the product does and how well it performs its intended tasks.
4. Components or Contents	Refers to an emphasis on the product’s composition and parts or ingredients. This is accomplished when components of the product are displayed in the form of graphs, drawings, pictures, videos, etc.
5. Availability *	Information regarding dealers, shops, or distribution channels is provided. “Dealer information” or “branch network” is often included.
6. Special Offers *	Limited-time, non-price related incentives are offered with the purchase. This cue refers to special promotions, gifts, and trial services that relate directly to the sale of the product.
7. Taste	Evidence is presented suggesting the product’s flavor is superior according to a sample of individuals.
8. Packaging or Shape	The package and or the shape of the product is highlighted

Review of Information Content Variables (cont.)

Information Cue	Definition/ Examples
9. Guarantees or Warranties	This cue highlights post-purchase assurances accompanied with the product . Examples are technical and service assistance and refund policies. Customer Service is not included in this cue.
10. Safety/ Security	The safety features of the product are highlighted. Specific comments are offered to guide the avoidance of hazards associated with product use.
11. Nutrition	Nutritional data provided for the product. Alternatively, a direct comparison of nutritional attributes with other products is provided.
12. Independent Research	Data gathered by an external, independent organization is provided. This cue can include sales rankings, pollution surveys, technical inspections, etc. the information source should be clearly indicated.
13. Company-Sponsored Research	Internal data gathered by the company is provided to show the products benefits or superiority. Similar to independent research, the information source should be clearly indicated.
14. New Ideas	This cue implies that the product introduces a totally new concept or paradigm and identifies the advantages that this brings.

Source: Resnik and Stern (1977); adapted by several others

* Represents information content item used in this study

The Resnik & Stern (1977) scheme has been the most widely used in both domestic and cross-national evaluations of communications. It was selected for this study, in part, due to its popularity in usage. One goal of this study is to help to qualify the degree to which previous findings regarding the standardization of information content in the more static mediums can be transferred to the online medium. By using the Resnik & Stern categories for this study, a more direct comparison of the findings can be made to previous research.

Certain considerations, however, need to be addressed when applying the Resnik & Stern (1977) scheme in service studies. For example, its “components” and “packaging” categories are not applicable to services due to the intangible nature of services. Its “taste” and “nutrition” cues are only applicable to food products and very select food-related services. Likewise, the “guarantees” cue could be problematic in scoring, especially in highly intangible and inseparable service categories. If the service is not a new service, it will prove difficult to score service communications on the “new ideas” cue. The “company research” and “independent research” cues are more appropriate for high technology products than they are for services. Lastly, the “safety and security” cue is limited to select service categories, and therefore not included in this study. The five information content elements chosen for this study are briefly described later in this chapter, with further evaluation offered in the hypotheses development section.

The Impact of Host Country Environmental Factors on Communications

National business environments are different on many dimensions. In addition to the often cited economic differences such as per capita GNP, for example, countries also often differ on important dimensions such as socioeconomic variables, regulations imposed by the host government, technology infrastructures, cultural values of their people, and availability of media structures. Because these national differences can affect the ability of the service firm to communicate effectively with its constituencies, managers are forced to be sensitive and responsive to national environmental factors in the countries in which they operate.

When traditional static media types such as print and TV are evaluated, these forces are often cited as a justification to support local differentiation in information content (Javalgi et al, 1995; Ha, 1998; Wang & Chan, 2001). In relation to the objective of this study, however, a fundamental question is posed: the degree to which environmental factors affect the content dimensions of web-based communications in the services sector. The research concerning this specific question remains scarce.

The Impact of Culture

The use of cultural measures as a vehicle for analyzing the values, norms, symbols, and content of communications from businesses to individuals in a society has been an established tradition in the communications literature (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996; Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999 Javalgi et al, 1994). Communications are thought to not only reflect but also endorse and support the cultural values that prevail in a society. Additionally, culture can be expected to have an influence on the production of information content in many respects, because information content is the key generator supporting knowledge transfer. In order to improve promotional effectiveness, it is thought, marketers need to apply relevant content that properly reflects the cultural values of the society (Javalgi et al, 1994; Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996; Okazaki & Rivas, 2002).

The most celebrated effort to date to describe and categorize cultural differences in different countries came from Geert Hofstede (1980, 1983). The Hofstede framework is used in a vast majority of studies that evaluate creative strategies and information content. Hofstede was primarily interested in discovering differences in work-related values across countries. He administered over 116,000 questionnaires to employees of a multinational corporation in 66 countries. Through factor analysis and other statistical methods, he identified four dimensions of culture: individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity. Hofstede later identified a fifth cultural dimension, long-term orientation, after he and Bond (1988) delivered a questionnaire to Chinese employees and managers across 23 countries. A large majority of the previous studies evaluating the effect of culture on communications execution and content measures concentrate on three of the five dimensions: individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. For clarification, all of the Hofstede dimensions are explained below.

The individualism-collectivism dimension focuses on the individual's relationships with others in the society (Hofstede, 1991). In a collectivist society, such as Brazil, Columbia, and Japan, individuals are presumed to be concerned with the interests of their group before themselves. As a result, individuals prefer cohesive social frameworks and group harmony, with a lower tolerance for intra-group confrontation. Societies with a higher propensity toward individualism, such as Austria, Canada and the US, prefer a loosely knit society in which people are expected to care primarily for themselves and their immediate family members.

The power distance dimension describes the extent to which a society accepts an unequal distribution of power (Hofstede, 1983; 1991). While social inequality may exist within any society, the degree that it is accepted can vary considerably across cultures. Individuals who reside in cultures exhibiting high power distance tendencies, such as Egypt, India, and Malaysia, might be expected to respond in socially desirable ways to please those in authoritative positions. However, those who come from cultures with lower power distance tendencies, such as Denmark, Austria, and the US may feel more inclined to express their own opinions.

The uncertainty avoidance dimension describes how societies deal with high levels of uncertainty and ambiguity (Hofstede, 1991). When situations are unstructured or unpredictable, individuals from high uncertainty avoidance cultures, such as Greece, France, and Japan can be expected to provide socially acceptable responses that are condoned by the general population, and thereby reduce innovative ideas and personal risk. Conversely, persons from a low uncertainty avoidance culture, such as England, India, and the US might be more reflective in these situations, resulting in a decreased need for social approval and increased openness to innovative ideas.

The masculinity-femininity dimension relates to the ways sex roles are allocated in the society. Cultures lower on the masculinity dimension are expected to minimize the distinctions between sex roles, and emphasize the quality of life, emphasize social relationships, and hold an increased concern for the environment. Examples would include Chile, Finland, and Norway. Other cultures maximize the distinction between sex roles. These societies have a preference for accomplishment, heroism, and material success. Examples of masculine cultures would include Brazil, Austria, and Venezuela.

Long-term orientation refers to the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic, future oriented perspective. Persons who possess a long-term time orientation are expected to place a greater significance on the values of thrift, persistence, and long-term alliances. On the other hand, individuals with a short-term time orientation might be more forthright and explicit in their interactions with others.

Limitations Surrounding the Use of Culture

The simplicity and intuitive appeal of the Hofstede classification system has supported its use in a vast majority of cross-national communication content studies. However, some researchers have expressed doubt regarding the adequacy and comprehensiveness of these dimensions in fully explaining how cultures differ. Psychologists contend that these dimensions represent only a fraction of the meaningful dimensions needed to explain the impact of culture. Hofstede’s (1980) questionnaire revolved almost entirely around work-related values. If a questionnaire addressing a broader domain had been used, it is very feasible that additional underlying dimensions might emerge. Additionally, researchers have raised the question of the relative stability of the Hofstede country profiles (Kale, 1991). They suggest that scores for individual countries may have been impacted by the non-representativeness of the sample. Factors such as the effects of uniformity of behavior spawned by industrial culture, modern education, and the fact that all respondents were associated with the same multinational corporation all cast doubt on the applicability of the Hofstede cultural indices.

It may, therefore, be concluded that not all of the information needed to explain adaptations in communications can be generated from one framework. Indicators from other business disciplines, such as business globalization strategy and media research might provide valuable input to better explain the standardization and adaptation of web site content. The following sections outline the categories of host country variables that will be used to explain potential variances in web site standardization for this study.

The Impact of Socioeconomic Factors

The interest in using socioeconomic variables to evaluate differences in countries was stimulated when firms identified the marketing across national boundaries as an imperative for long-term company profitability and survival. Faced with so many countries to evaluate, business executives needed reliable, standardized data to assist in evaluating alternative market opportunities. There are vast differences among countries in terms of size, income, infrastructure, market access, and many other dimensions. Yet, to international marketers, the differences and similarities among countries are fundamental in determining which markets to enter.

International marketers often use two primary approaches in screening for attractive markets (Cavusgil et al, 2004). First, clustering yields a group of countries with similar economic, social, and cultural dimensions. The second approach is ranking the countries according to the dimensions that the marketer deems relevant. The two methods are complimentary and are intended to reduce the complexity associated with market selection.

When socioeconomic indicators are used to classify countries, two primary groups of countries are usually identified. The term developed country, or advanced country, is used to categorize countries with developed economies where sustainable higher GDP per capita ratios have been achieved. On the other hand, a developing country is a country which has a relatively lower standard of living with a less developed industrial base.

Each year since 1990 the United Nations includes a Human Development Index (HDI) which looks beyond strict economic measures to a broader definition of social well being. It is used as a standard means of measuring human development in a given country. This concept, according to the United Nations Development Program, widens the options of a country's citizens, giving them additional opportunities for education, health care, income, and employment. The basic use of the HDI is to rank countries by human development which often also implies whether a country is a developed, developing, or underdeveloped country. The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development:

1. Life expectancy at birth as an index of population health and longevity
2. Knowledge and education, as measured by the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary, and tertiary gross enrollment ratio
3. The standard of living, as measured by the natural logarithm of GDP per capita at purchasing power parity (PPP) in US dollars.

Table 6 provides an overview of the distribution of HDI values from the 2007/ 2008 United Nations Program Development Report. Although 88% of all countries fall in the high and medium development categories, a relatively even range of index values is supported for each of the three categories. The sample of five countries used in this study is found to be included in two of the three categories.

TABLE 6

Overview of HDI and Other Socioeconomic Variables

HDI Category	Number of Countries In Category	Range of HDI Values	Countries Included in this Study
High Human Development (Developed Countries)	70	.800 - .968	United States Australia United Kingdom
Medium Human Development (Developing Countries)	85	.502 - .798	Malaysia India
Low Human Development (Undeveloped Countries)	22	.326 - .499	None

Source: United Nations Human Development Program Report 2007/ 2008

Overview of Other Socioeconomic Variables

Indicator	United States	Australia	United Kingdom	Malaysia	India
Socioeconomic Category	Developed	Developed	Developed	Developing	Developing
Life Expectancy[1]	77.9	80.9	79.0	73.7	63.7
Gross Enrollment Ratio[1]	93.3	93.0	113.0	74.3	63.8
GDP PPP US$ [1]	41,890	31,794	33,238	10,882	3,452
Market Intensity Index [2]	94	89	89	43	14

1. United Nations Human Development Program Report 2007/ 2008
2. Cavusgil et al (2004)

The Impact of Existing Media Structures

A less researched environmental topic deals with explaining the degree to which the established media within a given country contributes to the economic development found in that country. It is suggested that economic development is achieved when potential conflict among media and business/ political interests is resolved through a spirit of coordination. A free media is the primary vehicle for achieving this (Coyne & Leeson, 2004; Djanko, et al, 2003).

The early research involving the importance of media in explaining public choice issues was aimed at explaining poverty and famine conditions in certain countries. Djanko et al (2003) extended this early work by analyzing the ownership structure of media and found a correlation between state ownership of media and poverty. The World Development Report (2002) evaluated this topic in some detail and concluded that a relationship exists between free media and economic development.

Although there seems to be strong agreement among scholars regarding the importance of a free media in supporting economic development, it is important to qualify the relationship with other important factors. For example, a free media is often viewed as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for economic development. Other factors such as political stability, a stable economic environment, and education also play a role in supporting economic progress. Additionally, even if the factors listed above are favorable, consumers must demand certain information of the media to allow for effective transfers of information to take place. Media firms, like other firms, are subject to the forces of profit and loss. When state funding is removed (as in a free media state) then media firms are constrained by the demand of their consumers. Consumer demand, to some degree is a function of the depth of media choice that is available to consumers. Free media countries are often characterized with a broader array of media types, and offer the consumer more choices within each category of media structure. By having additional choices, consumers can learn to identify what content they find valuable. For this reason, industrialized countries with free media standards are often found to provide consumers with a broad array of media channels, with many offerings available in each channel type. This point is illustrated through a review of media restrictions status in Table 7. For the countries included in this study, those containing developed economies generally contain greater media and communication flexibilities than less developed economies.

TABLE 7

Relationship of Free Media Structure to Socioeconomic Indicators

Country Used in Study	United States	United Kingdom	Australia	Malaysia	India
Socioeconomic Category	Developed	Developed	Developed	Developing	Developing
Free Media Structure [1]	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Restricted	Partly Restricted
Free Market Index[2]	92	92	96	38	48
Overall Market Potential Index[2]	89	75	76	43	60

1. Freedom House, 2008
2. Cavusgil et al (2004)

The Role of Technological Achievement and Consumer Preference Categories

The development and expansion of the internet as a shopping tool has been exponential over the past 15 years. However, it has been equally clear that advancements in internet technologies have not been introduced equally across nations. The UN Human Development Report (2007/ 2008) and the Internet World Statistics publication (2008) both strongly suggest wide variances in both the number of online shoppers per country and the percentage of the total population (i.e.; penetration) that those shoppers represent. Hill & Dhanda (2004) refer to these differences with the term “digital divide” to explain the wide disparities in accessibility of information and communications technologies within and among nations. Some scholars believe that the digital divide is an important concept that separates countries in terms of their residents' ability to accumulate knowledge. In the end, they argue, technological advancement may be a key variable in explaining the gap in socioeconomic and quality of life indicators for a given country.

In 2001, The UN Development Program Report presented a technological achievement index (TAI) which sought to explain how well each country is creating and diffusing technology and building a human skill base. This index is a composite of several indicators including the creation of technology, the diffusion of innovations, and human skill levels. This effort was culminated in a report that highlighted the inequalities in human development world-wide.

The relative level of internet technology advancement found in a host country is also important because it may provide insight into the types of information content and web site features that are used by service providers in that country. It may, in essence, provide a basis for non-standardization in the hypertext environment. It is presumed that a service provider develops a web site to accelerate the specific communication effects that it deems critical in establishing competitive advantage. To meet this goal, the website must contain features and emphasize information that appeals to those target market segments that the firm intends to attract to its communications.

Blake & Neuendorf (2004) proposed a framework for assessing the nature of cross-national differences in reactions to web site features and information that incorporates the technological and content features found on web sites. Their evaluation criteria consist of three dimensions to help operationalize their model in future cross-national studies of web site evaluation. The dimensions are termed elevation, differentiation, and priority (Blake & Neuendorf, 2004; Blake et al, 2008).

Elevation is the term used to refer to the overall demand from site visitors for web site features and information. It is estimated by the average score of the ratings of site features and information across a broad range of possibilities. In general, consumers in countries offering diversified shopping venues, broad varieties of consumer products, and emphasizing the acquisition of consumer goods and services are expected to demand more and higher quality of features and information than less developed countries.

Priority refers to the perceived appeal of a web site feature compared to the appeals of the other features being evaluated by the shopper. To understand cross-national differences, the relative priority of one feature in relation to another or in relation to a set of features must be understood.

Differentiation is the variability in the appeal of the various features and information content items from the viewpoint of each individual respondent. The cross-national difference in differentiation can possibly be due to the same dynamic that influences elevation, i.e., the reduced online shopping experience of shoppers in less technology advanced countries. Shoppers in less developed countries may have previously learned the importance of some features and information, but have not yet come to appreciate the value of other informational items.

In Summary, the creation, diffusion, and usage levels of internet technologies in the context of economic expansion are expected to have a significant impact on the socioeconomic levels that a country attains. Scholars believe that the separation of the “knowledge rich” countries from the “knowledge poor” countries is an important criterion from which socioeconomic growth and quality of life indicators can be explained. It is further assumed that technological achievement at the national level will impact the preference level of information content and the site features designed to communicate with prospective buyers. Table 8 provides a review of the technology achievement measures from the sample of five countries used in this study. It is offered to highlight the dependence of socioeconomic attainment on technological achievement. Based on this relationship, it is the goal of this study to determine if these variables can be used to also explain information content levels and creative development strategies.

TABLE 8

Relationship of Technology Achievement Variables to Socioeconomic Category

	United States	**Australia**	**United Kingdom**	**Malaysia**	**India**
Socioeconomic Category	Developed	Developed	Developed	Developing	Developing
Technology Achievement Index (TAI)[1]	.733	.587	.606	.396	.201
TAI Category[2]	Leader	Leader	Leader	Potential Leader	Dynamic Adopter
Internet Penetration (%)[3]	71.4	75.9	66.4	52.7	5.3
Broadband Penetration (%)[3]	21.9	22.4	23.8	3.9	0.2

1. United Nations Program Development Report, 2001
2. Hill & Dhanda, 2004
3. World Internet Statistics, 2008

The Issue of Data Redundancy in Host Country Factors

The previous sections firmly suggest that redundancy exists in the variables used to classify countries in socioeconomic, media, and technology achievement categories. When Tables 6, 7, and 8 are evaluated for the five country sample, it becomes clear that the three countries that have reached a developed socioeconomic status have also instituted unrestricted media regulations and have additionally maintained higher levels of technology achievement. Likewise, the two countries representing the developing country category show a distinct lag in each of the three categories of host country variables that were evaluated. This situation is thought to present a potential problem as well as an opportunity. Because the goal of this research is to identify and explain differences between countries in web site information content and creative strategy, the presence of redundancy in the category variables suggests difficulty in hypothesis construction and results interpretation. If variances in web site communications are in fact supported, then it will be difficult to attribute those differences to a specific host country factor. Similarly, data redundancy provides challenges in hypothesis construction. For example, empirical evidence is not available to suggest that anticipated differences in web communications might be more attributed to socioeconomic factors than to technological achievement variables.

Procedures Used to Reduce and Clarify Data Redundancy

However, because of the redundancy in variables, it is reasonable to expect that a reduction in observed variables can be reached and that a smaller number of artificial variables can be constructed that will account for most of the variance in the observed variables. To investigate this opportunity, a broader sample of countries was evaluated using all of the relevant observed variables in the socioeconomic, media, and technology achievement categories. The countries included in this analysis represented a mix of developed as well as developing countries so that justification could be established for the proposed five country sample. The resulting data set consisted of 12 variables to be evaluated for 40 countries, including the five countries proposed for the sample.

Developing the Socioeconomic and Technology (SET) Score

The metric scaled variables listed in Tables 6, 7, and 8 were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis using squared multiple correlations as prior communality estimates. The principal factor method was used to extract the factors. The goal of this analysis was only to reduce data redundancy and no effort was made to assume an underlying causal structure among the variables or to investigate the presence of latent variables. For this reason, principal component analysis was used instead of factor analysis. The results suggested one meaningful factor.

To interpret the factor pattern, an item was said to load on the factor if the factor loading was .40 or greater, and less than .40 for another factor. Using these criteria, all of the items were found to load on the first factor, which was subsequently labeled the socioeconomic and technology factor. Data items and corresponding factor loadings are presented in Table 9.

TABLE 9

Factor Loadings of Selected Technology, Socioeconomic, and Media Items (One Component Extracted)

Item	Component 1
Tech Achievement Index	.945
Human Development Index (HDI)	.951
Life Expectancy	.806
Gross Enrollment Ratio	.864
GDP PPP US$	.957
Per Capita Internet Hosts	.726
Per Capital Mobile Phones	.808
Market Intensity Index	.940
Free Market Index	.819
Overall Market Potential Index	.791
Internet Penetration	.937
Broad Band per capita	.941

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Eigenvalue of component = 9.231. % of variance explained = 76.929

Once the principal components analysis was complete, it was important to assign scores to each of the 40 countries for which data was gathered. The goal was to assign one score to each country to indicate where that country stands on the socioeconomic and technology factor. With this complete, these factor scores can then be used either as predictor variables or as criterion variables in subsequent analysis. The factor scores were then labeled as the socioeconomic and technology score values. These values are presented in Table 10.

TABLE 10

SET Score Values for 40 Countries

Advanced Countries		Developed Countries		Developing Countries	
Country	**SET Index (Factor Scores)**	**Country**	**SET Index (Factor Scores)**	**Country**	**SET Index (Factor Scores)**
Netherlands	1.41	Germany	0.78	Malaysia	-0.69
Norway	1.27	Austria	0.76	Brazil	-0.70
Australia	1.26	France	0.67	Panama	-0.85
Finland	1.18	Spain	0.53	Colombia	-0.98
Sweden	1.15	Italy	0.50	Philippines	-1.03
United States	1.01	Israel	0.49	El Salvador	-1.11
Canada	0.94	Portugal	0.32	China	-1.15
United Kingdom	0.90	Greece	0.07	South Africa	-1.20
Japan	0.90	Hungary	0.00	Paraguay	-1.31
Singapore	0.88	Chile	-0.16	Egypt	-1.50
Belgium	0.87	Argentina	-0.21	Indonesia	-1.52
Ireland	0.81	Poland	-0.21	India	-1.65
Hong Kong	0.78	Uruguay	-0.32	Kenya	-2.24
		Mexico	-0.63		

Highlighted countries represent those used in this study.

The 40 countries listed in Table 10 were then split into three groups based on the value of their SET scores. This was done to see if significant differences could be established for the 40 country sample. Group 1 consisted of the 13 countries with the highest SET scores. Three countries used in this study are included in this group. Group 2 contained the next 14 countries, and group 3 consisted of the 13 countries with the lowest SET scores from Table 10. The remaining two countries included in this study are found in group 3. An ANOVA analysis suggested significant difference between the 3 groups ($F=116.559$; $p<.001$). Pair-wise comparison tests were executed during the Post-Hoc analysis and all pair means were found to be significantly different at the $p=.05$ level.

Summary of Previous Research Surrounding Communications Content

Over the past two decades, a number of studies have made contributions to the understanding of differences between cultures in terms of the informational content of company sponsored communications. Researchers have traditionally considered the issues of content standardization in terms of the consistency of the marketing mix elements used when a company enters different foreign markets (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1994). Standardization became a central theme in many studies, partly because of the economic issues associated with this strategy.

Table 11 contains a chronological review of some of the more influential and often cited studies that have evaluated information content and advertising appeal variables. These studies, in total, span three mediums: TV, print, and the web.

The acceptance of TV as an important communication medium has long been acknowledged by researchers. Resnik & Stern (1977) found that only 49.7% of US television commercials contained at least one information cue from their content scheme. Dowling (1980) found samples of television commercials in

Australia to be more informative than a sample taken from the US, whereas commercials from Sweden (Martenson, 1987) were found to be less informative. One variable that has been of particular interest to researchers evaluating the TV medium is the level of information contained in the sample of commercials. This measure is often estimated by totaling the number of information cues found to be present in the advertisement. A common feature found in studies evaluating content in the TV medium, including the often cited studies found in Table 11, is that comparisons are often limited to two country samples.

The surge in interest surrounding information content in print advertising was initiated through the work of Cutler & Javalgi (1992) and Javalgi et al (1994). These studies sought to compare the structural components of print advertisements. Measures of variables such as the size of visuals, the frequency of usage of black and white and photographic visuals, and the frequency of product portrayal were incorporated into these studies. The country samples consisted primarily of the US and Pacific Rim countries. Albers-Miller & Gelb (1996) introduced the notion that information content and advertising strategy characteristics might be linked to the Hofstede (1983) cultural dimensions. This study attempted to link each of the Pollay (1983) appeal types to one of the Hofstede (1983) cultural dimensions, with mixed results.

The academic literature offers fewer studies, however, that have looked into the issue of standardization of web-based content. Studies by Fink & Laupase (2000), Simon (2001), and Tsikriktsis (2002) provide some evidence of cross-cultural differences in the perception of web site content, thereby suggesting that adaptation approaches should be pursued. However, these studies evaluated the atmospherics and other structural components of the design of the web sites and did not evaluate the content of the information contained in the web sites. Studies by Kanso & Nelson (2002) and Singh et al (2003) emphasized that values, symbols, and even sales themes need to be targeted to local markets. These studies were each based on two-country samples, with the US represented in both studies. On the other hand, Hermans & Shanahan (2002) indicate that cultural factors do not impact consumer perception of web site information in their study involving a two country sample.

Okazaki & Rivas (2002; 2003) and Okazaki & Alonso (2003) evaluated web pages of major firms with headquarters in Japan to determine if differences could be determined in the emphasis placed on information variables in different countries that the Japanese firms operate. The findings suggest that individualist values were emphasized in the three markets that they evaluated (Japan/ Spain/ US), but that large Japanese firms tend to localize information content in durable goods categories.

TABLE 11

Partial Literature Review

Content Analysis Studies on Communications Information Content and Creative Strategies

Authors	Media	Countries Evaluated	Products/ Services Evaluated	Results
Cutler & Javalgi (1992)	Magazine	US/ UK/ France	Durable/ Nondurables	• Structural components of ads differ by country
Graham, Kamins, & Oetomo (1993)	Magazine	US/ Spain/ Indonesia	German/ Japanese MNC's	• Content of German/ Japanese firms ads did not differ across 3 countries
Javalgi, Cutler, & White (1994)	Magazine	Japan/ Taiwan/ South Korea	Nondurables	• Differences found in elements and appeal processes of visuals
Javalgi, Cutler & Malhotra (1995)	Magazine	US/ Japan	All ads in issue	• Portrayal of visual appeals and structures differ across countries
Albers-Miller & Gelb (1996)	Magazine	11 countries (US/ Europe/ Asia/ South America)	Office Equipment/ Financial Services/ Clothing/ Travel	• Pollay (1983) ad appeals types are linked to Hofestede (1980) cultural dimensions
Cheng & Schweitzer (1996)	Television	US/ PRC	All ads over a two week period	• Individualist values are prevalent in US • Family values are prevalent in PRC
Ha (1998)	Magazine	US/ Hong Kong	Experience and Credence Services	• Emphasis of informational content differ across 2 countries • Ad appeals differ across 2 countries

Content Analysis Studies on Communications Information Content and Creative Strategies (cont.)

Albers-Miller & Stafford (1999)	Magazine	11 countries (US/ Europe/ Asia/ South America)	Experience and Utilitarian Services	• Rational appeals more prevalent in utilitarian services; emotional appeals more prevalent in experience services
Wang & Chan (2001)	Magazine	US/ PRC	All ads in issues	• Individualism themes are used more in the US • Collectivism themes are used more in the PRC
Lin (2001)	Television	US/ PRC	All ads over a one week period	• No significant differences in the use of individual/ independence themes
Okazaki & Rivas (2002)	Product-based web pages	Japan/ US/ Spain	20 Japanese MNC's	• Web pages were equally informative in Japan and US; both countries found to be more informative than Spain
Okazaki & Rivas (2003)	Product-based web pages	Japan/ Spain/ US	50 Japanese MNC's	• Individualist values were emphasized in all markets
Okazaki (2004)	Product-based web pages	Japan/ Spain/ US	50 Japanese MNC's/ Durables	• Japanese MNC's localize information content for durable products to a large extent

Limitations of Previous Research

A few interesting observations can be offered when the previous research surrounding standardization is reviewed. The amount of progress made in understanding standardization of web-based communications lags behind the contributions made in the print and TV mediums, as evidenced in Table 11. Many previous studies, especially in the print medium, have focused on whether to standardize or to localize in a given market as opposed to which aspects of advertising can be standardized or under what conditions.

Additionally, there have been few studies that examine standardization of communications from the perspective of the business manager who competes in the host market(s). This issue relates to the question of not whether standardization should be pursued in a given market, but the extent that it is being delivered through the communications of firms competing in that market. Many past studies involving the web medium have used two country samples, with a heavy emphasis on the US and Pacific Rim countries. The aim of this study is to provide insight into content standardization by providing empirical evidence from five countries that are felt to be diverse across a host of socioeconomic and technology variables.

The bulk of the previous research investigating the relative levels of web-based information standardization surrounds the evaluation of tangible product categories. Ha (1998) and Albers-Miller & Stafford (1999) extended previous research conducted in the print medium by evaluating services, however, web studies have been limited to tangible goods. This study will evaluate standardization delivery in key service sectors.

Finally, the vast majority of previous studies, including all of the studies highlighted in Table 11, use cultural dimensions as the basis for explaining the degree of standardization found in cross-national studies. This is an area of concern in light of the inherent limitations surrounding the use of culture that were discussed earlier. This study attempts to incorporate other host country environmental factors that are widely believed to impact economic development. With this approach, the relative degree of standardization of information content can be approached from a broader base of host country inputs.

Choosing the Elements for Inclusion in the Study

The five content information elements chosen for this study are price/ value, quality, performance, availability, and special offers. These elements were chosen from the Resnik & Stern (1977) classification scheme of 14 information cues. An overview of the 14 items is presented in Table 5 followed by a brief discussion of the applicability of the items to studies involving services. This scheme has been the most widely used in both domestic and cross-national evaluations of company sponsored communications.

Price information is one part of the advertising message that may differentiate countries in the consumer services sector. Okazaki & Rivas (2002) found differences in the emphasis placed on price when online ads for durables were evaluated. Abernethy & Butler (1992) found in their study of print ads that a smaller percentage of service ads than tangible goods ads in their sample made price-value claims. However, price information gives buyers a rational criterion on which to base their purchase decisions, and thereby demands consideration when the socioeconomic impact on communications is being evaluated.

Service quality has been a dominant research topic during the past two decades. Researchers have developed several models to explain how service perceptions are formed, with one of the more cited frameworks coming from Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1985). They claim that external communications with consumers play a pivotal role in the customer's perception of service quality. One of the strategic uses of external communications is to communicate special efforts to achieve quality that might not be visible due to the intangible nature of services. As a result, quality claims are an important consideration in the evaluation of service communications.

Performance refers to the relative emphasis in the communication on what specific benefits the service delivers and how well it performs its intended tasks. Zeithaml (1981) claimed that inaccurate perceptions of service performance make it more difficult for consumers to evaluate services than goods. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1985) identified a critical "gap" relating to perception of service performance that they suggest can cause unsuccessful service delivery. This gap refers to the difference in the performance of the service that the customer perceives versus the service performance that the customer expects. Service communications is often suggested to be one important component supporting the formulation of the customer's expectation regarding service performance.

Availability refers to information in the communications regarding dealers, locations, and distribution channels. It is an informational content item that has been reviewed in several studies involving goods advertising in a print medium. Because this study focuses on service categories in an electronic medium, two conditions may directly impact the perception of availability in this study: (1) the hypertext medium may be acting as a direct sales and distribution channel to the consumer; and (2) availability of the service may be perceived to be constant, with the perishability dimension acting as the key constraint.

Special offers is an informational content item that refers to limited-time, non-price related offers that are included with the purchase of the service. Whereas advertising offers a reason to buy, special offers are used as incentives to buy. Traditionally, special offers and other sales promotion strategies are executed in a data base marketing environment at the niche and target market level, and delivered through direct marketing channels. Okazaki & Rivas (2002), for example, found no significant differences in the use of special offers in their examination of goods categories. However, the use of special offers and premiums has been increasing in the web environment, and that increase is expected to continue (e-Marketer, 2006).

In a study conducted by Harris Interactive in 2006, 60% of adult internet users reported that one primary reason for searching consumer package goods sites was to investigate whether the company was providing special offers. During a similar study conducted by Universal McCann in 2006, 80% of heavy internet users reported entering contests and sweepstakes as a common online activity.

Additionally, online marketers have been eager to meet the demand for limited-time, special offers. It is thought that internet technologies provide managers with tighter control of promotion program management and enhances the marketer’s ability to capture and analyze customer information. The internet also provides managers with greater efficiencies in program design and distribution than the more static mediums. Dynamic content can be generated on the web, and distributed based on variables such as the disposition of responses and the frequency of visits.

Chapter III

DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

General Study Questions

The impact of host country factors on marketing, and in particular on the execution of communications strategies, seems very broad in light of the variety of research techniques that have been applied to this topic. One primary area of interest deals with estimating the informational value of communications because of the importance of this concept to a broad range of constituents, such as investors, prospective employees, governments, and consumers. One of the more basic elements associated with a communication strategy is the choice of a creative strategy. Interestingly, the terminology separating the categories of “appeals” and “creative strategies” have become blurred in more recent research, especially in those studies evaluating web advertising However, creative strategy generally refers to the executional tactics in which the general nature of the message is presented. If we assume that informational content focuses on the concept of “what to say”, then creative strategy incorporates both the “what to say” and the “how to say it”.

In many cases, a firm's communications are the first exposure that a consumer has to a product or service prior to the evaluation of its benefits. Most authors agree that intangibility is a defining characteristic of services. It is not surprising, therefore, that researchers have evaluated creative strategies to help explain the perceptions generated with respect to the various dimensions of service quality (Bang et al, 2005). Prior studies support the idea that customers in different cultures have different expectations for service delivery (Furrer et al, 2000; Bang et al, 2005). However, very little research has focused on whether differences in other host country factors, such as socioeconomic and technology advancement variables can help to explain expected differences in the creative strategies promoted in web-based communications.

The exploration of creative adaptation through the evaluation of creative strategies used in communications has been a common research objective in cross-cultural research studies (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996; Okazaki & Rivas, 2003). The identification of creative strategy originated from research intended to understand human values. One early pioneer was Rokeach (1973). He identified 18 "instrumental" and 18 "terminal" values. The terminal values were taken from a larger list compiled from a literature review combined with an interview process where respondents' values were elicited. Pollay (1983) extended the work of Rokeach (1973) by content analyzing magazine ads in a longitudinal sample. Pollay (1983) provided the most granular typology of appeals. All of the Pollay (1983) appeals were classified into 42 categories. Notable adaptations to the Pollay framework were proposed by Cheng (1994), Cheng & Schweitzer (1996), Albers-Miller & Gelb (1996) and Okazaki & Rivas (2002). Table 12 provides an overview of appeals that have been evaluated in web-based advertising. It is taken from Okazaki & Alonso (2003) primarily because they offer the most expansive list of online strategy categories to guide the identification of appeal types. Because research into web-based communications is still developing, notable adaptations to this list have not yet surfaced.

Table 12

Overview of On-Line Creative Strategies

Based on Okazaki & Alonso (2003)

Strategy Category	Definition
Comparison	Two or more named and recognizable brands in the product class are compared. Attribute comparisons used to establish brand superiority
Interactive Communication	Customer response is encouraged through e-mail, questionnaires, or registration
Entertainment	Features and benefits of the product are explained through humor, amusement, etc
Curiosity Arousal	“eye catchers” used. On-line games, videos, unique photos, etc
Special Incentives	Prizes, gifts, or coupons used to incite inquiry of the product

Overview of On-Line Creative Strategies (Cont.)

Strategy Category	Definition
Habit Forming by Trials or Stimulations	Routine usage of the product is encouraged through free samples, trials, reduced prices, etc
Emotional or Psychological Appeal *	Buying decisions are induced through positive or negative emotions such as love, hatred, desire, joy, admiration, sorrow, etc
Symbolic or Visual Metaphor *	Product is linked to symbols and visual images of a place, event, or person that provide insight into the expression of the advertising
Personalized Choice/ Attention	Shoppers are encouraged to pinpoint and access specific information that interests them, or alternately to identify problems and access "trouble shooting" scenarios.
Rational Reasoning *	Features and benefits are explained in a logical (informational) manner
Celebrity Endorsement	Famous people used to create a positive image for the product or company
Brand Repetition and Familiarization	Brand name or one basic piece of information (e.g. phone number) is repeated to provoke loyalty and memory (familiarity) of the brand

Note: Symbolic metaphor is perhaps the most widely evaluated creative strategy in cross-cultural studies of print and TV ads.

* Represents creative strategy item used in this study

Selection of Creative Strategies

This study will evaluate the use of emotional appeals, symbolic metaphor, and rational reasoning. The study is limited to these three items in part because these strategies have been previously studied in print and television mediums. The operational definitions of these strategies, therefore, have been better established in literature.

It is interesting to note from Table 12, however, that three of the online appeals categories (interactive communication, curiosity arousal, and personalized choice) stem directly from the inherent capabilities of web technologies. As new technologies provide the marketer with increased capabilities for flexibility in messaging, new appeals categories are emerging that reflect these new capabilities. The special incentives and habit forming appeals categories from Table 12 are being incorporated into this study; however, this information is being evaluated as part of information content as explained previously in Chapter II. Categorizing special offers as an information content item increases the consistency of this study with the previous research done in this area.

The comparison, celebrity endorsement, and brand repetition appeal categories from Table 12 are not included in this study due to the feeling that their use may be more service category specific. Although the goal of this study is to use a sufficiently broad array of service categories so that comparisons can be evaluated across service categories, the selection of the categories might introduce bias when the more narrowly defined appeal types are being evaluated. It is suggested that these areas might be better served in future research efforts.

Evaluating the Use of Creative Strategies

Rational and emotional reasoning are often considered the two opposite forms of creative strategy (So, 2004; Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1996; Turley & Kelly, 1997). These two categories have been studied extensively in communications and advertising literature using print ads (primarily from magazines) and television commercials. Researchers have spent considerable effort exploring and debating the relative effectiveness of the two approaches. Some authors suggest that rational or informational advertising appeals may help reduce some of the uncertainty associated with a purchase (Stafford & Day, 1995; Tsikriktsis, 2002). This argument stems from the traditional information processing models of decision making where the consumer is believed to make logical and rational decisions. Communications that rely on rational appeals are intended to change the message recipient's belief about the brand and rely on arguments or reasoning surrounding the brand's attributes (Miller & Foust, 2003). These appeals relate to the audience's needs by illustrating product benefits through associations of the brand to attributes such as quality, economy, value, or performance.

Unlike much of the previous research (Stafford & Day, 1995; Wang & Chan, 2001; Okazaki, 2004), this study does not classify an ad as either rational or emotional. Cross-cultural research suggests that rationality and emotionality may not be perceived as opposites in all cultures (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, this study captures the degree to which both rational and emotional appeals are present in web-based service advertisements.

According to economic theory, the abundance of quality information yields more competitive economic markets (Meso et al, 2006). Competition within markets helps to optimize the efficiencies of markets with respect to the development, delivery, and productivity of goods and services as firms seek to create competitive advantage. This situation, in turn, contributes to strengthening the social aspects of a society. It is suggested that easy and plentiful access to information improves the quality and level of education, health, and communications in a country (Dawes & Pardo, 1999). The net effect is an improvement of the social development of a nation due to a better educated and healthier citizenry. Consumers in economically advanced countries are better conditioned to evaluate and apply information to support their decision making. It is expected, therefore, that service providers competing in advanced economies will tend to transmit rational selling intent with a more direct transmission of claims surrounding the service because their prospective customers are proficient in evaluating relevant information surrounding the service. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that:

> H_1: Rational reasoning ratings for web-based service home pages will be higher for countries with higher SET scores (advanced countries) than countries with low SET scores (developing countries).

In contrast to rational creative strategies, emotional strategies are intended to stimulate positive reactions to the brand by promoting the experiential qualities of consumption. They seek to make the consumer feel good about the product or service by creating a likeable, friendly brand (So, 2004). Emotional appeals aim to build affective or subjective impressions of the intangible aspects of a product or service, and thereby motivate purchase. These motivations can include negative emotions such as fear, guilt, or shame to restrict or change current behaviors or positive emotional appeals such as love, joy, and pride

The literature suggests that much of the prior research on services advertising within the United States places a greater reliance on rational appeals. The question of whether service advertisers in other countries use more rational appeals or more emotional appeals is especially interesting in light of the broad array of environmental differences found in multiple country samples.

Of particular interest, however, is the effect that the freedoms afforded to the media by the governments of developing countries might have on the creative strategies that are developed for service offerings. In developing countries with authoritarian regimes, the traditional role of the media has been to serve as advocate for the ruling political power (Sibley & Nadas, 2006). In these countries, the media is used to shape public opinion on a wide range of issues, including product and service consumption patterns. Attitudinal conviction towards product and service sectors must first be established followed by differentiation among specific brand offerings. This is often accomplished through transformational messaging, stimulating emotions such as sensory gratification or social approval associated with specific consumption behavior. This provides some initial support for the notion that free, or totally independent media structures might be correlated with emotional creative strategies in a broader context. Hence, the following general hypothesis is offered:

> H_2: Ratings for emotional reasoning will be higher for countries with low SET scores (developing countries) than countries with higher SET scores (advanced countries).

The Relationship of Symbolism and Emotional Creative Strategies

A considerable body of consumer research has focused on cultural and corporate symbolism. This research generally supports the idea that goods and services represent many things to consumers above and beyond their functional uses. Many authors suggest that the set of symbols which individuals embrace in a society impacts the degree to which certain stimuli can penetrate a recipient's attention and others cannot. These symbols are shared by members within the culture, and it is this sharing that is thought to facilitate communications among members of a culture. By the same token, it is this lack of shared symbols that makes cross-cultural communication more difficult.

The use of symbolism is generally associated with the more indirect creative strategy types. Japanese communications, for example, have often been characterized as using subtle messaging and symbolism, which have been suggested to be characteristic of high context cultures. Stemming from hypotheses one and two stated previously, it is expected that the use of symbolism will be more common when emotional appeals are employed than when rational appeals are used. Okazaki (2004) found that the Japanese market sample used in his study made greater use of symbolism in the creative strategy than the samples from Spain and the US. Cutler & Javalgi (1992) found support for differences in the frequency of usage of symbolism when print advertisements for goods categories were evaluated from the US, United Kingdom, and France. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> H_3: Symbolic appeal ratings will be higher for countries with low SET scores (developing countries) than countries with higher SET scores (advanced countries).

An overview of the hypotheses surrounding creative strategy is provided in Table 13. Most notably, it is expected that the findings from this study will be consistent with those established from studies in other mediums. However, this similarity only applies to the degree that creative strategy rankings will vary significantly across country groupings. The primary difference in this study is that a broader definition of host country environmental factors is being applied through the SET score. Previous studies have relied exclusively on the Hofstede cultural framework to explain differences in creative strategies found in cross-national samples.

Table 13

Overview of Hypotheses Surrounding Creative Strategies

Strategy Rating	Host Country Environmental Factor	Consistent with Findings in Other Mediums?	Justification/ Constraints*
H_1: Rational Reasoning	Socioeconomic variables positively impact SET score values	Yes	Partial support found in TV medium with 2 countries (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Lin, 2001) Support found in 2 country samples when print ads for services are evaluated(Bang et al, 2005)
H_2: Emotional Reasoning	Restricted media structures negatively impact SET score values	Yes	Partial support found in print using Pollay (1983) appeal categories (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996) Significant difference in print ads found in select country samples (Sar & Doyle, 2003; So, 2004)
H_3: Symbolic Usage	Restricted media structures	Yes	Significant difference in print ads found in select country samples (Javalgi, et al, 1994; Wang & Chan, 2001) Significant difference in web ads found in select country samples (Okazaki, 2004)

Note: All previous studies listed used the Hofstede cultural indices to define host country environmental factors.

Developing Hypotheses Surrounding Information Content

A substantial amount of empirical evidence suggests that there are important cross-cultural differences in the total amount of information that is shared in business communications between different countries (Abernathy & Franke, 1996; Okazaki, 2004). In most studies, however, the measure for the amount of information shared is estimated by totaling the number of information content variables that are contained in an advertisement. Those samples that are found to contain a greater number of information content items are then deemed to be more "informative". Very few studies, however, have examined the relative emphasis that has been placed on individual content items in cross national studies. The remaining hypotheses in this study deal with information content variables in an individualized evaluation to help provide insight into the impact that specific host country characteristics might have on the specific kinds of information that are emphasized.

Concerning information content usage patterns, countries in developing economies are expected to be more process-oriented, so that service communications in less developed countries are more likely to emphasize high sensitivity and interpretation to non verbal cues and subtle effect in transmitting messages. In contrast, firms competing in advanced, competitive economies are expected to use a style of communication that is more outcome-oriented with goals of communicating information that is more direct and specific to the sender. It is expected, therefore, that firms competing in advanced economies will rely on a broader range of practical information, such as warranties, performance, and safety that are accompanied with an explanation of the attributes that support these claims. Because the bases of value determination are narrower in developing countries, it is expected that an increased emphasis will be placed on price as a comparative feature. This argument is offered to support the following:

> H_4: Ratings of price/ value will be higher for countries with lower SET scores (developing countries) than countries with higher SET scores (advanced countries).

Claims of quality and performance are expected to support a need to reduce the perceived level of uncertainty surrounding the service purchase decision. Quality and performance information, therefore, can give potential buyers additional rational criteria for decision making. Because levels of rational reasoning are expected to be higher in communications from advanced economies, home pages for service firms in these countries seem more likely to decrease the relative emphasis on these claims specifically due to their need to address a broader range of attribute categories and thereby support rational decision making. Service providers in developing countries, however, are expected to more directly address the inherent uncertainty surrounding the procurement of services through bolder, more direct claims of quality and performance.

> H_{5A}: Quality appeal ratings will be higher for countries with lower SET scores (developing countries) than countries with higher SET scores (advanced countries).

> H_{5B}: Performance appeal ratings will be higher for countries with lower SET scores (developing countries) than countries with high SET scores (advanced countries).

The Impact of Technology Achievement On Information Levels

The specific impact of information technology on the level of information shared in web-based communications has not been empirically investigated. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the level of technology applied to communications development will impact the level of information shared with the recipient. Korgaonkar & Wolin (1999) found a factor that they labeled" information motivation" through their multivariate analysis of web usage. Similarly, Hoffman (2006) suggests that the introduction of internet technologies alters the recipient's expectation of on-line news production, and further suggests that information content differences may be discovered in future studies. These authors describe how consumers use the web for their self-education and information needs. They suggest that this information seeking orientation has been one important ingredient that has supported the adoption of internet technologies by consumers worldwide. This position appears consistent with historical studies of technological innovation. Once consumers understand and use the capabilities of information technologies, their expectations regarding the delivery of information will reflect their increased awareness and a form of customer power will develop (see Wu & Lee, 2005 for an expanded discussion).

The information content item labeled availability relates to information regarding dealers, repair services, or distribution channels connected to the service. It is expected that in order to attract and keep visitors returning to the site, the service provider will need to provide information that supports its unique selling propositions and helps to differentiate the brand in some meaningful way. It is therefore expected that:

> H_6: Service availability ratings will be higher for countries with higher SET scores (advanced countries) than countries with low SET scores (developing countries).

Although the interest in web-based information content levels has been sparse, one area that has received considerable attention by researchers has been web site features and enhancements. The goal of this research has been to understand how well marketers are able to enhance the attractiveness of web page communications and to generate greater user satisfaction. For instance, Teo (1998) reported that specific web page designs and features, referred to by Teo as gimmicks, were useful in improving the viewing experience. In his study, gimmicks included web page animations, movies, sound effects, and background music. Furthermore, Teo speculated that the content of the gimmick features did not necessarily need to relate directly to the primary product being offered on the web page. Related studies have found that the inclusion of more advertisement banners from other firms, web pages containing images, and web pages incorporating sound and video clips can induce web visitors to stay longer on the site (Luk et al, 2002).

This stream of research provides evidence to suggest that the capabilities of the hypertext medium can support an effective use of more complicated sales and service delivery schemes. This suggestion is contingent, however, on the broad availability of relevant technologies in the marketplace. Businesses operating in technologically advanced societies are expected to emphasize product differences through aggressive comparisons to its competitors and through linkages to other products, thereby increasing the total value delivered to the customer. The use of special offers in connection with service offerings are often positioned with these goals in mind. Therefore, the next hypothesis is as follows:

> H_7: Special offer ratings will be higher for countries with higher SET index scores (advanced countries) than countries with low SET scores (developing countries).

The Impact of Technology Achievement on Innovativeness and Consumer Preference

The hypotheses proposed above suggest that technological achievement might be an important host country environmental factor that can positively influence the amount and richness of information presented for specific informational content items included in a web page. These hypotheses represent a small portion of a broader construct relating to the impact of a country's technology achievement on the level of internet adoption and the internet shopping behaviors that prevail in the country. The construct, labeled innovativeness, has been measured in a variety of ways (Park & Jun, 2003; Blake et al, 2005). One method estimates the respondent's attitudinal characteristics, arguing that this type of measure can be an important predictor of internet adoption and diffusion. It has been established, for example, that those with more exposure to and familiarity with the internet have a higher probability of shopping online (Blake et al, 2003).

Another method treats innovativeness as a domain-specific phenomenon, linked to broader innovative traits and web site features. Innovativeness in this context can be seen as product/ service class specific. Domain-specific innovativeness is especially useful because it helps to capture the societal level effects on the development of website features and communications. Studies that evaluate domain-specific innovation have identified a number of web site features and have measured their impact on website appeal. Other studies have analyzed the functions or roles played by specific features and their contribution to site appeal.

Blake et al (forthcoming) propose a “preference component perspective” to illustrate the country specific preferences for web site appeal and web site information. This perspective proposes that each individual shopper has specific characteristics of with respect to preferences for web site features. Elevation is the overall demand for web site features, including web site information. It is estimated by the average of ratings for a broad cross section of site characteristics. Priority is the relative appeal of a feature compared to the appeals of the other features in the eyes of an online shopper.

Because the scope of this study deals with the perceived level of information content delivered through a web site, elevation levels can be estimated across the cross-national sample. This study, however, does not capture data regarding the relative preference of information content items. For this reason the priority construct will not be evaluated.

A potential explanation of relative elevation scores is that citizens in countries that offer more online shopping opportunities in a broad array of product and service categories have learned the value delivered through a wide range of information types. By contrast, citizens in countries with less advanced information infrastructures have less opportunity to learn of the benefits associated with different information content. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that service providers that target communications to an audience that is somewhat disadvantaged from a socioeconomic and technology standpoint will be more inclined to emphasize the major criteria used to evaluate service offerings. It is therefore hypothesized that:

> H_8: Elevation scores for information content will be higher for countries with lower SET scores (developing countries) than countries with high SET scores (advanced countries).

In addition to the two consumer preference categories discussed above, Blake & Neuendorf (2004) propose a concept that they label differentiation to help explain the differences in perceived usefulness of web site information found in cross-national studies. Differentiation is the variability in the appeal of the various features and information content from the perspective of the individual shopper. It is suggested that the cross-national difference in differentiation might be due to the same dynamic that influences elevation. A greater inexperience with online service information might support a lower level of appreciation for certain information content categories. It is expected that online shoppers in countries with less advanced internet technologies may have learned the value of some information features (low price, for example) but have not yet come to appreciate the value of other information content.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is offered:

> H_9: Estimates of differentiation for information content will be higher for countries with low SET scores (developing countries) than countries with higher SET scores (advanced countries).

An overview of the hypotheses surrounding information content items is contained in Table 14. One interesting feature inherent with this group of hypotheses is that a clear precedent has not been set through former studies to construct or to defend the expectations. In the majority of previous studies, individual information content items have not been evaluated. In those studies that have isolated individual items, results have varied. The variation in findings might be attributable to the industry sectors selected, the markets evaluated, or both.

Hypotheses 4 through 7 represent a theoretical bridge between the findings and implications of the research available using cultural values and the communication execution strategies that are expected to be developed to accommodate other host country environmental factors. What is lacking, however, is a clear understanding of the impact that the web medium will bring to these hypothesized relationships. Hypotheses 8 and 9 seek to extend the previous research connected with web site features. Although information levels are clearly a feature associated with web sites, it remains an area that has not been investigated using measures that were designed specifically for evaluating web site features.

It has been suggested that information levels are influenced by the medium's nature of involvement (Okazaki & Rivas, 2002). Hoffman & Novak (1996) suggest that the internet contains a higher level of information because of the higher attention levels that accompany the review of web site advertising. The higher level of attention is usually attributed to the qualitative factors associated with the web that were discussed in Chapter 1 (see Table 1). The concepts of quality and performance, for example, must be conveyed by the advertiser in a believable manner to support motivation on the part of the purchaser to choose the service. In a web medium, quality and/ or performance might be inferred through other components in the advertisement such as landing pages or online calculator programs. This suggests that, unlike traditional media, claims of quality and performance might be made or implied more evenly across cultural boundaries in a web environment.

The study of availability content is another area where previous research does not provide insight into the impact that web characteristics might have on the degree of standardization that is achieved in the services sector. Although availability content has been reviewed in several studies involving goods advertising in a print medium, this body of research does not consider the potential impact that the web medium can have on the advertising of services in two key areas: (1) the internet can act as a direct sales and distribution channel to the consumer, and (2) availability of the service through the internet might be perceived as constant, because the consumer can choose when to evaluate the service’s features. These conditions may support a standardization affect in web-based communications.

Thus, measuring information levels on web advertisements in service categories remains an area where much new learning can take place.

Table 14

Overview of Hypotheses Surrounding Information Content

Information Content Rating	Host Country Environmental Factor	Consistent with Findings in Other Mediums?	Justification/ Constraints*
H_4: Price/ Value	Socioeconomic variables positively impact SET score values	Yes	Partial support found in print medium with 2 countries (Javalgi et al, 1995) Support found in Japanese web ads with 3 country sample (Okazaki, 2004)
H_{5A}: Quality	Socioeconomic variables positively impact SET score values	N/A	Directional support found in Japanese web ads with 3 country sample (Okazaki, 2004) Pollay quality-related and performance-related appeals found not linked to individualism (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996) Linkage to uncertainty avoidance has surrounded community, collectivism, and group integrity
H_{5B}: Performance	Socioeconomic variables positively impact SET score values	N/A	Partial support found with Japanese web ads (Okazaki, 2004)

Overview of Hypotheses Surrounding Information Content, (cont.)

H_6: Availability	Technology Achievement positively impact SET score values	N/A	The use of availability and special offer information cues have been limited to studies interested in evaluating the total number of all cues generated in the ad, both in print and web mediums.
H_7: Special Offers	Technology Achievement positively impact SET score values	N/A	
H_8: Elevation	Technology Achievement positively impact SET score values	N/A	Blake et al (forthcoming) found national level differences in website structural features
H_9: Differentiantion	Technology Achievement positively impact SET score values	N/A	Blake et al (2003) found support for differentiation with regard to innovativeness estimates

Note: All previous studies listed that evaluated specific information content items used the Hofstede cultural indices to define host country environmental factors.

Chapter IV

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Selecting the Sample of Countries

The five target countries selected for this study are India, Malaysia, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The goal is to include countries that provide the diversity in environmental factors required to support reasonable tests of the hypotheses. Each of the five countries meet the criteria suggested by Malhotra et al (1996) regarding the inclusion of national samples in cross-national marketing research studies.

The information presented in Table 15 suggests that these five countries differ significantly on many critical dimensions. Two clear categories of countries emerge when they are evaluated from a technological achievement perspective. India and Malaysia have moderate to low rankings in all technology indicators, with the remaining three countries all ranking in the top 10 countries in the world in technology advancement as well as internet usage (Hill & Dhanda, 2004).

Although the growth in spending of online advertising is attractive in all of the countries, the percentage of internet user penetration and the total dollars invested in online advertising varies considerably across the five country sample. The lower growth in online spending found in Australia and Malaysia might have a negative effect on companies seeking to adapt their advertising to local markets. The low internet penetration in India might provide less of an incentive to standardize, due to the socioeconomic characteristics that might be specific to the group. Additionally, what is lacking from Table 15 is an estimate of the availability of internet access in each of the countries, as this is another possible variable potentially impacting the degree of advertising standardization.

The final piece of information that can be calculated from the data in Table 15 is the average online spending per broadband household in each country. In this category, the US, India, and the UK are very similar ($357, $354, and $360 respectively). Australia has a much higher per-household spend of $527. This, combined with its relatively high broadband household penetration rate of 53.0% might suggest willingness for firms in that country to adapt their advertising to local conditions. On the other hand, the situation in Malaysia is quite different. The per-household spend in that country is $140 and the broadband household penetration rate is 25.7%. This might indicate less willingness for firms in that country to adapt their online advertising.

Strong variation is found across the five country sample when the socioeconomic metrics for each country are evaluated. India and Malaysia fall squarely in the developing country category when human development and GDP per capita indicators are used (UN Human Development Report, 2007/ 2008). The remaining three countries are classified as advanced economies. Similar rankings emerge when a broader span of economic and trade variables are used to evaluate overall market potential for each country (Cavusgil et al, 2004).

The extent to which free and independent media exists in each country seems to indicate the number and variety of media channels available to the public. The three free media states (US, UK, AU) all have increased media opportunities available to their citizens. Increased media opportunities and increased media interaction are expected to increase the potential for rational reasoning in service communications due to the learning that takes place through continued and expanded use of media channels.

Table 15

Key Metrics of Selected Countries

1	Australia	United States	United Kingdom	Malaysia	India
Technological Achievement					
Broadband Households (millions)$_1$	4	59.8	14.5	1.4	2.4
Broadband Household Penetration (% of households)$_1$	53.0%	51.9%	56.4%	25.7%	1.2%
Internet Users -Total Home and Work (millions)$_1$	10.11	181.9	32.2	7.521	22.8
Internet User Penetration$_1$	62.0%	65.2%	61.2%	45.0%	2.9%
2007 Online Advertising Spending (billions)$_2$	$2.11	$21.40	$5.28	$0.20	$0.85
Online Advertising Spending Growth (2007 vs. 2006)$_2$	10.20%	26.80%	42.30%	10.20%	52.80%
Online Buyers as a % of Total Internet Users$_3$	na	66.3%	76.3%	na	na
Technology Achievement Category$_4$	Leader	Leader	Leader	Potential Leader	Dynamic Adapter
Technology Achievement Index$_5$	0.587	0.733	0.606	0.396	0.201
Socioeconomic					
Socioeconomic Category	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced	Developing	Developing
Overall Market Potential Index$_6$	76	n/a	75	43	60
Human Development Index$_7$	0.962	0.951	0.946	0.811	0.619
Life Expectancy at Birth (years)$_7$	80.9	77.900	79	73.7	63.7
Combined Gross Enrollment Ratio$_7$	113.0	93.3	93.0	74.3	63.8
GDP per Capita (PPP US$)$_7$	31,794	41,890	33,238	10,882	3,452
Existing Media Structures					
Free Media Status$_8$	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Restricted	Partly Restricted
Number of Internet Hosts (millions)$_9$	9.46	3.95	5.12	0.34	2.31
Television Broadcast Stations$_9$	104	2,218	228	88	562
Radio Broadcast Stations$_9$	608	13,769	653	441	312
Mobile Cellular Telephones (millions)$_9$	19.76	233	69.67	19.46	166.1
SET Index Score	1.26	1.01	0.90	-0.69	-1.65

$_1$ World Internet Statistics, 2008
$_2$ eMarketer, June 2007
$_3$ eMarketer, October 2007
$_4$ Hill & Dhanda (2004)
$_5$ United Nations Human Development Report (2007/2008)
$_6$ Cavusgil et al (2004)
$_7$ United Nations Human Development Report (2007/2008)
$_8$ Freedom House, 2008
$_9$ CIA World Factbook (2007)

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study is the homepage of the service provider's corporate web site. One issue that often arises in studies that seek to evaluate web content surrounds the question of what is really meant by the term “web site” (McMillan, 2000). In practice, a firm’s web site is a hierarchy of information connected through hyperlinks to a multitude of other pages. This is because corporate online advertising pursues several purposes with several different intended audiences (McMillan et al, 2003), such as customers, investors, employees, and suppliers. By focusing on homepages, the primary text, graphics, and symbols can be considered in a standardized fashion. By using the home page as the unit of analysis, web sites of varying sizes and complexity can be more effectively compared. Ha & James (1998) suggest that evaluating multiple pages of a web site can be very time consuming and introduce biases based on the size of the site. The homepage, therefore, takes a central role in the firm’s online communication strategy because it acts as a gateway to all corporate messages contained in the site. Visitors to a web site decide whether they will continue to browse a site based on their impression of the homepage (Ha & James, 1998). Therefore, the homepage of corporate web sites becomes a valuable unit of analysis in light of the stated objectives for this study.

Selecting the Sample of Service Categories

The goal of this study is to use a sufficiently broad array of service categories so that comparisons can be evaluated across service categories in addition to comparisons across cultures. As discussed in Chapter II, several bases of differentiation among service categories have been proposed in the literature. Although little empirical evidence is available to suggest that any of the classification schemes highlighted in Chapter II are generalizable to all services, the salient characteristics used to separate service categories in the various schemes are useful as guidelines when selecting service categories for this study. Six service categories are proposed for use in this study:

1. Commercial air carriers (“Airlines”) whose primary business is providing national and international air travel to consumers and business people.

2. Hospitals – non-government owned institutions that offer a broad range of health care services to the public.

3. Department stores – commercial dry goods retailers with medium to broad product assortments.

4. Financial institutions (Banks) whose primary service offering are retail financial services.

5. Insurance companies - companies engaged primarily in full service insurance products to individuals and families.

6. Mobile phone operators – privately owned (non-government) wireless network providers aimed primarily at individuals and households.

A pilot test was conducted on random selections within each of the six service categories to check the clarity and appropriateness of the service definitions posed in the study. This exercise revealed that confusion can surround the acceptance of companies if its line of business is the only qualification. For example, simply stating that commercial air carriers will be evaluated is misleading. Most international business data bases (including Hoovers online) include businesses such as charter airlines and private business airlines to their list of commercial air carriers. These companies, however, usually operate under a different business model and are expected to advertise their services to very specific, targeted groups. Therefore, bias might be introduced into the ratings.

For this reason, a list of clear, concise exclusion categories were developed and applied to each of the service categories. Table 16 provides a review of the exclusions that were developed as a result of pilot testing.

Table 16

Summary of Exclusions Applied to Service Sectors

Airlines • Charter Airlines • Private Business Airlines • Avionics Companies • Fuel Base Operators (FBO's) • Commuter Airlines • Flanking (Secondary) Brands*	**Department Stores** • Specialty Stores • Mega SuperCenters • Flanking (Secondary) Brands
Hospitals • Government Owned Hospitals • Veterans Hospitals • Geriatric Hospitals • Outpatient Hospitals • Transaction Sites • Hospital Trust Sites • Medical Education Sites	**Banks** • Government Owned Banks • Investment Banks • Business Banks • Affinity Group Banks • Bank Transaction Sites • Private Banking Operations • Institutional Banks
Insurance Companies • Business Insurance Companies • Single Line Insurance Companies • Bank Brands • Flanking (Secondary) Brands • Local (Non-National) Brands	**Mobile Phone Operators** • Equipment Manufacturers • Affinity Group Brands • Virtual Operator Brands (MVNO's) • Local (Non-National) Brands

*Flanking brands are separate brands maintained by the parent company to compete with competitor brands and to help protect the parent's flagship brand. For example, a major airline may create, or acquire, a flanker brand to compete with regional express carriers or low-cost, no-frills, competitor brands.

With respect to the literature on service classification schemes (Lovelock & Yip, 1996; Namaivayam, 2003; Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004; Hoffman, 2006), the six service categories selected for this study fall into two broad categories of services. In one category are highly intangible service offerings that rely heavily on information processing to deliver service fulfillment. This category includes banks, insurance companies, and mobile phone operators. The second category contains services that require tangible goods and equipment during the service delivery process. This category includes airlines, hospitals, and department stores. A broad review of the characteristics associated with each of these service categories is included in Table 17:

Table 17

Characteristics of Service Categories Selected

Service Category Selected	Service Characteristics
Airlines	• Physical acts to customers bodies • Less permanent effects of service • Uniform service delivery procedures • Single service oriented • Single site delivery • Customer presence required • Discrete transaction delivery • No formal relationship required
Hospitals	• Physical acts to customers bodies • More permanent effects of service • High customer contact required • Single site delivery • Customer presence required
Department Stores	• Physical acts to owned objects • Services affecting goods • Discrete transaction delivery • No formal relationship required
Banks	• Information processing • Intangible service actions • Variation in delivery processes • Bundled service delivery • Continued service delivery • Formal relationship required
Insurance Companies	• Information processing • Intangible service actions • Low customer contact required • Bundled service delivery • Continued service delivery • Formal relationship required
Mobile Phone Network Operators	• Information processing • Intangible service actions • Low customer contact required • Continued service delivery • Formal relationship required

After applying the exclusion criteria listed in Table 16, it was found that 459 web sites were available for evaluation. This represents the total number of available web sites that are available in most countries after the exclusion criteria are applied, except in the US. For the US, size restrictions were applied to limit the total number of sites being evaluated for the country. The record counts for each service sector are provided for each country in Table 18.

Table 18

Number of Observations Found In Each Service Category

Country	Banks	Dept Stores	Airlines	Mobile Phones	Insurance	Hospitals	Totals
India	22	10	11	10	11	8	**72**
Malaysia	8	8	5	4	15	12	**52**
Australia	13	11	19	5	16	12	**76**
UK	13	27	18	8	17	24	**107**
USA	36	22	13	25	26	30	**152**
Totals	**92**	**78**	**66**	**52**	**85**	**86**	**459**

Source: Hoovers online database

Data Collection Procedures

The coding instrument contained eight input fields: the first three items captured perceptions relating to the three forms of advertising appeals being evaluated; the remaining five fields captured inputs regarding the five informational content items being evaluated. The two consumer preference variables were calculated from the data gathered for the five information content items. A five-point semantic differential scale was used to solicit responses on all inputs. Based on recommendations by Kolbe & Burnett (1991), two native coders, both of whom will have been raised in the host country and unaware of the study's purpose, were recruited for each country. Coders were recruited through word-of-mouth on two separate university campuses. Training materials were prepared to help coders grasp the operational definitions of all the variables in two training sessions. In the first session, coders were directed to visit a web site at their convenience to review instructions on evaluating web sites and be introduced to the eight inputs being collected. The web-based training tool contained audio instructions, visual instructions, and web screen shots to deliver several examples to help operationalize the concepts being evaluated in the study. A copy of the training site is included in disk form in the appendix.

During the second training session, all disagreements in understanding between the two judges were solved through discussion to give the tests higher validity, a method suggested by Kassarjian (1977). At the conclusion of the second training session, coders began to evaluate the web ads for their particular country and provide inputs for the eight variables. Coding took place in a computer lab setting.

McMillan (2000) reviewed nineteen studies that applied content analysis to the web and made various recommendations with respect to the methods that researchers employ. She pointed out that sampling techniques, the unit of analysis chosen, and the preparation of judges are most challenging in online studies. The number of potential homepages is limitless and the number of pages linked to a homepage can vary considerably. Web advertisers can also change content to a site at any time. McMillan (2000) suggests that these complexities can lead to inconsistencies in sampling, defining units of analysis, and receiving reliable ratings from judges. This study has attempted to address each of these concerns by clearly defining the service categories used, maintaining consistent use of the home page as the unit of analysis, and using multimedia presentation tools to deliver effective judges training.

Overview of Analysis

Hypotheses one through seven use responses from judges that were treated as interval scaled independent variables. Hypotheses eight and nine use data calculated from the inputs and were also treated as interval scaled data.

Hypotheses testing was accomplished by evaluating the difference among ratings of the collected data across the three separate classification criteria of countries (socioeconomic, technology achievement, and media structure). These classifications, as well as the service category, were treated as nominal scaled variables. Multiple discriminant analysis (MDA) is an appropriate technique when a single dependent variable is categorical and the independent variables are metric. Therefore, this procedure was applied to investigate the hypotheses statements as they are presented in Chapter III.

The MANOVA procedure was applied to simultaneously analyze the effect of the categorical variables on the creative strategy and information measures. Because significant results were obtained for the omnibus test, follow up analyses was required to determine which of the different single effects were significant. It was expected that category comparisons other than those stated in the hypotheses would be considered. For example, comparisons of intangible versus more tangible service categories were investigated MANOVA is one method that is particularly well suited for this type of investigation because of the difference in the sample sizes that resulted across the service categories being explored (see Table 18).

Because content analysis is an observational research method that is often applied to reporting specific elements in communications using categorical data, much attention has been focused on applying the procedures and safeguards to objectively evaluate reliability estimates (Kassarjian, 1977; Perrault & Leigh, 1989). Kolbe & Burnett, (1991; p.244) succinctly describe their concern for the consistency of measures generated in content analysis studies as follows:

> “While the potential benefit of using content analysis in consumer research seems extensive, some consideration needs to be given to its inherent weaknesses. For instance, this method is quite susceptible to the effects of researcher biases, which in turn, can

> effect decisions made in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. . . . .the existence of these biases can effect a study's contribution to knowledge"

Kolbe & Burnett (1991) further suggest that the incidence of these shortcomings can be reduced through what they refer to as the objectivity through which analytical categories are developed and used. Their list of five recommendations has been incorporated into this study and is briefly described below:

1. Rules and procedures must be reported to validate research findings and support future replication.

2. Judge training must be reported to increase the coders' familiarity with the coding scheme and operational definitions.

3. Pretesting of measures must be reported to validate the coding process

4. Judging must take place independent of the authors

5. Judges must code responses independent of one another

These precautions are offered to authenticate a subsequent estimation of the reliability estimate of measures. The most frequently used reliability index is the coefficient of agreement (Perrault & Leigh, 1989; Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). This index is calculated by dividing the number of coder agreements by the total number of coding decisions. This study, however, will not use the coefficient of agreement index as the estimation procedure due to its inherent inability to correct for chance agreements and the number of rating categories.

Chapter V

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In the following section, a discussion is first offered surrounding the methods applied in content analysis studies to estimate reliability of the data obtained from coders. Because ordinal scaled data was obtained in this study, particular emphasis needs to be placed on correcting for chance agreements among coders, as well as the number of categories contained in the rating scale. These critical correction methods form a departure from many of the estimation procedures used in empirical studies found in academic journals within this topic area. Justification for the method recommended in this study is brought from the marketing research discipline.

Content Analysis was selected for use in this study because it offers a clear method for identifying and understanding the consistencies and differences in the content of messages (Kassarjian, 1977; Kolbe & Burnett, 1991; Wheeler, 1998). This method is also adaptable to studies that examine corporate web sites (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999; Okazaki & Rivas, 2002). The goal of content analysis in advertising studies is to provide an objective and systematic evaluation of a set of ads in order to identify behavioral or attitudinal generalizations (Wheeler, 1988; Javalgi et al, 1994).

An evaluation of the SET score is next provided by evaluating the relationship between the SET score and the Hofstede indices as well as between the SET score and the eight creative strategy and informational content items data collected during the study. The results of statistical testing are next provided for each of the hypotheses. Clarification of the nature of the data obtained in the study is pursued through two separate analysis techniques. Multiple discriminant analysis is provided to test for significance in ratings across countries and service sectors, and multiple analysis of variance is used to estimate the relationship between the two categorical variables (country and service sector) with the eight rating variables collected during the study. Lastly, an evaluation of service groupings is provided to explore the effect that service category might have on future studies.

<u>Estimating Reliability of Coder Ratings</u>

The estimation of inter-coder reliability is a critical issue when multiple coders are used to assign ratings to communication content. High levels of disagreement among judges suggest weaknesses in research methods, including the possibility of poor operational definitions, categories, and judge training. A variety of estimation approaches have been proposed and used in research practice to assess inter-coder reliability. However, because the results obtained may depend on the particular measure used, the relative merits of these estimation approaches have been widely debated (Hughes & Garrett, 1990; Perreault & Leigh, 1989).

The most frequently used reliability index is the coefficient of agreement. It is defined as the total number of agreements divided by the total number of coding decisions. Often authors refer to inter-judge reliability without specifying the calculation used. In a majority of these cases, the coefficient of agreement method is the procedure applied. For several decades, however, the consensus has been that percentage agreement is an unacceptable estimation approach (Hughes & Garrett, 1990; Perreault & Leigh, 1989). One of the main deficiencies of percentage agreement is that it does not correct for chance agreement among coders. Additionally, the percentage agreement method does not correct for the impact of the number of coding decisions on the reliability score. The way in which agreements should be corrected for chance has been a topic of debate.

Cohen's kappa (1960) provides an intra-class correlation that directly addresses the issue of random agreement. Essentially, Cohen's statistic is a measure of the observed proportion agreement that is greater than what can be expected from chance. Although Cohen's kappa is a popular and widely cited method for estimating reliability of category data, many researchers have expressed concern for the measure. Cohen's measure takes the observed category frequencies as given (Perreault & Leigh, 1989) which has the effect of underestimating the scenario where a high category frequency could indicate that a particular category is properly selected, but also that there is considerable agreement among coders. Therefore, Cohen's kappa is often referred to as an overly conservative measure.

Perreault & Leigh (1989) proposed an alternative method to Cohen's kappa for studies involving two judges. The Perreault and Leigh measure assumes that the observed agreement between judges is a function of a true, yet unknown, measure of reliability. Therefore, the true level of reliability can be inferred from the level of agreement observed. This measure is also considered to be more stable that Cohen's kappa (Rust & Cooil, 1994), because it always achieves a maximum of one when there is perfect interjudge agreement and defined as zero when the number of agreements is less than or equal to what would be expected by chance.

The proportional reduction in loss (PRL) approach extends the previous methods by applying generalizability (G) theory as an appropriate framework for developing estimates of intercoder reliability. G theory recognizes that the definition of true and error variance depends on the researcher's context; therefore, estimates of reliability must be related to the various facets of the research design. For purposes of this study, the random facets of the research design would include the number of rating variables, the number of coding decisions, and the number of coding categories. The PRL approach accommodates each of these areas in arriving at an estimate of reliability, and was therefore applied to this study. The PRL measure then becomes:

Reliability estimate = $\{A - (1/K)\ [(K/(K-1]\ \}^{.5}$

Where A is the proportion of inter-judge agreement and K is the number of categories into which the responses can be coded.

Table 19 provides the PRL reliability estimates derived from the coder ratings gathered for this study. Also contained in Table 19 are the reliability estimates for the eight individual rating categories. Kolbe & Burnett (1991) alert researchers to a concern for what they call the “overall reliability approach”. This method can yield misleading results because while agreement can be high in the aggregate, low ratings on individual measures may be hidden by pooled results.

Table 19

Proportionate Reduction in Loss (PRL) Reliability Estimates*

ADVANCED COUNTRIES

	Australia		**United Kingdom**		**United States**	
	Observed Agreement	PRL Estimate	Observed Agreement	PRL Estimate	Observed Agreement	PRL Estimate
RR	0.92	0.95	0.70	0.79	0.61	0.72
ER	0.90	0.94	0.72	0.81	0.45	0.56
SU	0.93	0.96	0.49	0.60	0.68	0.77
P/V	0.80	0.87	0.64	0.74	0.63	0.73
QY	0.90	0.94	0.48	0.59	0.67	0.77
PF	0.93	0.96	0.46	0.57	0.59	0.70
AV	0.93	0.96	0.65	0.75	0.61	0.72
SO	0.95	0.97	0.80	0.87	0.55	0.66
Totals	0.91	0.94	0.62	0.72	0.60	0.70

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

	India		**Malaysia**	
	Observed Agreement	PRL Estimate	Observed Agreement	PRL Estimate
RR	0.39	0.49	0.48	0.59
ER	0.33	0.40	0.60	0.71
SU	0.42	0.52	0.54	0.65
P/V	0.38	0.47	0.67	0.77
QY	0.24	0.22	0.60	0.71
PF	0.38	0.47	0.42	0.52
AV	0.40	0.50	0.46	0.57
SO	0.36	0.45	0.52	0.63
Totals	0.36	0.44	0.54	0.64

* The Proportional Reduction in loss (PRL) method and the Perreault & Leigh (1989) method yield the same results in studies utilizing two judges (Rust & Cooil, 1994)

It is important to note that a clear threshold for reaching acceptable reliability estimations has not been established for content analysis studies similar to the one applied in this study due to a variety of reasons. First, the preferred method of estimating reliability whereby corrections can be applied for chance agreement has not been applied to studies that rate creative strategies and information content items. Secondly, in those studies that apply the proper methods of reliability estimation, the authors often serve as coders. Consequently, the objectivity of the ratings, based on the number of coders and judge independence, is suspect.

However, Rust and Cooil (1994) insist that researchers must always be prepared to address the question of "how reliable is reliable enough". In quantitative data, an often cited rule of thumb is given by Nunnally, who suggests that a reliability level of .70 will suffice for exploratory studies. Because the PRL measure is a direct extension and generalization of Cronbach's alpha, Rust & Cooil (1994) suggest that the same benchmarks that are applied to Chronbach's alpha could also just as easily be applied to PRL in the qualitative case. This recommendation suggests that the reliability estimates in this study for India are unsatisfactory and that estimates for Malaysia are borderline. It is suggested, however, that overall reliability estimates for this study are acceptable due primarily to the unavailability of benchmarks from studies evaluating web information content and creative strategies, and to the relative low application level of the PRL method in any studies using qualitative data.

What is clear, however, is that critical facets of the research methodology must be maintained. These would include the requirement that each judge acts independently. This assumption is common to all of the major reliability measures. Each judge should also be expected to choose the perceived correct category with the same probability. This implies that judge's instructions are clear and understandable. Finally, the number of response categories supplied to the coders must be thoroughly evaluated by the researcher. Because the number of response categories impacts the percentage of chance agreements, the responsibility of the researcher must be to establish coder response scales that are consistent with the research objective and thereby maintain parsimony to the extent that hypotheses can be objectively evaluated.

Results of Hypotheses Testing

In general, the results indicate support for all of the hypotheses as stated in Chapter III except for hypothesis 7. It appears that the emphasis that is placed on special offers in this sample of countries is more closely aligned with price/ value than the argument that advanced technologies would support more complicated sales and service delivery schemes. Table 23 contains a summary of the results of hypothesis testing.

TABLE 20
Overview of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Result	t-statistic	Significance
H1: Rational Reasoning	Supported	9.478	P<.01
H2: Emotional Reasoning	Supported	12.077	P<.01
H3: Symbolic Usage	Supported	6.465	P<.01
H4: Price/Value	Supported	10.446	P<.01
H5A: Quality	Supported	12.15	P<.01
H5B: Performance	Supported	10.152	P<.01
H6: Availability	Supported	3.465	P<.01
H7: Special Offers	Not Supported	-2.816	P<.01
H8: Elevation	Supported	9.836	P<.01
H9: Differentiation	Supported	4.942	P<.01

df = 334 – Advanced; 123 – Developing

Evaluating the Contribution of the SET Score

The SET score was developed primarily to overcome the limitations often associated with using cultural indices to explain differences in cross-national studies. These inadequacies are explained in Chapter II. However, the fact that the Hofstede cultural framework has been used extensively in previous studies that evaluate information content suggests that an evaluation of the SET score to the Hofstede cultural indices might identify useful relationships to guide future research. Appendix A contains a comparison of the SET score values to the values for the five dimensions of the Hofstede framework for the 40 country sample that was used to develop the SET score. Hofstede data is available for 33 of the 40 countries for Hofstede's original four dimensions, and 13 of the 40 countries for the Long Term Orientation (LTO) dimension. A review of the Pearson correlation coefficients is presented in Table 20. Although sufficient data sizes were not available to complete the entire table, the results do suggest that a few cursory observations can be made. SET score values were found to correlate negatively with power distance and positively with individualism. This relationship among the two cultural dimensions is consistent with previous findings. Hofstede (2001, p.216) graphically illustrated the two dimensions and found a correlation coefficient ($r = -.68$; $p<.01$). In the factor analysis of all value questions, PDI and IDV loaded (with opposite signs) on the same factor. Hofstede chose to maintain the two categories as separate dimensions, however, due to the feeling that they are conceptually different constructs. It is interesting to note that in Hofstede's (2001) sample; almost all poor countries tend to rate low on individualism and high on power distance. This relationship is maintained when SET scores are evaluated for these two dimensions.

TABLE 21

Evaluation of SET Score and Hofstede Cultural Dimensions
Correlation Table

Cultural Dimension	SET Score 40 Countries	SET Score 5 Country Sample	SET Score 13 Advanced Countries	SET Score 14 Developed Countries	Set Score 13 Developing Countries
PDI	-.670**	-.827	-.536	-.600	.320
UAI	-.131	.485	.072	-.441	.441
IDV	.647**	.857	.431	.733**	-.252
MAS	-.187	.733	-.694	.196	-.141
LTO	-.138	N/A	-.424	N/A	-.100

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
N/A – Sufficient data not available for analysis

The Pearson correlation coefficients of SET score to the rankings of the individual ratings of the creative strategies and information content variables is presented in Table 21. The only significant levels of correlation are found with the ratings of price/ value (-.988; p<.01) and symbolic usage (-.911; p<.05). However, it is interesting to note that the directional relationships of the SET score with the ratings categories is consistent with those proposed in each of the hypotheses with the exception of hypothesis seven.

TABLE 22
Evaluation of SET Score and Individual Variable Ratings
Correlation Table

Information Variable	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Information Variable	Pearson Correlation Coefficient
Rational Reasoning	.640	Quality	-.752
Emotional Reasoning	-.677	Performance	-.691
Symbolic Usage	-.911*	Availability	.543
Price/ Value	-.988**	Special Offers	-.387

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The final stage of evaluating the SET score deals with investigating the systematic increases and/ or decreases in each of the eight coder input variables with the observed increases in the SET score for the five country sample. To accomplish this task, an ANOVA including a test for linearity was performed to estimate the relationship between SET score and the mean values of the eight inputs. In this analysis, SET score value is held as the independent variable and the eight coder ratings are evaluated as dependent variables. This exercise is expected to provide additional insight into the relationship of SET score to coder ratings beyond the group relationships that are offered in the hypotheses. To help explain the first hypothesis, for example, it is expected that the mean scores for rational reasoning ratings will systematically increase from low SET score countries to higher SET score countries. The results of this analysis are contained in Table 23. The results suggest that all hypothesized relationships can be supported with the exception of hypothesis 7.

ANOVA Table With Test for Linearity
Countries Held In Ascending SET Score Order

Variable Rating	Variance Estimates	Sum of Squares	F	Sig.	Consistent with Hypothesis
Rational Reasoning	Between Groups	75.99	35.10	p <.01	Yes
	Linearity	34.83	64.34	p <.01	
	Deviation from Linearity	41.17	25.35	p <.01	
	Within Groups	245.73			
	Total	**321.72**			
Emotional Reasoning	Between Groups	255.74	105.34	p <.01	Yes
	Linearity	108.47	178.73	p <.01	
	Deviation from Linearity	147.27	80.88	p <.01	
	Within Groups	275.53			
	Total	**531.27**			
Symbolic Usage	Between Groups	46.06	13.96	p <.01	Yes
	Linearity	39.04	47.33	p <.01	
	Deviation from Linearity	7.02	2.84	p <.05	
	Within Groups	374.51			
	Total	**420.58**			
Price/ Value	Between Groups	131.36	31.00	p <.01	Yes
	Linearity	128.41	121.22	p <.01	
	Deviation from Linearity	2.95	0.93	NS	
	Within Groups	480.92			
	Total	**612.28**			
Quality	Between Groups	210.64	80.19	p <.01	Yes
	Linearity	124.85	190.11	p <.01	
	Deviation from Linearity	85.79	43.55	p <.01	
	Within Groups	298.15			
	Total	**508.79**			
Performance	Between Groups	171.40	59.24	p <.01	Yes
	Linearity	87.56	121.04	p <.01	
	Deviation from Linearity	83.85	38.64	p <.01	
	Within Groups	328.42			
	Total	**499.82**			
Availability	Between Groups	33.00	9.06	p <.01	Yes
	Linearity	9.20	10.11	p <.01	
	Deviation from Linearity	23.80	8.72	p <.01	
	Within Groups	413.25			
	Total	**446.25**			
Special Offer	Between Groups	48.87	11.30	p <.01	No
	Linearity	8.24	7.62	p <.01	
	Deviation from Linearity	40.63	12.52	p <.01	
	Within Groups	491.04			
	Total	**539.91**			
Elevation	Between Groups	70.74	52.51	p <.01	Yes
	Linearity	40.20	119.35	p <.01	
	Deviation from Linearity	30.54	30.23	p <.01	
	Within Groups	152.91			
	Total	**223.65**			
Differentiation	Between Groups	17.79	9.38	p <.01	Yes
	Linearity	5.00	10.54	p <.01	
	Deviation from Linearity	12.79	9.00	p <.01	
	Within Groups	144.00			
	Total	**158.28**			

Notes: df = 4 - between groups; 1 - linearity; 3 - deviation from linearity; 454 - within groups

Table 23 also highlights an interesting development in the relationship of the magnitude of changes in the variable ratings to the directional changes found in SET score. The tests for linearity as well as non-linearity were found to be significant at the $p<.01$ level for all variables except special offers. It is presumed that the relatively high numbers of degrees of freedom in the within groups category is supporting the significance in findings. However, the question of whether the relationship of SET score to input variables is, in fact, linear remains unanswered. To pursue this questioned, R squared estimates and Eta squared estimates were evaluated for all data variables to assess linearity and non-linearity, respectively. It is suggested from the measures of association in Table 24 that the relationships of each of these variables to SET score is somewhat non-linear based on the magnitude of the estimates in each of the categories.

TABLE 24
Measures of Association

Item	R Squared	Eta Squared
RR *Country In Order	0.108	0.236
ER *Country In Order	0.204	0.481
SU *Country In Order	0.093	0.110
PV *Country In Order	0.210	0.215
QY *Country In Order	0.245	0.414
PF *Country In Order	0.175	0.343
AV *Country In Order	0.021	0.074
SO *Country In Order	0.015	0.091
Elev *Country In Order	0.180	0.316
Diff *Country In Order	0.074	0.076

Additional Clarification of the Data Obtained

The previous section suggests that strong support exists for the hypotheses as they are proposed in Chapter III. Because the hypotheses are proposed for groups of countries (advanced versus developing), an attempt was made to determine which of the eight coder rating variables discriminate between the two groups. Simply stated, the objective in this section is to determine which of the eight ratings variables can be effectively used to predict the likelihood that a specific case might belong to a specific country grouping. Multiple discriminant analysis was used to pursue this objective.

The Issue of Multicollinearity

An attempt is made in Table 23 to evaluate the systematic increase or decrease in input variables as the SET score increases for each country in the sample. Because significance at the $p<.01$ level was indicated in the linearity as well as deviation from linearity categories, additional investigation was pursued. To start, a correlation matrix was evaluated for the data set. The results are presented in Table 25. The table suggests strong multicollinearity among several input variables, especially with respect to symbolic usage and emotional reasoning inputs, as well as quality and performance ratings. This suggests that these variables might be highly explained by other variables in the data set. For this reason, a step-wise procedure was applied to the multiple discriminant analysis.

TABLE 25
Correlation Matrix of Web Information Variables

	RR	ER	SU	PV	QY	PF	AV	SO
RR	1	-0.021	.149(**)	0.033	0.006	0.067	.364(**)	.196(**)
ER	-0.021	1	.411(**)	.310(**)	.550(**)	.514(**)	.148(**)	.343(**)
SU	.149(**)	.411(**)	1	.378(**)	.402(**)	.394(**)	.252(**)	.386(**)
PV	0.033	.310(**)	.378(**)	1	.220(**)	.260(**)	0.075	.491(**)
QY	0.006	.550(**)	.402(**)	.220(**)	1	.760(**)	.187(**)	.192(**)
PF	0.067	.514(**)	.394(**)	.260(**)	.760(**)	1	.164(**)	.225(**)
AV	.364(**)	.148(**)	.252(**)	0.075	.187(**)	.164(**)	1	.279(**)
SO	.196(**)	.343(**)	.386(**)	.491(**)	.192(**)	.225(**)	.279(**)	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Step-Wise Multiple Discriminant Analysis

Discriminant function analysis was used to determine which rating variables discriminate between the two country groupings. The results of the analysis are contained in Table 26. One canonical function was accepted with a significance of $p< .01$. The discriminant coefficients suggest that rational reasoning, emotional reasoning, and price/ value ratings are most useful in discriminating between advanced and developing countries. The step-wise procedure dropped the symbolic usage and performance variables from the analysis.

Internal validation estimates from the step-wise procedure appear to be acceptable. 73% of the actual observations in the data set were from advanced countries, and these were properly classified in 94.6% of the cases using a hold out sample validation method. Observations from web sites in developing countries accounted for 27% of the input records, and these were correctly classified in 90.3% of the cases.

TABLE 26
Step-wise Discriminant Analysis Model

Eigenvalues

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Canonical Correlation
1	1.428(a)	100.0	100.0	.767

Wilks' Lambda

Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	.412	402.714	6	P < .01

Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients

	Function
	1
Rational Reasoning	-.648
Emotional Resasoning	.432
Price/Value	.648
Quality	.574
Availability	-.266
Special Offers	-.171

Group 1 = US/UK/AU; Group Centroid = -.725
Group 2 = IN/MY; Group Centroid = 1.960

Evaluating Service Sector Groupings

An a priori grouping of service categories was next explored. The objective of this exercise is to identify significant differences in coder ratings with respect to service categories.

For this study, the two a priori service groupings consist of the highly intangible/ information based services and the more tangible services. Lovelock (1999) suggests that categorizing services on a tangibility continuum is appropriate when evaluating web-based offerings. This position is supported by Achrol & Kotler (1999). The highly intangible category consists of banks, insurance companies, and mobile phone operators. The more tangible service category included airlines, hospitals, and department stores. Overall, no substantial difference in coder ratings were found with respect to service category except for emotional reasoning. The availability variable found marginal support. Table 24 contains an overview of the results of the means testing that was done to evaluate the effect of service sector category

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TABLE 27
Service Groupings and Web Site Variables

Rating Category	t - Statistic	Significance
Rational Reasoning	.810	.418
Emotional Reasoning	2.531	.012*
Symbolic Usage	-.205	.838
Price/ Value	.862	.389
Quality	-.031	.975
Performance	1.357	.175
Availability	-2.006	.045*
Special Offers	.403	.687
Elevation	.242	.809

* p< .05

Group 1 = Banks, Insurance Companies, and Mobile Phone Operators; df = 228
Group 2 = Airlines, Hospitals, and Department Stores; df = 229

Multiple Analysis of Variance

Lastly, an exercise to simultaneously explore the relationship between two categorical independent variables (country and service sector) and the eight dependent variables formed by the individual coder ratings. The two country groupings of advanced and developing countries were maintained from the hypotheses, as well as the two a priori groups of services. The interaction effect of country grouping and service category on coder ratings was also evaluated. Multiple analysis of variance was applied during this stage of the analysis.

Multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis that the two independent variables (country group and service group) simultaneously affect information variable ratings. The multivariate F value (Wilks' lambda) is used as the principal statistic for testing the null hypothesis. A strong country main effect is supported through the analysis followed by a marginal service category main effect. No significant interaction effect was detected. An overview of the MANOVA test is included in TABLE 28.

Table 28

MANOVA Results Indicating Country Main Effect

Effect	Wilks' Lambda Value	F Value	Significance
Intercept	.043	1261.4	.000
Country effect	.404	82.4	.000
Service Cat. Effect	.967	1.89	.060
Country*Service Effect	.985	.858	.552

Table 28 indicates a significant effect of country grouping on the mean value of information ratings. It might also imply that while significant difference is being detected in coder ratings between groups of countries, individual country differences in coder ratings could be masked by the pooled results. This issue is a topic for future research and will be addressed in the study limitations section in Chapter VI.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONTRIBUTIONS

As internet technologies and web-based marketing strategies continue to be applied to the global marketplace, research into the strategy and content of electronic business communications becomes increasingly important. To date, few studies have captured qualitative measures of specific information variables and use this data to gain insight into the online communication strategies of service firms. This study is possibly the first to propose a methodology that empirically evaluates strategy and information ratings without being encumbered by the inherent drawbacks of using cultural indices as predictor variables. Nine of the ten hypotheses are supported; indicating that other, more current, information can adequately explain the relative levels of content standardization that might be expected in online cross-national studies.

In the following sections, implications of the results of this study will be offered to practitioners competing in online communications channels, the contributions of the research to the marketing discipline will be delineated, the limitations of the project will be discussed, and directions for future research will be offered.

Recommendations for International Online Communications Managers

As evidenced by the significant findings in the study, practitioners in the service sector who develop online communication strategies are encouraged to evaluate several data sources when crafting their strategies. The link between host country environmental factors and creative strategy is significant, and the link between the same environmental factors and information content is significant.

In addition, based upon the evidence provided in the MANOVA procedure, web strategy and content adaptation appears to be most desirable at the individual country level. If a communications standardization strategy is pursued, the results of this study supports an approach whereby strategy reasoning and information concentration levels are standardized and then applied to service sectors individually at the country level. Multinational companies that offer multiple service offerings are encouraged to standardize the emphasis placed on information content across service offerings because service sector was not shown to have an impact on information content ratings. The benefits of this strategy is that the service firm's communications can now be target market specific, because the information needs and the delivery style of the information are now incorporated into the firm's overall communication strategy. This strategy is also consistent with the notion that advances in technology are prompting a shift in the consumer product and service adoption paradigm. The idea that today’s online consumers are not buying individual products and services, but procuring components to solution systems suggests that communications managers be fully aware of information content demands surrounding claims such as quality, performance, and availability. Perhaps most importantly, the expected pace of continued technology achievement world-wide suggests that additional implementation expenses that were once associated with communication adaptation strategies will now be minimized through advances in technology.

The benefits of communication adaptation at the country level, however, must be recognized in light of the increased branding requirements that this strategy brings. A communication adaptation strategy suggests that international service sector managers will face increased pressure to manage multiple sets of brand elements. When environmental factors explain clear sensitivity to communications content and strategy, brand strategy formulation must be at least considered at the country level.

Contributions to Marketing Theory

The contribution of this project to international marketing theory is threefold: First, the results from using the SET score indicate that a clear, systematic, and updated procedure is available for explaining information levels and creative strategies at the country level. Secondly, this study incorporates measures on specific information content variables. Previous studies rely on summary measures of information content, thereby reducing the potential effects of individual information categories. Lastly, this project deals specifically with service categories. Previous web-based studies dealt with product companies or international companies that were headquartered in the same home country. Each of these contributions will next be discussed in more detail.

The development of the SET score might provide researchers with new opportunities to identify and understand communication differences in cross-national studies. Several authors have raised questions surrounding the use of the Hofstede culture framework to evaluate communications content. These questions have included concerns surrounding the stability of the country profiles, the non-representativeness of the sample, the correlation among at least two of the primary dimensions, and the fact that the Hofstede responder data was gathered nearly 40 years ago. This study demonstrates that through the SET score researchers can utilize updated, published data to explain differences in creative strategy and information content.

This study also attempts to measure information content categories at the most granular level within the Resnik and Stern typology. Only those content variables that were not appropriate for service offerings were excluded. This level of thoroughness might uncover interesting findings in subsequent studies. Limiting future studies to summary measures of informativeness might limit opportunities to uncover subtle differences in service offerings in specific service sectors.

It has been recognized that the growth and impact of services on the world's economy has initiated a transition from a goods-centered to a service-centered delivery of marketing strategy. Vargo & Lusch (2004) as well as others maintain that the list of potential business resources that are impacted by this philosophical shift encompasses the breadth of the firm's strategic inputs. These inputs are presented in this document in Table 4. It is interesting, however, that potential shifts in promotion and communications has yet to be addressed by these authors. This study has evaluated communication patterns in service categories and has found support for significant findings. Although the findings with respect to the over-arching service-centered strategies that are emerging may be small, they may prove worthwhile as future research continues to probe for optimization strategies in the international business sector.

Limitations

Although a great deal of effort was invested to support the generalizability of the results of this study, limitations to the applicability of the findings persist. First, this study was limited to five countries, primarily to allow the data collection process to be a manageable effort. Ideally, having country representation from other parts of the world might shed additional insights into the relationships among the key variables being explored. Similarly, the selection of service categories might be a key determinant to future efforts to replicate the findings of this study. Because of the void in empirical research to support the vast majority of the service typologies that have been offered, the process used to support service category selection must rely on somewhat anecdotal components to ensure that a broad spectrum of services are evaluated.

Service firms in all of the countries in this study use other mediums in addition to the internet to communicate information and value surrounding their offerings. The information emphasized in each medium, and the role that each medium is to play in the firm's overall promotion plan could vary across the countries studied. It is possible that web-based communications itself performs somewhat different functions in each of the countries studied, due primarily to the relative differences found in the five country sample surrounding technology achievement metrics. This possibility poses two key limitations to the study. First, it limits conclusions which might be drawn regarding national communication differences based on a study of one single medium. Secondly, it makes comparing the results of the study to previous research difficult because much of the previous research was conducted on communications delivered through the more static mediums.

The nature of corporate web site information makes it well suited for communicating to a broad spectrum of audiences. McMillan et al (2003) identified diverse objectives such as goodwill, image advertising, employee recruitment, as well as several others. It is reasonable to assume that these different objectives can be linked to different target audiences and therefore support different message strategies and content. Inherent characteristics surrounding the information used to pursue the different objectives of the message is a critical factor because the motivation of consumers to process different types of information can vary based on their needs while reviewing the content of the communication.

Finally, this study uses a cross-sectional data collection method, and therefore provides no basis for capturing the dynamic nature that is often associated with web-based communications. To determine whether or not communication content moves in incremental stages, the communication strategies and content of service firms must be evaluated over a number of periods.

Directions for Future Research

Now that baseline relationships between the SET score and creative strategies and information content have been established, more research is needed to identify more applicable constructs. Web features including multimedia usage and interactive availability should be incorporated into future studies. Blake et al (2007) identified 23 potential web features that can potentially impact viewer ratings. Only through the rigorous testing of all possible antecedents can a comprehensive predictive model be developed.

A broader spectrum of service providers needs to be included in future projects. Because the often cited typologies of service categories have not been empirically supported, researchers might consider selecting service categories on the basis of the contribution that specific service sectors make on the overall service trade of the countries used in their samples.

An obvious extension of this research is to include countries that were not evaluated in this study. Previous research has found significant differences in print and television advertising for European countries when compared to

Asian countries, for example. Few studies include South American countries in their sample, but it might be useful to include a few South American countries to those included in this study.

Extensions to this study could also address methodological improvements. This study makes a clear contribution to many past studies with regard to reliability estimation procedures. However, in retrospect, additional attention could have been given to scale construction during the pre-test to better understand the impact of the number of rating categories and the number of coders on reliability estimates. Specific information content items such as availability and special offers may not have needed a five point scale to capture the differences that was expected. These issues can only be better understood through additional testing and experimentation.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

COMPARISON OF HOFSTEDE INDICES TO 40 COUNTRY SAMPLE

Comparison of Hofstede Indices to 40 Country Sample

Country	SET Index (Factor Scores)	Power Distance Index (PDI)	Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)	Individualism (IDV)	Masculinity (MAS)	Long-Term Orientation Index (LTO)
Netherlands	1.41	38	53	80	14	44
Norway	1.27	31	50	69	8	n/a
Australia	1.26	36	51	90	61	31
Finland	1.18	33	59	63	26	n/a
Sweden	1.15	31	29	71	5	33
United States	1.01	40	46	91	62	29
Canada	0.94	39	48	80	52	23
United Kingdom	0.90	35	35	89	66	25
Japan	0.90	54	92	46	95	80
Singapore	0.88	74	8	20	48	48
Belgium	0.87	65	94	75	54	n/a
Ireland	0.81	28	35	70	68	n/a
Hong Kong	0.78	68	29	25	57	96
Germany	0.78	35	65	67	66	31
Austria	0.76	11	70	55	79	n/a
France	0.67	68	86	71	43	n/a
Spain	0.53	57	86	51	42	n/a
Italy	0.50	50	75	76	70	n/a
Israel	0.49	13	81	54	47	n/a
Portugal	0.32	63	104	27	31	n/a
Greece	0.07	60	112	35	57	n/a
Hungary	0.00	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Chile	-0.16	63	86	23	28	n/a
Argentina	-0.21	49	86	46	56	n/a
Poland	-0.21	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	32
Uruguay	-0.32	61	100	36	38	n/a
Mexico	-0.63	81	82	30	69	n/a
Malaysia	-0.69	104	36	26	50	n/a
Brazil	-0.70	69	76	38	49	65
Panama	-0.85	95	86	11	44	n/a
Colombia	-0.98	67	80	13	64	n/a
Philippines	-1.03	94	44	32	64	19
El Salvador	-1.11	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
China	-1.15	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
South Africa	-1.20	49	49	65	63	n/a
Paraguay	-1.31	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Egypt	-1.50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Indonesia	-1.52	78	48	14	46	n/a
India	-1.65	77	40	48	56	61
Kenya	-2.24	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

APPENDIX B

JUDGES INSTRUCTIONS

Evaluating Corporate Web-Site Communications
Suggestions and Comments for Judges

December, 2007 Judges Instructions Page 1

Introduction

- Thank you for taking the time to participate as a judge in this research.
- Judges were selected based on academic background and accomplishments in addition to having a keen awareness of advertising and business applications.
- During this session, you will be asked to evaluate electronic advertisements from several different service organizations that are located in your country of origin.
- In most cases, you will be viewing the home page of the service firm; however, in some cases you will be directed to a specific product page located within the firm's web site.

December, 2007 Judges Instructions Page 2

Getting Started

- After you finish reviewing these training materials, you will provide input regarding your reaction to web-based advertisements.
- The input sheet to record your responses will look like this:
- Before you begin to provide your responses to the questionnaire items, take a few minutes to look at the entire home page
- Evaluate the overall tone and structure of the web page. Look at the construction of the tabs on the web page and the pictures and/ or animation of the page.
- It is important for you to get an overall feeling about the web page before you provide responses to any of the individual informational items listed on the input sheet.
- Please do not navigate through the web site. The goal of this research is to capture your evaluation of **only** the information that is provided.

Providing Responses on the Data Input Sheet

- You will be asked to evaluate items in two different categories
- Part one of the questionnaire asks you to assess 3 different items associated with the overall theme and the direction of the advertisement.
- Part two asks you to provide input regarding 5 specific areas that may or may not be addressed in the advertisement.
- All of your responses will be entered in the data input sheet. You will first click on the web link located in the first column titled “LINK”. This will enable you to evaluate the advertisement.
- After you have familiarized yourself with the advertisement, you will comment on a series of items located in the subsequent columns of the data input sheet.
- In each of these columns, you will enter a response of 1,2,3,4,or 5.
- **In all cases**, a “1” will imply that you do not feel that the item is addressed or covered in the ad. An entry of “5” in the field will suggest that you feel the item is addressed very strongly in the advertisement.

Examples of Coding on the Data Input Sheet

- For example, the following number responses apply to a question probing your impression of the emphasis that is placed on price in a particular advertisement.
- Question: “Is Price/ Value addressed in the service product link?
- Inputting a 1 in the Price/ Value field would be appropriate if no attempt is made by the advertiser to disclose or explain the price of the service. The following link provides an example of an advertisement that might fall into this category:

  http://www.malaysiaairlines.com/default.aspx
- Inputting a 2 in the Price/ Value field suggests that the advertiser used very little effort to disclose pricing or value information regarding the service. The following link provides an example of an advertisement that might fall into this category:

  http://www.airindia.in/

Examples of Coding on the Data Input Sheet (cont.)

- Inputting a 3 in the Price/ Value field suggests that the advertiser clearly intends to include price/ value information, but the information is not a major element in the advertisement. The following link provides an example of an advertisement that might fall into this category:

  http://www.airnorth.com.au/
- Inputting a 4 suggests that the advertiser considers price to be a major ingredient in the customer’s decision of what company to select for their service needsThe following link provides an example of an advertisement that might fall into this category:

  http://www.flyasianxpress.com/site/en/fax/home.jsp
- Inputting a 5 suggests that the advertiser considers price to be the prime differentiator between the advertiser and their competitors The following link provides an example of an advertisement that might fall into this category:

  http://www.goair.in/

Review of the Input Form

- The input form consists of two parts
- Part 1 consists of 3 inputs. They are entered in the first three columns following the link column in the excel spreadsheet.
- These inputs relate to the overall theme generated by the advertisement.
- The three categories of advertising themes being evaluated in this study are:

Column Title in Excel Spreadsheet	Advertising Theme
RR	Rational Reasoning
ER	Emotional Reasoning
SU	Symbolic Usage

Definition of Terms for Part 1 of the Input Sheet

Rational Reasoning (RR)

- When RR is used, the features and benefits of the service are explained in a logical, straight-forward, and persuasive manner.
- Explicit and direct communication styles are often used. Sales messages are often supported with facts and data.
- When Rational Reasoning is used in advertising, practical usefulness of the service is stressed over mood and atmosphere.
- Self sufficiency, a do-it-yourself, or a do your own thing sales theme may be applied.
- With Rational Reasoning advertising themes, the service can be described as rare, unique, or unusual.
- **An example of an advertisement that contains some level of rational reasoning can be found at http://www.easyjet.com/en/book/index.asp**

Emotional Reasoning (ER)

- In contrast to rational reasoning (RR), emotional reasoning (ER) is grounded in the experiential side of the consumer.
- These ads seek to make the consumer feel good about the service by creating a likeable and friendly brand.
- Emotional Reasoning seeks to create positive impressions on the intangible aspects of the service.
- In ads using Emotional Reasoning strategies, consumers of the service can be shown to be having a happy moment, being surprised or shocked from an unordinary experience, or be shown in a pleasant and soothing experience.
- **An example of an advertisement containing some level of Emotional Reasoning can be found at http://www.malaysiaairlines.com/default.aspx**

Symbolic Usage (SU)

- Symbolic Usage relates to the degree to which symbols, icons, and non-verbal visual elements are used in connection with the advertisement.
- The use of symbolic tools is generally applied by advertisers to create an imaginative or artful representation of the feelings that are generated through use of the service.
- Symbols can include brand logos, icons, cartoon characters, and other visual elements to assist the advertiser in promoting the product.
- In addition, storytelling, the use of humor, and the use of metaphors is often considered to be an important use of symbolism in advertising.
- **One advertisement that would contain some level of Symbolic Usage can be found at http://www.flyairdeccan.net/AirDeccan.htm**

THIS CONCLUDES THE REVIEW OF THE 3 INPUT ITEMS FOUND IN PART 1 OF THE DATA INPUT FORM

Part 2 of the Data Input Form

- Part 2 consists of 5 inputs. They are entered in the last 5 columns of the excel spreadsheet.
- These inputs relate to five specific areas that may or may not be addressed in the advertisement. The five items being evaluated in Part 2 are:

Column Title in Excel Spreadsheet	Item to be Evaluated in the Advertisement
P/V	Price/ Value
QY	Quality
PERF	Performance
AVAIL	Availability
SO	Special Offers

- Just like Part 1 of the input form
  - A "1" will imply that you do not feel that the item is addressed or covered in the advertisement. An entry of "5" in the field will suggest that you feel the item is addressed very strongly in the advertisement.

Definition of Terms for Part 2 of the Data Input Form

Price/ Value (PV)

- Information surrounding the cost of the service. See the example on page 1 for insights into the different levels of emphasis on Price/ Value information

- **An example of an advertisement containing a higher degree of Price/ Value type of information can be found at:**

  http://www.airasia.com/site/en/home.jsp

Definition of Terms for Part 2 of the Data Input Form (cont.)

Performance (PERF)

- Performance refers to how well the service accomplishes its intended objectives.
- Performance information explains or contrasts what the service does in comparison to other purchases in the same or related service categories.
- **An example of an ad describing some level of performance relative to what and where the advertiser provides service is found at:**

  http://www.rex.com.au/

Definition of Terms for Part 2 of the Data Input Form (cont.)

Availability (AVAIL)

- Availability refers to information in the advertisement regarding where and how the service can be purchased.
- Information about dealers, brokers, or other distribution networks are often used to support the degree of availability that is provided for the service
- **One advertisement containing some level of availability information through the use of contact and location information can be found at:**

  http://tata.com/tata_aig_life/index.htm

Definition of Terms for Part 2 of the Data Input Form (cont.)

Special Offers (SO)

- Special Offers refers to limited time, non –price related incentives that are available with the purchase of a service.
- Information about free or lower-priced merchandise that is provided when the service is purchased is an example of a special offer tactic
- **An example of an advertisement containing a special offer element can be found in the link below. Notice that the advertiser offers a special offer on the primary service as well as discounts on digital cameras:**

  http://www.maxis.com.my/main.asp

APPENDIX C

MEAN VALUES OF CODER RATINGS FOR THE FIVE COUNTRY SAMPLE

Report

COINOrder		RR	ER	SU	PV	QY	PF	AV	SO	ELEV
India	Mean	3.30	3.611	3.46	3.479	3.51	3.36	2.65	2.30	3.0583
	N	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72
	Std. Deviation	.585	.5705	.574	.4925	.547	.640	.431	.906	.30292
Malaysia	Mean	2.59	3.202	2.94	2.817	2.65	2.71	2.20	1.88	2.4538
	N	52	52	52	52	52	52	52	52	52
	Std. Deviation	.911	.6437	.639	.6025	.590	.613	.876	.948	.45524
UK	Mean	3.74	1.421	2.59	2.070	1.91	1.96	2.50	1.39	1.9673
	N	107	107	107	107	107	107	107	107	107
	Std. Deviation	.596	.6187	.789	1.1604	.792	.829	1.146	.705	.47180
USA	Mean	3.90	2.457	2.55	2.039	1.63	1.76	2.93	1.88	2.0480
	N	152	152	152	152	152	152	152	152	152
	Std. Deviation	.675	.8298	.826	1.1559	.793	.793	.845	1.007	.42907
Aus	Mean	3.51	2.993	2.78	2.086	2.76	2.89	3.03	2.25	2.6013
	N	76	76	76	76	76	76	76	76	76
	Std. Deviation	.983	1.0755	1.466	1.1587	1.142	1.224	1.233	1.555	1.06100
Total	Mean	3.56	2.570	2.79	2.368	2.29	2.35	2.72	1.89	2.3253
	N	459	459	459	459	459	459	459	459	459
	Std. Deviation	.838	1.0770	.958	1.1562	1.054	1.045	.987	1.086	.69879