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## Cultural values in American and Spanish TV advertising at the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic

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### Abstract

**This article discusses the similarities and differences found in some Spanish and American television advertisements broadcast at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. To carry out this study, forty advertisements shown on television in the two countries during the months of March and April 2020 were analysed. Qualitative and quantitative analysis considered the cultural dimensions of identity, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity. In addition, the Chi-square formula was also applied in order to confirm that the differences found in both groups of adverts were not significantly important. The results show that a great deal of similar messages and even expressions was conveyed to both audiences in both countries, although some differences were also found. Besides, the main goal of these ads in both groups was to comfort the audience, and not to clearly promote or advertise the product. Thus, this study demonstrates once again that despite the differences that these two cultural groups display, and which are usually portrayed in intercultural literature, the context highly influences the values typically assigned to a linguistic community. That is reflected in the discourse of speakers, and it is the reason why we can find values opposite to those expected in a cultural group.**

### Keywords

**TV advertisements, COVID-19, individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity.**

### 1. Studying cultural dimensions in American and Spanish TV advertisements

Cultural dimensions in advertising have been extensively studied in intercultural communication. There are many voices who argue that for an ad to be effective it must appeal to the values and preferences of the target audience, and for that reason, a particular ad can work very well in one country and prove a failure or not be understood in another one (Cheong *et al.*, 2010; De Mooij & Hofstede, 2015; Kitirattakarn, Araujo & Neijens, 2019; Okazaki & Mueller, 2007; Zandpour *et al.*, 1994; Zhang & Gelb, 2013). Examples of comparative analyses between the two countries in this study can be found in Taylor and Wolburg's study (1998), who analysed individualism in Spanish, American and French TV advertisements. Praet (2009) also analysed the cultural dimensions of identity, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance in these two countries and several more when advertising with celebrities. Ramos and Rubio's work (2011) analysed advertisements for alcoholic beverages in different countries, including the United States and Spain, demonstrating that the former highlights individualist and masculine values, such as competitiveness, whereas Spanish adverts use

more tribal-collectivist and female values, such as the search for group cohesion. Generally speaking, we could say that the American culture has been contrasted with the Spanish culture in two main dimensions, which are the same ones that have been analysed in this study. These dimensions are identity and masculinity. This study has also taken into account uncertainty avoidance, of which fewer comparative studies are available, thus giving a special interest to the paper.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that advertisements aimed at American audiences have been analysed on numerous occasions in contrast to those targeting Asian cultures, as these two groups have strong cultural differences (Cheong *et al.*, 2010; Cho *et al.*, 2013; Lin, 2013; Zhang & Gelb, 2013). The author of this paper chose not to include Asian ads in this study because of the linguistic barrier that implies the lack of knowledge of any Asian languages, which would have made us rely on translations, and may have led to misunderstandings of the messages. The United States has also been compared with Hispanic cultures (Betti, 2015; Roberts & Hart, 2015) since we can usually find important differences in advertising too, in the sense that many Hispanic cultural groups are often collectivist or tribal-collectivist cultures.

Despite the significant differences that have been seen in these cultural groups, it should be noted that, as mentioned above, the context will always determine the cultural options that participants activate, to the extent that the options chosen may be opposite to those commonly assigned (Correa *et al.*, 2002; Triandis *et al.*, 1988; Sifianou & Garcés-Conejos, 2018). For instance, in an individualist cultural group, there may be contexts in which the group shows collectivist values, if the situation so requires.

## 2. Cultural dimensions found in this study

Three cultural dimensions have been analysed in this study. The analysis has taken as a reference Hofstede's scale (Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010), for, as we know, it is the most widely used in intercultural studies. As Bennett argues (2004), Hofstede's calculations and similar authors' like Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars are useful tools to analyse cultural differences at the national level, i.e., among countries. And Kim (2007) emphasise the value of Hofstede's empirical work as he used a sample of thousands of individuals from more than seventy countries. Also, Bhaskaran and Sukumaran (2007) state the importance of the national culture values upon workers, that may surpass that of the organizational culture of a company. However, we must be cautious and run away from stereotypes, which are only beliefs and expectations set up and shared by people about the characteristics that women and men should have in a certain society (Mensa & Bittner, 2020). These stereotypes sometimes include false assumptions about a national culture built over the years. We must understand that the values used in this study are measurements at a national level and that everyone is unique in his or her nature, with genuine behaviours, although people inevitably receive the influence of the cultural group in which they have been cultured, and that is the reason why their behaviour will tend to go in line with the values of their national culture (Kitirattarkarn, Araujo & Neijens, 2019).

Values assigned by Hofstede to the two groups studied would be those shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Differences between the United States and Spain found by Hofstede in the three cultural dimensions analysed in this paper.

	<b>United States</b>	<b>Spain</b>
Individualism	91	51
Uncertainty avoidance	46	86
Masculinity	62	42

Source: Own elaboration based on Hofstede, 1991.

First, we find the cultural dimension of identity (Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010) with its two poles being individualism and collectivism. This dimension describes the relationship individuals establish with the rest of society, with the group or community, being these bonds very strong, as in collectivist cultures, or very weak, as in individualist ones. In our case study, since we analysed the Spanish cultural group, located on the scale with 51 points, we have included in this analysis the term tribal-collectivist, since this group is halfway between the two poles (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1998, 2000; Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Leaptrott, 1996). The term tribal was conceived by Leaptrott (1996) to refer to these intermediate cultural groups. For these cultures, the individual has a primary role (Kooyers, 2015) but small groups with which he or she establishes close relationships are also important; we are referring to the nuclear family, also the extended family, that is, other close relatives, groups of friends, groups that are established in the family sphere, etc. (Han & Shavitt, 1994). Nowadays, the term tribal sometimes presents difficulties of acceptance, so in this article we use the term tribal-collectivist, with the purpose of distinguishing these groups from collectivist ones, where the individual can be absorbed by the group to a greater extent. By contrast, individualist cultural groups such as the American one, located on Hofstede's scale with 91 points (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1998, 2000; Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Lewis, 2010) exhibit the importance of the individual above the group as one of their main differentiating traits. In addition to the individual, his or her nuclear family is equally important, and this can be clearly seen in the values projected by this cultural group. Independence of the individual and his or her nuclear family from the rest of the group and institutions is another differentiating feature, so it is an ideal to be able to make decisions individually and independently and to express them openly and directly.

Secondly, a significant number of references to the cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance have been found in the analysis (Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). This dimension measures the extent to which members of a cultural group accept the uncertainties and challenges that the future hides. According to Hofstede (1991, 2001), the United States has a medium-low score on the table, with 46 points. This implies that in this culture people can live comfortably with the idea that new and unstructured situations and challenges can happen at any time and this is not a problem for them. Competitiveness is also considered positive and necessary to improve any procedure or system and this also links with the idea of independence and freedom of action, one of the values of individualist cultures. In contrast, Spain is located at the top of the scale, with 86 points. In these cases, uncertainty and situations with an unknown outcome are less tolerated by their members and therefore attempts will be made to create contexts that convey security. For example, one manifestation of this is the large number of regulations and legal frameworks that are created for many situations, in order to structure ways of acting and leave nothing to chance. A different issue is whether or not people comply with these regulations, but in these cultures, it is common to find systems, structures, laws, etc. that provide safety frameworks.

Thirdly, references to the cultural dimension of masculinity (Hofstede, 1991, 2001, 1998; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010) have also been found in the analysis, albeit to a lesser extent. This dimension represents the deepest societal structure (Triandis & Suh, 2002) and it tries to distinguish, on the one hand, masculine cultural groups in which competition, individual struggle and achieving material achievements is highly valued by their members (Cienfuegos-Martínez *et al.*, 2016; Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Lucker, 2002). The United States ranks in the upper middle part of the scale, with 62 points, so it would be a cultural group prone to masculinity. On the other hand, this dimension describes feminine countries as cultural groups where harmony, search for consensus and attention to others, especially those in a situation of need, prevail over other values (Arrindell *et al.*, 1997; Gouveia *et al.*, 2011; Hofstede, 1991; Lucker, 2002). Spain is located in the lower middle part of the table, with 42 points, that

is to say, with a tendency to femininity. Hofstede chose the masculinity/femininity denomination because this was the only dimension in which differences appeared in the responses from men and women in the same country. For example, cultures that rated high in masculinity, such as the Japanese, with 95 points, showed significant differences between the roles adopted by men and those adopted by women. Specifically, men showed a preference for competition or pursuit of individual success, while women tended more towards the pursuit of harmony, cooperation and concern for others. Generally, however, all participants in that country accepted competition as a positive thing in society. This dimension has always been accompanied by controversy and disagreement, especially by countries that are characterised as masculine, as they do not wish to be marked as insensitive. For this reason, Hofstede recommends that in those places where this duality would not be well-received, we can opt for other denominations, such as “ego/social” or “assertive/nurturing,” following the original idea of the authors who inspired him, Inkeles and Levinson (1954). The author of this paper has preferred to continue with the terminology masculinity/femininity because it is used in most intercultural studies.

### 3. Methodology and corpus

This qualitative and quantitative study was carried out from July to November 2020 although the ads chosen had been broadcast on generalist channels in both countries during March and April 2020, at the beginning of confinement. Then, the ads were retrieved from YouTube for analysis purposes. The corpus of the analysis consists of forty advertisements –20 Spanish and 20 American– chosen at random, and divided into two groups, for each of the two countries to which the ads were addressed. As I mentioned before, these countries were chosen because they differ in some cultural dimensions, as for instance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, gender (Hofstede, 1991, 2001, 1998; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010) or achievement-ascription, individualism-communitarianism, etc. (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1998, 2000). We must keep in mind that the number of advertisements decreased during the start of the pandemic, due to the economic crisis looming over all businesses. In the case of Spain, there was a decrease of 45% in revenue from TV advertising (Los ingresos publicitarios en televisión caen, 2020). In the United States, there was a fall too, though slighter, with a dip of 28% (National TV Advertising Fell, 2020).

An attempt was made to search for companies based in the countries of study, but multinationals were also included, due to the global nature of many of the leading companies. In any case, if there was no correspondence between the nationality of the business and the audience to which the advert was addressed, it was checked that the advertisement was really aimed at that cultural group and it was not a mere translation of another advertisement. For example, it was checked that the advert for Vodafone®, a British company, was targeted at the Spanish audience. This was done by checking that the company’s advert in the UK was a different one. The companies’ adverts included in the analysis were the ones shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Companies’ adverts included in the analysis in alphabetical order.

<b>American companies</b>	<b>Spanish companies</b>
Alaska Federal Credit Union	Activia
Bayway Lincoln	Bankia
Budweiser	Bankinter
Cadillac	Caixabank
Con Edison	Campofrío
CVS Pharmacy	Carrefour
Doordash	Danacol
Fedex	Mahou

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First Energy	Maxxium España
Ford	Mercadona
Grubhub	Mutua Madrileña
Little Caesars Pizza	Renfe
Mastercard	San Miguel
Nationwide Insurance	Santalucía
Publix	Santander
Realtor	SEAT
Runnings	Telepizza España
Spectrum	Unión Adarve
U-Haul	Vodafone
Verizon	Yoigo

Source: Own elaboration.

It goes without saying that in TV advertising, images play a crucial part in transmitting the message, as they enhance and support the ideas conveyed, being considered one of the best weapons to convince, seduce or simply drag the audience's attention (Rodríguez García, 2008). However, the aim of this study was to analyse just the discourse and oral messages conveyed by the adverts, but not by the images. The reason is that the author wanted to focus just on the linguistic component of the advert but not on other cognitive elements which the advert can appeal to.

Firstly, all the advertisements were watched two or three times, to identify the words or expressions more frequently used in all the adverts. Then, a table with three columns was prepared to write down in the first column the words or expressions that were mostly repeated. The other two columns were for the two cultural groups in this study –advertisements aimed at American and Spanish audiences. The adverts were again viewed three or four more times, depending on the duration and density of the ad content, to note down in columns two and three of the table the names of the brands whose ads used the repeated expressions in column one. For example, when viewing the Spanish advertisement for San Miguel® beer, the following expressions were identified: Family, Help / care; People / everybody; Times like this / difficult times; Together / connected and We'll / this will pass / go by. Thus, the brand was written in the corresponding boxes of repeated expressions in column one. In this paper, the expressions are shown in English, but they are the same as those found in the Spanish adverts, translated literally. For instance, Together / connected were found in the Spanish adverts as *Juntos / conectados* or the expressions Care / help were *Cuidar / ayudar*.

This deductive analysis was repeated several times with all the advertisements, and it gave different figures in each of the expressions for each of the cultural groups under study. For example, the expression Together / connected was repeated in eleven out of twenty American advertisements and in sixteen out of twenty Spanish ones. Then, a simple rule of three was applied to get the percentages for each expression in each country. In the example mentioned above, the expression Together / connected appeared in 55% of the American ads and in 80% of the Spanish ones. The percentages for all of the expressions in each country are what we can finally read in this paper. This table was then divided into three tables, grouping together the repeated expressions according to the cultural dimension to which they referred.

Finally, the Chi-square formula was applied to the figures, to find out if the differences in the two groups of data were statistically significant, i.e., if the differences found on the two cultural groups were important.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Expressions found in both cultural groups

The first thing to highlight is the fact that in all the analysed ads, the first and foremost intention is to inspire the audience and to convey them hope and good wishes. Generally speaking, ads usually try to promote the product, highlighting its qualities. However, in these ads, the qualities that identify the product may become something secondary, because the main idea to convey the audience is values, expectations, etc. Obviously, ads always have the function of promoting a service or product, and these ads also fulfil that function, as the brand is visible to the consumer. But promotion of the product takes an altruistic focus, in other words, what matters is not the product itself, but to comfort the audience in these difficult times. Having said that, we can anticipate that since the pandemic situation is global and common to all countries, the general needs of the population become basically the same, namely, not feeling alone because of the fact of being isolated, having reasonable assurance that, given a moment of vital need, we will have someone to turn to, to know that there are people who are working and striving to get humankind out of this situation, the perception that we live a dangerous moment in the history of humankind, etc. The fact that some countries adopted tougher movement restriction measures than others does not affect this analysis since, as we will see, the expressions are very similar in all the advertisements, and this is because the population was generally surprised at the beginning of the pandemic because of the number of deaths the disease caused every day. Unfortunately, deaths continue at a terrible rate nowadays, but sadly enough, it seems that this fact is no longer so surprising, or maybe, we could say that for some people death has settled in the daily routine and less are nowadays as horrified as then by the fact that hundreds and thousands of people die worldwide every day. One might ask the question whether it is a matter of resilience and adaptation to the plight (Santos, 2013), or simply of becoming insensitive towards the tragedy of others. After this reflection, let us now move on to analysing the differences and similarities found.

First, let us analyse the differences concerning the cultural dimension of identity. To this end, we must take a closer look at Table 3 below regarding the differences in this dimension. The three first rows of the table –Together / connected, People / everybody and We’ll feel / hug / see / touch / kiss... each other again– refer to tribal-collectivist values, and the last two rows –Family and Home– to individualist values, although as we know, they are also part of the main tribal-collectivist traits.

**Table 3:** Similarities and differences found between American and Spanish advertisements concerning the cultural dimension of identity.

	<b>American TV adverts</b>	<b>Spanish TV adverts</b>
Together / connected	55%	80%
People / everybody	15%	40%
We’ll feel / hug / see / touch / kiss... each other again	0%	35%
Family	40%	20%
Home	45%	30%

Source: Own elaboration.

As expected, the group of Spanish adverts shows higher percentages with references to tribal-collectivist values. Specifically, the words Together / connected appeared in 80% of Spanish ads and in 55% of Americans. These expressions relate to the need to feel valued by the group, and not to feel isolated, but supported by others. As mentioned above, this trait is typical of tribal-collectivist cultures such as the Spanish one (Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede

& Minkov, 2010; Leaptrott, 1996). The percentage is also important in the American group of adverts, and this could be explained by the need to know that if the feared time comes, and we get sick, we are not completely isolated, but we will be able to request assistance. In this sense, this expression has a lot to do with feminine cultural values too, since it implies care and concern for others. Next, we can observe that the words People / everybody appeared in 40% of Spanish ads and only in 15% of Americans. Again, due to its strong individualist character, references to society in general, to people, etc. are not essential for the American audience, since one of their main cultural values is highlighting the individual, not the group (Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). However, for the Spanish tribal-collectivist group, feeling the close presence of people is relevant. Finally, the difference in percentages on the last row of this group of expressions is also significant –We'll feel / hug / see / touch / kiss... each other again. As we can observe, these expressions do not appear on any occasion in the group of American adverts, while they appear in 35% of the Spanish adverts. Undoubtedly, for tribal-collectivist groups, and in particular for the Spanish cultural group, physical contact and expressions of affection are essential, contrary to what happens in individualist cultural groups, such as the American one. This trait is typical of many Mediterranean and Hispanic cultures (Hall, 1963, 1989). The fact that, in the current situation, people cannot have that physical contact is something difficult to cope with for the Spanish cultural group, so these adverts try to send a positive message to the audience, reassuring them that everything will return to normal in the near future and that they will be able to have the same lifestyle as before.

Finally, the last two rows in the table draw our attention. The words Family and Home appear in 40% and 45% of the American adverts respectively, and they only appear in 20% and 30% of the Spanish adverts, respectively. As mentioned above, the nuclear family is one of the fundamental pillars of individualist societies. The individual and his or her closest family environment are the centre of individualist values. This is the reason why instead of focusing the message on the group –Together / connected; People / everybody– American advertisements highlight to a higher extent the individualist value of the importance of the nuclear family and its most intimate refuge, i.e., their Home. We must remember that, for tribal-collectivist societies such as the Spanish, the nuclear family is very important, but other small groups like the extended family, work groups, friend groups, etc. also play an essential role (Han & Shavitt, 1994; Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Leaptrott, 1996) and as we have argued, that is what the first three rows of the table indicate.

Secondly, let us move on to analyse in Table 4 the expressions that refer to the cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance.

**Table 4:** Similarities and differences found between American and Spanish advertisements concerning the cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance.

	American TV adverts	Spanish TV adverts
This will pass / go by / be overcome	15%	55%
Times like this / difficult times / challenging times	60%	25%

Source: Own elaboration.

In this table, the first row relates to a high level of uncertainty avoidance, since with the expressions This will pass / go by / be overcome the advertiser tries to convey peace of mind and security, stating that this difficult situation will soon disappear. In contrast, the second row of the table relates to a low level of uncertainty avoidance, since with the expressions Times like this / difficult times / challenging times the advertiser wants to communicate that this situation is a challenge to be overcome and that like so many others in life we will have to

face it. We must remember that the cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance indicates how a cultural group faces the uncertainties and challenges that people come across throughout their lives (Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). The Spanish cultural group has a high rate of uncertainty avoidance with 86 points on Hofstede's scale, and that is the reason why we find that the expressions This will pass / go by / be overcome can be found in as much as 55% of the advertisements, since the audience is comforted by knowing that this situation is not indefinite in time, but it has an early end. On the other hand, this audience wants to avoid expressions such as Times like this / difficult times / challenging times / trouble times, as they arise in the subconscious an uncertain challenge with which the Spanish audience is not at ease. For this reason, these expressions appeared in only 25% of the Spanish ads. In comparison, the American cultural group has a lower index on this cultural dimension, with 46 points on the scale. In these cultural groups, new challenges and events are welcome and people usually have no problem in accepting them. This could be the reason why 60% of these adverts repeat the expressions Times like this / difficult times / challenging times, whereas the other expressions that refer to a need for this situation to go by quickly were only found in 15% of the adverts.

Thirdly, let us comment on Table 5, which refers to expressions referring to the cultural dimension of masculinity.

**Table 5:** Similarities and differences found between American and Spanish advertisements concerning the cultural dimension of masculinity.

	American TV adverts	Spanish TV adverts
Care / help	40%	45%
Here for you	20%	10%

Source: Own elaboration.

In this table, the two items refer to feminine values, as they speak of concern and attention to others, and as we mentioned above, this can be very important in this pandemic situation. The first thing that draws our attention is precisely that the results are quite similar in both groups. As already noted, the cultural dimension of masculinity differentiates between cultures that prevail competition, achievements, competitiveness, etc., in comparison with feminine cultures in which attention to others, pursuit of harmony, etc. stand out above the other values (Gouveia *et al.*, 2011; Hofstede, 1991; Lucker, 2002). As we can observe in Table 5, the expressions that refer to feminine values most repeated in ads are Care / help and Here for you. As we can see, these two groups of expressions are identified with feminine values since they refer to the need and desire to take care of others and also to feel supported and protected (Arrindell *et al.*, 1997; Hofstede, 1991; Lucker, 2002). They appeared in American adverts on 40% and 20% of the occasions, whereas they appeared in 45% and 10% of the Spanish adverts, respectively. They are very similar results in both cases, and this is interesting because the values of these two cultural groups are different (Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). In other words, the American cultural group is often given a higher masculinity rate than the Spanish one, with 62 points versus 42 respectively, so this fact should have been reflected in the results. However, in this pandemic context, advertisements aimed at the American audience prefer to highlight cultural feminine values, such as attention to others, over masculine values, such as competitiveness and the acquisition of material achievements. It is a further demonstration that depending on the context, we can find cultural values opposite to those expected (Cienfuegos *et al.*, 2016; Correa *et al.*, 2002; Estrada-Villalta & Terpstra-Schwab, 2014; Sifianou & Garcés-Conejos, 2018; Triandis *et al.*, 1988). In other words, context is an essential element when analysing the speakers' discourse (Hall, 1976; Schiffrin, 1987, 1991).



#### 4.2. Chi-square test on the results obtained in the analysis

After completing the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data, the Chi-square test was applied to statistically analyse the data. This type of analysis is intended to check whether the results of the tables are statistically significant, i.e., if the differences in the cultural groups are important.

The first step was to create a contingency table containing figures indicating the number of times that the expressions related to the three cultural dimensions under study had appeared in the analysis. The variables were, on the one hand, the two cultural groups under study, with two modalities: American and Spanish, and on the other hand, the expressions found in the analysis. Thus, the table showed the times that these expressions had been used in the adverts.

Then, we defined a null hypothesis, hereinafter  $H_0$ , and an alternative hypothesis,  $H_1$ . These hypotheses relate to the existence or not of an association between different variables, which in our case are, on the one hand, the expressions repeated in the adverts and on the other hand, the two cultural groups. Thus, the null hypothesis would be as follows:

$H_0$ . There are no significant differences in the frequencies obtained in the group of American adverts and the ones obtained in the group of Spanish adverts.

The alternative hypothesis would read:

$H_1$ . There are significant differences in the frequencies obtained in the group of American adverts and the ones obtained in the group of Spanish adverts.

Next, the Chi-square formula  $\chi^2 = \sum (O - E)^2 / E$  was applied to the data in the contingency tables with a 0.05 degree of statistical significance, following Pearson's table (Velez *et al.*, 2004). This means that we can have a confidence level of 95%. The figure obtained after applying the formula –3.81– with its corresponding degrees of freedom –5 in this case– is clearly lower than the figure provided by Pearson's table –11.07. This would mean that the null hypothesis must be accepted for the results, so we admit that there are no significant differences in the frequencies obtained in the group of American adverts and the ones obtained in the group of Spanish adverts. In other words, the differences observed are not statistically significant. Therefore, how should we interpret this result? It could be inferred what we have been arguing in this study, that is to say, that although these two cultural groups normally exhibit differences concerning cultural values in TV advertising, in this context that affects humankind worldwide, the similarities that arise are greater and, therefore, differences in the cultural values may not be so important. In this context, the similarities arisen in the cultural dimensions of identity and masculinity carry greater weight than the differences arising in the dimension of uncertainty avoidance, and finally, the balance tilts towards equality in cultural values for these cultural groups.

#### 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have learned that, in the early moments of the pandemic, Spanish advertisements highlighted to a greater extent than American ones tribal-collectivist values that have to do with feeling connected in some way with the collective and the group (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000; Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Leaptrott, 1996). By contrast, American adverts changed this need for social contact by a greater concern for the nuclear family, as well as for the most immediate refuge of the individual, namely his or her home, both typical individualist values. We cannot forget that the role of the family is also important for the Spanish tribal-collectivist group, because it is an individualist trait that tribal-collectivist groups usually adopt (Leaptrott, 1996), and it is especially important in this difficult situation. This fact has also been reflected in the analysis. Similarly, the American group has found the need to feel somehow *Together / connected*, and not totally independent of the collective, and this is forced by the difficult health context we

are going through. Thus, as we can see, some of the cultural values of this dimension have been shared by both groups.

In the case of the cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010), the two groups have shown their usual differences. On the one hand, Spanish ads try to convey a message of tranquillity and security, typical of cultures with a high level of uncertainty avoidance. These ads send messages transmitting peace of mind and stating that the situation is going to improve, and that everything will return to normal. On the contrary, the American group presents the situation as another challenge that we must face in life. In other words, the situation is difficult and dangerous, but the adverts created for the American cultural group do not consider an imperative to convey tranquillity and security to the audience, something that is clearly seen in the other group.

As for the cultural dimension of masculinity, the importance of the context is clearly shown here, since both groups have achieved almost identical results. This should not have been the case, as the American cultural group has cultural values closer to masculinity, such as competition, the pursuit of individual achievements, etc. (Cienfuegos-Martínez *et al.*, 2016; Hofstede, 1991, 2001; Lucker, 2002). However, in this context of health emergency, feminine values of care and support for others (Arrindell *et al.*, 1997; Gouveia *et al.*, 2011; Hofstede, 1991; Lucker, 2002) are further promoted in both groups, though they are usually more typical of the discourse in Spanish advertisements. Thus, in this case, the two groups of advertisements have shared the same messages of cultural femininity.

Finally, we could say that two conclusions could be derived from this study. The main conclusion is that context is an essential element in the analysis of speakers' discourse (Hall, 1976; Schiffrin, 1987, 1991). In this particular case, it has been observed that although intercultural literature usually shows differences between the American and the Spanish cultural groups (Praet, 2009; Ramos & Rubio, 2011; Taylor & Wolburg, 1998), in a pandemic context like this, discourses and messages closely resemble each other, and the values to be conveyed are also very similar. Specifically, the cultural values of masculinity-femininity and to some extent the individualism-tribal-collectivism traits found in the American group did not meet the expectations and gave atypical results for this group. In addition, the fact that advertisements do not focus on advertising the product but on comforting the audience is also common in the two groups of adverts. Definitely, the most striking detail is the fact that the same expressions and words are used repeatedly in adverts created for these two different cultural groups. Thus, the second conclusion that could be drawn would be of an anthropological nature, as it could be said that situations of global misfortune can bring the peoples of the world closer together, because human beings become vulnerable. In those situations, no matter how different their cultural values are, many of their needs resemble one another and coincide at a particular moment in history.

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