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Culture and Metaphors in Advertising: France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United States

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Culture and language are intertwined. Metaphors, based on culture, are ubiquitous in thinking and communication. As social artifacts reflecting culture, advertising messages provide an opportunity to compare metaphors in different nations. Goals of this article are to understand how and why advertisers use metaphors and how they differ across countries, as well as how cultural characteristics are used to create compelling ad messages. Using a content analysis of 87 French, German, Italian, Dutch, and American magazine advertisements, this study examines metaphor usage and cultural attributes from four culture-bound product groups: food and beverage, automobiles, insurance/finance, and personal care.

Our findings offer examples for how language and symbols reflect culture. This study shows that advertisers exploit metaphors in visuals, headlines, and texts to universally capture the attention of the public in all five countries. However, within individual nations, advertisers use metaphors and cultural attributes quite differently and strategically in order to capture attention, gain interest, and to deliver persuasive messages.

This research is important to the context of globalization and the debate over whether culture is relevant or important in advertising. The exploratory project provides theory in culture, language, metaphor, and advertising as well as offers a guide for further research on how culture impacts ads.

Language is powerful; linguistic utterances construct everyday life and play a key role in socialization. The process of language structures thinking and the ability to clarify meaning. Cultures are groups of people with shared understandings that are communicated and manifested through language

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and symbols. Within a culture, advertising is considered both a communication and a social process that is used to influence its audience.

Metaphors are pervasive in both written language and thinking that enable extensions of ideas beyond experiences and can be particularly persuasive tools. Metaphors are based in culture influencing thinking and communication. The study of metaphors can lead to cultural insights.

The goal of this article is to examine how and why advertisers use metaphors, how metaphors in advertising differ across countries, and just how advertisers use cultural characteristics to create compelling promotional messages. Moreover, this article addresses the following questions: What types of metaphors are used, and why? How are metaphors used in different nations? What cultural attributes are used along with metaphors?

A cross-culture examination can highlight cultural similarities and differences even among familiar western nations. Because advertisements that appear in more than one country offer the opportunity to view metaphors in their cultural contexts, this study uses metaphors in ads from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United States. These countries have the highest advertising expenditures in their respective areas (Banerjee, 2000, pp. 15–16) and each offers a rich corpus of commercial messages.

A theoretical framework is constructed by using anthropology, sociology, and advertising literature to understand metaphors and their role in commercial messages. The method of investigation is a qualitative content analysis of popular consumer magazine ads from each country in the study with focus on product ads that are said to be culture-bound, including food/beverages, automobiles, insurance/finance, and personal care. The exploratory study is a guide for future research.

Literature Review

Metaphors are ubiquitous in language and it is through them that we are able to understand our world and express ourselves—from describing attitudes to defining objects. Metaphors, along with metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, are considered a master trope, "a figure of speech that defines a relationship between terms" (Sapir, 1977; as cited in Nelson & Hitchon, 1999, p. 356). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) describe metaphors as understanding one concept in terms of another, thus abstractions, such as feelings and emotions, are usually structured through physical experiences. Metaphors consist of two primary parts: "tenor," or the main subject, and "vehicle," which transfer qualities of one idea to another (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1985, pp. 33–34; as cited in Kaplan, 1990, p. 41). For example, in the metaphor "dreams are chocolate," dreams are the tenor and chocolate the vehicle.

Metaphors create concepts beyond experience and require us to stretch our imaginations to build meanings. The notion has been of interest to scholars in linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, and psychology (Nelson & Hitchon, 1999). Aristotle described metaphor as "giving names to previously nameless things . . . our best means of getting hold of something fresh," and he wrote that "the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor" (Aristotle, trans. 1952, p. 662; as cited in Leary, 1995, p.

268). Although he used metaphors, including: "The harmony of colors is like the harmony of sounds" (Aristotle, translated 1952; as cited in Nelson & Hitchon, 1995, p. 347), most 18th and 19th century scholars viewed them as merely an "ornamental element of style" (Siltanen, 1981, pp. 67–68).

Contemporary theorists argue "the impossibility of doing without metaphors" (Berlin, 1981; as cited in Leary, 1995, p. 268). Berlin suggests: "Without parallels and analogies between one sphere and another of thought and action, whether conscious or not, the unity of our experience—or experience itself—would not be possible. All language and thought processes are, in this sense, necessarily 'metaphorical' " (p. 158; as cited in Leary, 1995, p. 268). Metaphors are pervasive in our expressions because they are systematic, the language we use to talk about metaphors are metaphorical concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Metaphors have a fundamental role in language and thinking as they provide a framework for organizing information about the world and for making sense of experiences (Kaplan, 1990). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that they are part of the human conceptual system to account for how concepts are (1) grounded, (2) structured, (3) related, and (4) defined (p. 106), thus enable categorization and schema development. Similarly, Peppers (1942) writes that root metaphors determine our worldview by providing meaningful categories for people to group together perceptions and experiences (Siltanen, 1981).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest four types of metaphors: (1) orientation, (2) ontological, (3) structural, and (4) conduit (pp. 147–151). Orientation metaphors use one notion structured in terms of another in spatial orientation, such as: "up is happy, down is sad" (p. 14), and are based on culture, not on random choice. Ontological metaphors refer to concepts in terms of objects, substances, or discrete entities, as in "I'm a little rusty" or "He broke down" (pp. 27–28). Structural metaphors introduce similarities between concepts and objects: "Ideas are food" (p. 147), as both can be eaten and digested, and "argument is war" (p. 68), as both can be fought.

The conduit metaphor has three parts, according to Reddy (1979: as cited in Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). It considers that ideas are objects, linguistic expressions are containers, and communication the articulation (Lakoff & Johnson). A container metaphor is a type of conduit metaphor and is the most frequently used, comprising 70% of expressions (Reddy 1979; as cited in Lakoff & Johnson, pp. 10–11). An example, "I put a lot of work into it" conveys work as an idea that can be bundled up and contained.

Metaphors have a key role in creative thinking that is particularly important in public and commercial communication. Here, Bowers and Osborn (1966), Fearing (1963), and Reinsch (1971) found that metaphors increase the persuasive power of speeches (as cited in Siltanen, 1981). These scholars contend that metaphors change people's attitudes more "because metaphors appeal to the senses, enliven the discourse, and make it easier to attend to the arguments of the message" (Bowers & Osborn, p. 147; as cited in Siltanen, p. 69). They write that the metaphor's "extraordinary evocative capacity . . . taps many levels of reality and because of its direct relations to perceptions . . . it has the unique power to move people" (Fearing, p. 47; as cited in Siltanen, p. 69). Kaplan (1990) argues that truly creative metaphors combine a large number of ideas that are considered disparate, while Fiske (1982) suggests

the most powerful metaphors are those in which differences between elements are emphasized and similarities downplayed.

There is some research on the persuasive ability of metaphors. A study by Siltanen (1981) replicates earlier research by Bowers and Osborn (1966) which attempts to find correlations between concluding metaphors in speeches and changes in attitudes. Specifically, metaphors using sex, death, and a combination were tested, and the findings can be grouped into three categories: (1) not all metaphors increase persuasiveness, (2) the association of metaphors to the audience makes a difference, and (3) the affinity of the concluding metaphor to the body of the speech also needs to be considered (Siltanen). Unsurprisingly, the study found that—in relation to other metaphors—sex metaphors induced greater attitude change, as sex can psychologically motivate audiences to actions. Siltanen also emphasizes that in order to have their desired effect, concepts within metaphors must be meaningful to recipients. Although the research analyzes metaphors in speeches, findings can be applied to advertising including headlines, visuals, and copy, as all are persuasive tools.

In advertising, Hitchon (1991) found that metaphors in headlines were more persuasive than in the more factual body copy across various products. Nelson and Hitchon (1995, 1999) studied synesthetic claims in advertising with mixed results. Synesthesia is a type of metaphor that describes one sense by using words that normally describe another, such as calling bright colors loud and dark colors cool. These cross-sensory metaphors were found more persuasive for products in which product-sensory transfers can only be imagined and not literally applied (Nelson & Hitchon, 1999). In a test, synesthetic language using sight and sound to advertise three products—a TV station, radio station, and a perfume—found that it was most persuasive for perfume, in which sight and sound had to be imagined and transferred to the product (Nelson & Hitchon, 1999).

Metaphors, which are embedded in language and the human cognitive system, can offer a systematic review of language and provide insights into culture, so any investigation of metaphors would be incomplete without understanding the relationship of language and culture.

Language and Culture

Culture is composed of communications, social interactions, and practices that enable people to support relations in a group. Foley (1997) describes culture as a system of knowledge largely based on language and says cognitive anthropologists suggest that “culture is a mental phenomenon” (p. 107). A classic definition by Goodenough (1964[1957]) says “society’s culture consists of whatever one has to know or believe to operate in a manner acceptable to its members” (p. 36; as cited in Foley, p. 107). De Mooij (2010) contends that even with globalization, differences in cultural values do not converge. Instead, values of national culture have remained stable over time and local values have become increasingly important. She cites evidence of global segments, such as youth and Internet user groups, to show how local desires and behaviors have emerged. In other words, group specific culture is still relevant. In an effort to study and compare cultures, anthropologists have developed models of cultural dimensions, or attributes that are found in variations throughout different groups.

The well-known study by Hofestede (1980) includes data from 72 countries; the database was later condensed to 40 countries which contained more than 50 responses per nation (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006), then expanded (Hofstede, 2001) with 10 more countries and three regions: Arab and East and West African nations (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson). Originally four dimensions of national culture were identified: (1) individualism/collectivism, (2) power distance, (3) uncertainty avoidance, and (4) masculinity/femininity. A fifth dimension was developed by Michael Harris Bond (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) and, later, Hofstede and Bond (1988) called it the Confucian dynamism, or long-term/short-term orientation (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson). The original definitions for each attribute are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Hofstede's Five Dimensions of National Culture.*

Culture Dimension	**Characteristics**
Masculinity/Femininity	Masculinity stands for a society in which social gender roles are clearly distinct: Men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success; women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. Femininity stands for a society in which social gender roles overlap: Both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. (p. 297)
Uncertainty Avoidance	This stands for the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations. (p. 161)
Individualism/Collectivism	Individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: Everyone is expected to look after him/herself and her/his immediate family only. Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. (p. 225)
Power Distance	This stands for the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. (p. 98)
Long-/Short-Term Orientation	Long-Term Orientation stands for the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards, in particular perseverance and thrift. Its opposite pole, Short-Term Orientation, stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present, in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of "face" and fulfilling social obligations. (p. 359)

Source: Hofstede, 2001

Gannon and Pillai (2010) use metaphors to describe countries building on practices, expressions, or other aspects of culture, including humor and leisure pursuits. They depict 29 national personalities based on metaphors, such as French wine, German symphony, Italian opera, and American football. Although the portrayals are purely descriptive, they offer a kind of cultural worldview similar to Peppers' (1942) root metaphor.

No matter the model of metaphor used, language is the key in creating and maintaining culture and its distinguishing patterns of behavior. In the commercial realm, culture-based language, communications, and actions guide advertising practices and consumer behavior.

Advertising

Advertising is widely believed to play a role in how people establish ideas, organize experiences, and understand their physical and social environments (Dyer, 1982). Advertisements do more than communicate about products and services; they also tell us what products mean to the way we live. Along with sales pitches are social and cultural texts that help us understand commercial messages as well as the products, services, and sponsors. Ideas, visuals, and copy tell us and reflect on what is important and valued in society (Dyer).

Advertising uses symbols, common practices, and cultural references to create thoughts, impressions, and concepts (Lester, 1997), expressing culture, mirroring how people behave, and providing ideas and images about society's values, fantasies, desires, and norms (Valdivia, 1997). Not only is culture read in advertisements, but advertisements also contribute to the ongoing construction of culture (Lester). In other words, advertisements reflect and shape culture simultaneously.

Because ads reflect the wide and varied dimensions of culture, scholars have used cultural models with language as a key to understanding consumer behavior and advertising effectiveness. For example, de Mooij (2010) uses Hofstede's (2001) study and a mapping technique to identify cultural differences in product use and buying motives by product category. The following paragraphs highlight some of these findings as they relate to consumer behavior and advertising for product groups and countries included in this study.

Product Categories

Different product types can be placed on a continuum between culture-free and culture-bound, with the latter most effectively promoted by employing local cultural codes to communicate messages. De Mooij (2011) identifies food, personal care, and insurance ads as the most culture-bound and references the *Reader's Digest* Trusted Brands study showing that car, shampoo, and beverage brands originating locally or close to home are favored over non-local brands. Another study by Schuiling and Kapferer (2004) of 12 different food types in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Italy indicates strong consumer preference for local food in terms of quality, trust, and value perceptions (de Mooij).

The current study concentrates on ads for food/beverages, automobiles/vehicles, personal care, and insurance/finance because these are leading categories in advertising spending. According to *Advertising Age*, of the top 10 global marketers, the majority of ad agencies promote personal care items, food/beverages, and automobiles (Johnson, 2010, p. 11). Insurance/finance organizations, such as General Electric, ING Group, Visa, Mastercard, and Citigroup, are included in the top 100 advertisers as identified by *Advertising Age* (Johnson). Because categories in this study are meant to offer a large but

focused repertoire in which to explore metaphors, these products were also selected because they are relevant to both men and women. Cultural differences and similarities for these four product groups specific to the cultures used in these studies are discussed below.

In the automobile/vehicle advertisement category, different cultures show different preferences. According to de Mooij (2010), masculinity/femininity and uncertainty avoidance dimensions are important in consumers' decisions to purchase vehicles. The cultures of Italy, the United States, and Germany are considered to be more masculine than those of France and the Netherlands. (Hofstede's scores and rankings for the five countries in the study by key cultural dimensions are provided in Table 2.) In cultures rated high in masculinity, people want to stand out from the crowd, while those in more feminine cultures value modesty. The five countries studied also differ in the uncertainty avoidance characteristic, with American consumers showing weaker uncertainty avoidance, encouraging the need to display success and status through big cars with powerful engines. Italian and German consumers have strong uncertainty avoidance tendencies and like driving fast, so they tend to prefer cars that are well designed and technically advanced. The French have the highest uncertainty avoidance, yet they demonstrate the feminine dimension and place emphasis on design and style in automobiles. For the Dutch, safety and value are an important attribute in cars because of their low uncertainty avoidance and highly feminine culture (de Mooij, 2010). These cultural attributes are demonstrated in ad texts as auto manufactures attempt to resonate with potential customers.

Table 2. Hofstede Country Rank/Scores for Nations in the Study by Key Culture Dimensions.

Culture Dimension	Ranking	Country	Hofstede Score
Masculinity/Femininity	1	Italy	70
	2	Germany	66
	3	United States	62
	4	France	43
	5	Netherlands	14
Uncertainty Avoidance	1	France	86
	2	Italy	75
	3	Germany	65
	4	Netherland	53
	5	United States	46
Individualism/Collectivism	1	United States	91
	2	Netherlands	80
	3	Italy	76
	4	France	71
	5	Germany	67
Power Distance	1	France	68
	2	Italy	50
	3	United States	40
	4	Netherlands	38
	5	Germany	35
Long-/Short-Term Orientation	1	Netherlands	44
	2	France	39
	3	Italy	34
	4	United States	31
	5	Germany	29

Source: Hofstede, 2001, p. 500.

In general, consumers in all the countries in the study use insurance abundantly—American consumers the most, Italian consumers the least—but for different reasons. Dimensions of individualism/collectivism and uncertainty avoidance are factors in the decision to buy insurance and financial products (de Mooij, 2011). Taking into account their high individualism and weak uncertainty avoidance scores, American and Dutch consumers tend to buy insurance based on rational, calculated decisions; they take their futures into their own hands. In contrast, French and German consumers have strong uncertainty avoidance and consider the government responsible for insurance matters, so they purchase insurance with emotional motivations (de Mooij, 2011). Insurance advertising in France and Germany is prone to show emotional benefits of the product. Although they are infrequent users of insurance, Italian consumers also have strong uncertainty avoidance and approach insurance emotionally;

moreover, as a relatively collective society, they are loyal to organizations and companies. American and Dutch consumers expect ads to include copy that encourages rational decision-making (de Mooij, 2000).

When considering consumption of personal care products—specifically deodorants, cosmetics, and hair care—Americans and the Dutch are heavier users, Germans intermediate users, and Italians and French lighter users; here three of Hofstede's cultural dimensions are relevant: individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance. People in the Netherlands and the United States, both with high individualism but low power distance and uncertainty avoidance scores, need to stand out and show success with product purchases. Germans, with the lowest score in power distance but higher scores in uncertainty avoidance, will look for products that are natural, that help promote youthfulness, and that offer claims supported with scientific information. As with Germans, Italian and French consumers are strong on uncertainty avoidance, but they score highest on power distance. The combination suggests that German, Italian, and French consumers look for uncontaminated and scientifically tested products, and in these cases, ads for personal care items would probably focus on purity or highlight scientific attributes (de Mooij, 2000).

The symbolic function of food is stronger in collectivist cultures where food carries cultural meaning (de Mooij, 2011). Purity is an important characteristic in nations with high uncertainty avoidance (de Mooij). Consumption of bottled water and juice correlates with high uncertainty avoidance, so high uncertainty avoidance cultures drink more of these products, and in masculine cultures in which gender roles are more traditional, food/beverages ads have a less feminine appeal.

This theoretical framework for culture, language, behavior, and advertising provides a platform for reviewing metaphors in advertising messages. The literature suggests that metaphors are based on culture, and the question to be addressed is how French, German, Italian, Dutch, and American ads use these metaphors.

Method

In order to get a sample of metaphors found in advertisements that are available to the general population, this study examines advertisements from general interest print magazines, which were selected because of their ability to capture a society in both editorial and advertising content. Specifically, general interest publications with social, economic, lifestyle, and political editorial content, such as the American *TIME* and *Newsweek,* were selected because these popular magazines typically yield high circulations of relatively wide audiences of men and women across various age and socioeconomic backgrounds. This study also sought French, German, Italian, and Dutch publications similar to *Time* and *Newsweek,* selecting at least two from each nation to gain a richer perspective. Those magazines needed to be written in the local language; to be published in the native country; to include advertisements, and to be available in the United States.

The first author looked for magazine recommendations from public libraries, bookstores, and national consulate offices. Along with *TIME* and *Newsweek*, French *Le Point* and *L'Express*, German *Der Spiegel* and *Stern*, Italian *L'espresso* and *Oggi*, and Dutch *Elsevier* and *Vrij Nederland (VN)* were selected

because they met the outlined parameters and were relatively matched to one another with a variety of culture, politics, and lifestyles content.

A coding scheme designed to capture the characteristics of each magazine and its ads included title, country of origin, number of pages, and number of ads in the four selected product categories—food/beverages, automobiles/vehicles, insurance/finance, and personal care. In preparing the coding scheme, the first author discovered the low volume of advertising content in French and Dutch publications and added more issues of *Le Point, L'Express, and Elsevier* so that the five nations could be represented fairly in terms of the number of ads.

Each identified ad was reviewed and its attributes recorded on a coding sheet that noted product type, brand name, headline, subhead, tag line, logo, and visual elements. Next, the headline, copy, tag line, and other texts were translated into English by the first author with help as needed from associates native to the country, including representatives from local consulate offices. A second author and coder with post-graduate degrees and multi-linguistic skills was recruited, trained for the project and assisted in translating ad copy.

The first author developed initial descriptions of each metaphor group for use while coding (Table 3) and, during training with the second coder, added details to make them clearer. Both coders reviewed the ads, translations, and visuals and identified metaphors in headlines, subheads, copy, tag lines, and visuals; as they identified metaphors, they categorized them into four groups: orientation, ontology, structure and conduit/container. The most pronounced copy and visual metaphors were identified and counted, and because ad messages can have multiple metaphors, the final count of metaphors is often greater than the number of ads. If a metaphor could not be found, it was noted on the coding sheet. The coders then recorded the metaphor types, along with a short explanation, on the coding sheet.

Table 3. Metaphor Descriptions Used in Coding.

Metaphor Type	**Description**
Orientation	Uses a notion structured in terms of another in spatial orientation: "up is happy, down is sad."
Ontology	Refers to concepts in terms of objects, substances, or discrete entities. The body is considered a machine in "I'm a little rusty" or "He broke down."
Structure	Introduces similarities between concepts and objects, such as "ideas are food," both can be eaten and digested, and "argument is war," both can be fought. In advertisements, spokespeople, celebrities, animals, and employees are often used to represent brands. They depict similarities between the two and are considered structural metaphors. For example, Roger Federer's precision in tennis is compared to the fine workings of a coffee machine that can produce only fine-tasting coffee.
Conduit/Container	Considers ideas as objects, linguistic expressions as containers, and communication as the articulation: "I put a lot of work into it," conveys work as an idea that can be bundled up and contained.

As the last step, authors reviewed the coding sheet information, using the categories of country and product type along with important cultural dimensions and characteristics that influence purchasing decisions, thus allowing for the gathering of analyses.

Findings

A total of 87 advertisements from four product categories in which culture is important in the consumer's purchase decision are reviewed with a focus on metaphors and how their use reflects culture. As the purpose of the investigation is to get a snapshot of culture, a limited number of magazines are reviewed, specifically two publications per country, although the study used three more issues of specific magazines from France and the Netherlands to boost the number of advertisements from these nations and to be more equal to the other nations. The number of ads by nation range from 12 in France to 22 in Italy (Table 4). Insurance/finance ads are the largest group, (39.1%), followed by automobiles/vehicles (28.7%), food/beverages ads (20.7%), and personal care (11.5%). As this is a qualitative analysis, except for percentages that help paint a picture of the study's scope, statistics are not included.

Table 4. Summary of Advertisements by Country and Product Category.*
(# magazine pages)

	France		**Germany**		**Italy**		**Netherlands**		**U.S.**		**Total**	
Product Category	**(488)**		**(312)**		**(322)**		**(532)**		**(136)**		**(1,760)**	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Food/Beverages	4	33.3	3	15.8	6	27.3	0	0.0	5	29.4	18	20.7
Automobiles/Vehicles	5	41.7	8	42.1	4	18.2	6	35.3	2	11.8	25	28.7
Insurance/Finance	3	25.0	7	36.8	3	13.6	11	64.7	10	58.8	34	39.1
Personal Care	0	0.0	1	5.3	9	40.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	11.5
Total	**12**	**100.0**	**19**	**100.0**	**22**	**100.0**	**17**	**100.0**	**17**	**100.0**	**87**	**100.0**

*Publications: France – *Le Point*, December 10, 2009; *L'Express*, October 8, 2009, August 20, 2009, August 6, 2009, June 4, 2009, May 28, 2009; Germany – *Der Spiegel*, October 10, 2009; *Stern*, June 10, 2009; Italy – *L'espresso*, June 11, 2009; *Oggi*, June 10, 2009; Netherlands – *Elsevier*, July 4, 2009, June 27, 2009, May 16, 2009; *Vrij Nederland (VN)*, July 18, 2009, June 6, 2009, April 18, 2009; United States – *Newsweek*, October 12, 2009; *Time*, June 15, 2009.

Metaphors are apparent in most ads, from all countries and in all four product categories: Ontology, structural, and conduit/container are the most prominent types of metaphors used in both the text and visuals; orientation metaphors are employed the least in copy and not at all in the visual. For visuals in particular, orientation metaphors are not found in any nation, and no metaphors could be found in a few German, Italian, and Dutch visuals (Table 5).

Table 5. Summary of Primary Metaphors in Advertisements by Country.*

	France		Germany		Italy		Netherlands		U.S.		Total	
Metaphor Type												
In Text	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**
Orientation	3	18.8	2	9.1	3	13.8	3	13.8	2	10.0	13	13.0
Ontology	6	37.5	6	27.3	7	31.8	5	22.6	3	25.0	27	27.0
Structure	2	12.5	9	40.9	7	31.9	7	31.8	8	40.0	33	33.0
Conduit/Container	5	31.2	5	22.7	5	22.7	7	31.8	5	25.0	27	27.0
None	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	**16**	**100.0**	**22**	**100.0**	**22**	**100.0**	**22**	**100.0**	**20**	**100.0**	**100**	**100.0**
In Visual	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**
Orientation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ontology	2	15.4	5	26.3	5	21.7	6	33.3	5	27.8	23	25.3
Structure	7	53.8	10	52.6	16	69.6	6	33.3	10	55.5	49	53.8
Conduit/Container	4	30.8	3	15.8	—	—	3	16.7	3	16.7	13	14.3
None	—	—	1	5.3	2	8.7	3	16.7	—	—	6	6.6
Total	**13**	**100.0**	**19**	**100.0**	**23**	**100.0**	**18**	**100.0**	**18**	**100.0**	**91**	**100.0**

*Counts of metaphors are more than the number of ads as each ad could have zero or more metaphors.

In all countries, headlines use the most metaphors, capitalizing on their extension abilities to capture attention and pull in the reader. Body copy is more descriptive, informative, and supportive, and although metaphors may be used in body copy, they are not the focal point. Findings are summarized by product category using exemplars for each.

Food/Beverages

Two California Pizza Kitchen ads (not shown) from the United States provide examples of structural metaphors: “Barbecue taste that could spark a stampede” and “Giddy up taste buds.” New Flatbread Melts are here.” Metaphor parts are clear: “taste” is the tenor in both ads, while “stampede” and “giddy up” are the vehicles in the first and second, respectively. The ads compare the idea of taste to other concepts—a stampede in the first ad and giddy up in the second—to help make great taste meaningful in interesting, dynamic, and tangible ways, and the metaphors emphasize the taste of the pizza by providing the reader with a visual and a feeling or sense for the taste. The Western theme helps link the ads together in a campaign.

Similar products found across multiple countries allow for a comparison of cultural differences; fruit drinks, fruit-flavored water, and tea ads were common among French, German, and Italian advertised products, for example, and a French ad touted Schweppes “Nouveau saveur raisin,” or “New

grape flavor" (Figure 1). That ad's design is simple but fashionable and offers a stylized illustration of a woman's face and hands holding grapes, representing an ontological metaphor for health and beauty. A government-mandated line of copy at the bottom of the page reads: "Pour votre santé, mangez au moins cinq fruits et légumes par jour," or "For your health, eat at least five fruits and vegetables each day."

This ad is comparable to the German Chiquita Superfruit Smoothie message (Figure 2). The German headline, "Jede Menge Gutes . . . in einer Superfrucht," or "An endless amount of good in every superfruit," is a container metaphor, implying that Superfruit can hold the concept of good. As with the French ad, the design is simple, but the similarities end there. A cartoon bubble contains the headline and points to a pomegranate resting on a primitive scale made of a tree log balanced on a rock. The pomegranate on one side demonstrates that it is heavier with nutrients and healthful benefits than the bunch of grapes on the other end, which is high off the ground. The visual illustrating Chiquita Superfruit Smoothie is an ontological metaphor, rational and literal yet playful, and it speaks to Germans. In addition, the ad offers 11 lines of copy about the smoothie, including its double level of antioxidants and their defense mechanism and how the product uses the best fruits. The text's level of details is another way in which it is different from the French ad.

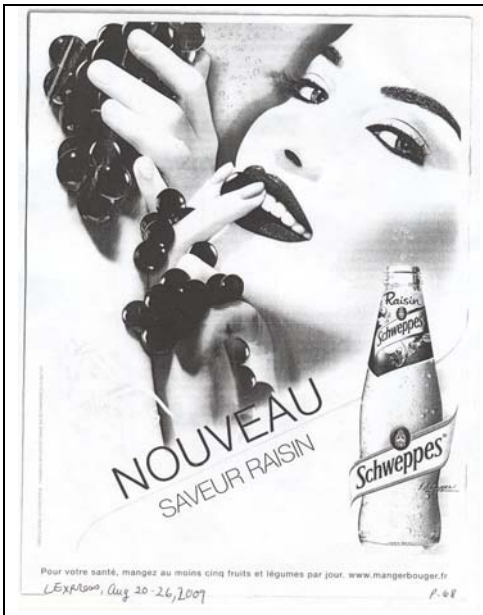

Figure 1. French Schweppes ad.

Figure 2. German Chiquita ad.

These French and German examples follow literature that suggests that a society's uncertainty avoidance attributes affect the food/beverages category and that "people in strong uncertainty avoidance cultures have a more passive approach to health and what they eat and drink" (de Mooij, 2000, p. 80). France has the highest uncertainty avoidance of the five countries studied. German consumers have a weaker uncertainty avoidance than do the French, so they require more rationality in making purchases.

An Italian Lipton Green Tea ad can be used for comparison. Italians fall somewhere between the French and Germans in uncertainty avoidance scores, and the ad reflects this, showing a bottle of tea ripped apart in streams of sparkling water, lemons, and tealeaves in a dynamic design (Figure 3). The headline, "Un'ondata di gustoso benessere/Drink Positive," or "A flavor full of tasty wellness/Drink Positive," is a container metaphor implying that flavor can hold wellness. The ad makes the abstract concepts of flavor, taste, and wellness more real with the thought that they can be held within, and the English words "Drink Positive" in the headline and "Tea can do that" in the tag line are symbols for a modern, active, Western lifestyle and help to increase the brand's status. The sentence of copy—"Tutta la bontà del tè verde, tutta la freschezza del limone, in un gusto unico," or "All the quality goodness of the green, all the freshness of the lemon in a unique taste"—highlights the taste benefit. However, the ad is not as stylish as the French Schweppes ad, nor is it as rational as the German Chiquita message.

Figure 3. Italian Lipton Tea ad.

Coffee advertising is also worth cross-cultural examination. An Italian ad for Pellini coffee with the headline "Particolare e Inconfondibile, or "Particular and Unmistakable," is visually pleasing: a picture of a coastline with gentle hills of coffee beans that transitions into the image of a beautiful woman (Figure 4). The woman's face, adorned with a beauty mark in the shape of the Pellini logo, accents beauty and style, and a picture of a Pellini can of coffee anchors the bottom right corner. The copy provides a structural, synesthetic metaphor: "Armonia ed intensità di profumi, un gusto delicato e raffinato che emoziona," or "Harmony and intensity of perfumes, a taste delicate and refined that excites." Here, the ad describes the taste of coffee in cross-sensory terms: harmony (sound), perfume (smell), delicate (touch), and the ad effects an elegant style to capture attention.

In contrast, a German ad for the Swiss-made Jura brand coffee machine employs an approach that resonates with consumers in that country, using an English headline, "If you love coffee," and featuring tennis champion Roger Federer (Figure 5). Copy in part tells of the match between athlete and machine as the language helps build the athlete as a metaphor for the coffee machine—both are perfect in their complex endeavors. As do players in a game of tennis, coffee machines need perfection; everything has to be in place and coordinated, making it a kind of ontological metaphor. The emphasis on the good-looking man's image not only continues the metaphor, it also speaks to German consumers' reliance on expertise. In addition are six lines of detailed copy. The English headline provides a symbol of prestige and status, transcending multiple cultures. Although both are elegant, the Jura ad contrasts with the Italian Pellini ad in details related to cultural differences.

Figure 4. Italian Pellini ad.

Figure 5. German Jura ad.

Automobiles

Every country examined in this study provides an automobile ad to review, and the differences reflect culture variations. A specific difference is found in the Netherlands, where automobile consumers, with low uncertainty avoidance and high femininity attributes, look for value and safety more than consumers in the other four nations (de Mooij, 2000, p. 97). Several ads for Renault cars in Dutch magazines take the same format and speak to these characteristics. In one, for example, "De Renault Laguna Coupé Nu tijdelijk met E 1.000—contant voor U," is translated as "The Renault Laguna Coupé now temporarily with Euro 1,000 cash for you" (Figure 6), suggesting that the car comes with cash or is able to hold cash, a container metaphor. The layout is simple and designed as a portrait of the car—illustrated by

the dog-eared bottom right corner—and a paper clip at the top of the picture holds a stack of euros, highlighting the car's economic value.

In contrast, the French like to see more design, style, and fashion in car advertisements (de Mooij, 2000, p. 97). In the Nouvelle Fiat 500 Cabriolet ad, the headline reads: "Le Bonheur en version originale" or "The happiness is in the original version" (Figure 7), using a container metaphor to suggest that the concept of happiness can be put into a container, in this case a specific vehicle. The convertible model design and styling are reinforced in the butterfly-shaped clouds, and a woman standing in the top-down convertible uses a butterfly net in attempt to catch everything that the car has to offer—happiness, fashion, fun, and style.

Figure 6. Dutch Renault ad.

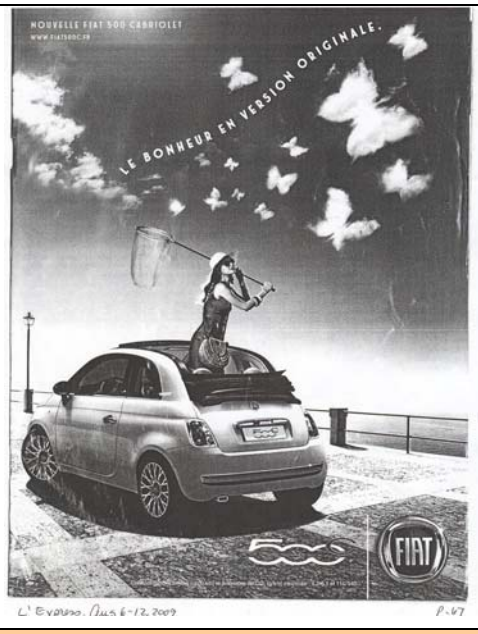

Figure 7. French Fiat ad.

German and Italian consumers are somewhat similar when it comes to buying cars because people in these nations look for fast acceleration, advanced technology, and design in style and function. However, Germans also look for more verification, such as expertise, than do Italians.

The German ad for Lexus RX 450h (Figure 8) uses an orientation metaphor in the headline: "Fahren sie voraus," or "Drive ahead." Several beautiful photos of the car give the idea of Lexus design and style. The main picture shows the Lexus in a flattering profile being driven along a picturesque lake and mountain range, and smaller insert photos boost the Lexus flair and brand equity. One shows a beautiful woman looking out the window along the coast while another gives a dramatic city view from a

highway and other small photos highlight the craftsmanship, technology, and function. Nine lines of copy provide details of the technology and mechanics, appeals that resonate particularly with Germans.

In comparison, the Italian ad for Hyundai, headlined “L’auto con grandi idee,” or “The car with grand ideas,” is an ontological metaphor as it considers that cars have ideas (Figure 9). The ad features a beauty shot of the car on a rich purple background, with a dramatic yellow and blue butterfly hovering above the vehicle. The auto’s design and style are illustrated in the luscious colors, and the butterfly conveys elegance and beauty for the vehicle.

Figure 8. German Lexus ad.

Figure 9. Italian Hyundai ad.

In a general sense, it might be said that large numbers of American consumers look at cars as status symbols and want big and powerful vehicles—partly because of their high masculinity score and low uncertainty avoidance attributes. The Lincoln ad features the car on a plain white background (Figure 10) and the headline— “Cleaner. Faster. Smarter.”—demonstrates the direct injection technology that allows the car to be cleaner, faster, and smarter, a structural metaphor. The tag line, “Reach higher,” is an orientation metaphor.

Figure 10. American Lincoln ad.

Insurance/Finance

In the insurance/finance category, American and Dutch advertisements used more rational appeals in layout and copy than their French, German, and Italian counterparts, which spoke more to emotions.

An example is the American New York Life ad (Figure 11), which prominently displays a blue gift box with "Peace of Mind" in white letters across the front. Both the text and visual use container metaphors to express insurance as a concept that can be put into a box and the straightforward copy describes the company and builds on the metaphor, as in the first line: "Think of life insurance from New York Life as a gift of financial protection." Other rationalizing arguments include "we have the highest ratings for financial strength" and "we share your goal of providing for your family's long-term security." Similarly, the Dutch ad (Figure 12) for NVM (a national realtors' association that is promoting a financial product and so merits inclusion in this category) is austere. Headlines "Groter Wonen?" or "Larger life?" convey the idea that living can be larger, in this case meaning in a larger house, is a type of ontological metaphor. As in the American ad, copy is direct, with little emotion.

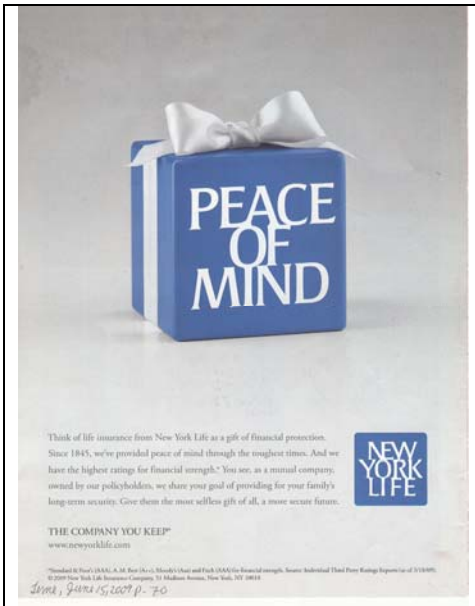

Figure 11. American New York Life ad.

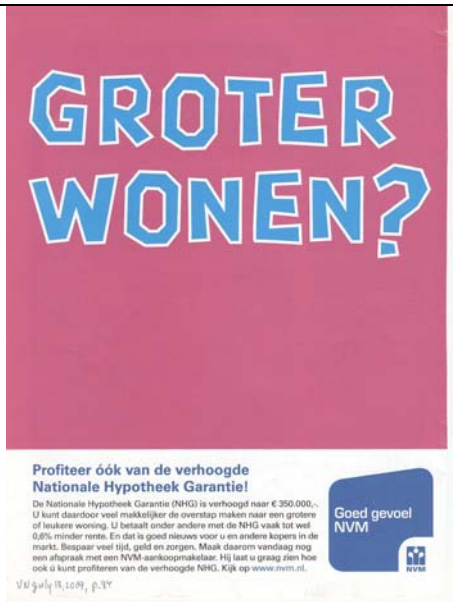

Figure 12. Dutch NVM ad.

In contrast, insurance/finance ads in the other three nations tend to use more emotional appeals, expressing them through copy, visuals, or both. For example, the German ad for Asstel shows a man and his baby with the headline: "Mein Lebenswerk. Abgesichert für nur 5 Euro/Monat" or "My Life's Work. Protected with only 5 Euros per Month" (Figure 13). The headline suggests that the concept of life's work can be protected, a type of ontological metaphor and the baby is a metaphor for the man's life's work and the father/son relationship is sentimental.

Figure 13. German Asstel ad.

Similarly, the Italian ad for Compass, a kind of credit union, depicts a middle-aged man and woman enjoying a glass of wine in the country and relaxing against a wooden fence (Figure 14). The picture is in black and white, except for the orange blanket wrapped around the couple that highlights their unity. The headline reads “Realizza i tuoi progetti più importanti” translated as: “Carries out your most important goals.” The headline is a type of conduit metaphor as it considers goals something that can be reached, in this case a long and happy life as demonstrated by the couple.

Copy in the French ad for Credit Suisse featuring Roger Federer states: “650 matchs gagnés, 15 Grand Chelems, 2 filles, Un Credit Suisse qui comprend ce qui compte pour vous” translated as “650 games won, 15 Grand Slams, 2 daughters, and Credit Suisse who understand what counts for you” (Figure 15). As in the German ad for Jura, Federer is a metaphor representing skill and perfection as an athlete, father, and provider. In the copy, Federer attributes his victories to passion, hard work, concentration, and experience, just as Credit Suisse applies the attributes to banking. The appeal is more emotional than in the American and Dutch ads in this group.

Figure 14. Italian Compass ad.

Figure 15. French Credit Suisse ad.

Personal Care

Two ads for Alpecin shampoo were found in Germany and Italy, providing for direct comparison. Germans are moderate users of deodorants, cosmetics, and hair care products, and as German consumers have strong uncertainty avoidance tendencies, they want to know how the product works, so testimonials and demonstrations are important to them (de Mooj, 2010). In the German Alpecin ad (Figure 16), "Keine Schuppen Kein Haarausfall, or "Little shampoo little hair loss"—a looser translation indicates that a small amount of the shampoo will lessen hair loss—a photo of a man shampooing his hair and scientifically styled illustrations describe the shampoo's effect on hair follicles. The copy text "Warem sich mit weniger zufrieden geben"—"Why settle for less"—is a structural metaphor claiming that settling for a lesser shampoo means settling for lesser hair.

Germans and Italians share strong uncertainty avoidance and high masculinity scores, but Italians also have large power distance attributes. The combination suggests that Italian advertising is more theatrical and less direct than in Germany (de Mooij, 2000, pp. 274–275). Italians, who are average to low users of deodorants, cosmetics, and hair care products, look for purity and nature (de Mooij, 2010). The Italian Alpecin ad, "Alpecin con caffeina doping per i capelli, reads "Alpecin with caffeine doping for the hair" (Figure 17), uses a structural metaphor as it considers that hair is alive and can be drugged to stimulate an effect. A large part of the ad is given over to detailed copy that provides numerous details, including how the product contains caffeine, an unusual ingredient in shampoo.

Figure 16. German Alpecin ad.

Figure 17. Italian Alpecin ad.

Discussion

This study investigates metaphors and their role in language, using advertising texts and visuals from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United States. The analysis shows that metaphors, as pervasive and powerful tools for expression, play a key role in language based on culture and that their effectiveness can be enhanced through strategic use and placement. Metaphors are linked to culture, and advertising, which employs them strategically when and where they are most effective, offers a unique opportunity to investigate metaphors specifically and culture in general.

The research shows that metaphors are used in headlines and visuals to capture attention and in copy to reinforce concepts. They portray abstract ideas and create bonds between products and potential customers in all countries, but their application differs among countries because of underlying attributes specific to people in each nation.

Cultural dimensions, especially power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, and uncertainty avoidance, are prominently reflected in ads to help ensure that messages are relevant for their intended target audiences; the ads can be seen as colorful and rich portraits of each country and can be compared with Gannon and Pillai's (2010) national metaphors. Examples: As does Gannon and Pillai's metaphor of French wine, the Schweppes and Fiat ads capture the joie de vivre attitude of the French; Germans' technical precision, similar to a symphony, according to Gannon and Pillai, is articulated particularly well across most of the German ads, including those for Chiquita, Jura, Lexus, and Alpecin; Italian drama of operatic proportions is painted in the Lipton, Pellini, and Compass ads; American

consumers' habitual hype and competitiveness, best summed up in Gannon and Pellai's metaphor of American football, exist in the California Pizza Kitchen and Lincoln ads; the Dutch Renault and NVM ads convey simplicity and value.

This review of advertisements uncovered interesting insights beyond metaphors and cultural attributes, including the use of English, which was found across all nations—for French auto manufacturers advertising in Germany, Japanese auto and German chocolate makers advertising in France, and German auto manufacturers advertising in Italy. An American-owned tea company of Scottish origins used English in an Italian message, as did a Swiss coffee machine ad in Germany; English was also prominent in Dutch advertising for a bank based in the Netherlands. A study of English and Western symbolism in international advertising can look critically at potential influences of global communication: Will local language and symbolism matter anymore, and if so, how will they fit in with multinational advertising, messaging, and media?

The advent of fast, streaming Internet access in many parts of the world has not only increased the globalization of information, it has also birthed a culture of advertisements as entertainment. The social networking site Facebook has more than 600 million users as of January 14, 2011 (Bilton, 2011), and its users can "like," or become fans of, Facebook pages set up by companies. The companies not only advertise on their pages but can interact directly with "fans"—consumers in their target demographic, which can build brand loyalty worldwide. The micro-blogging site Twitter and the video hosting site YouTube set the stage for a large-scale, public yet personalized viral marketing campaign. On July 13 and 14, 2010, Old Spice invited people to send messages to the company via the Old Spice Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube accounts, and responses to selected messages were quickly filmed and uploaded to YouTube with Old Spice spokesman Isaiah Mustafa delivering humorous "personalized" messages and promoting the brand (Williams, 2010).

Even without a popular social networking presence, brands can find a multinational audience online as users who find advertisements interesting can upload them to YouTube (Bosman, 2006) or to photo-hosting sites like Flickr and social blogging sites such as LiveJournal and Tumblr, where they can "go viral" because of a humorous or controversial angle or because of an international celebrity promoting products in a foreign ad (Kimak, 2009). Depending on circumstances such as "tagging" the ad with keywords, the size of the audience for the user who uploaded it, and the ability to find the content on search engines, a print ad can also be shared quickly among international users who wouldn't otherwise know of it. This sparks the research questions of what international attention will do for these companies and brands, and how cultural uniqueness is taken into account as companies—and advertising themes—go global. Although McDonald's restaurants use one slogan internationally ("I'm Lovin' It"), for example, commercials and print ads are still directed to the audiences and cultures of each region in which they appear (Madden, 2003).

Still, in the context of globalization, cultural differences are apparent in advertising messages even among familiar nations. Culture is deeply rooted and has stood up to the test of time. That is, for generations specific cultures have continued particular traditions and behaviors. How culture and particular long held cultural practices will hold up in the future with increasing globalization is a question.

Limitations and Future Research. A few limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. The number and type of countries included limits the generalizability of the findings. The United States and European countries were purposely chosen not only for their differences in cultural dimensions as theorized by Hofstede (2001) and Gannon and Pillai (2010) but also to focus on Europeans and gain insights into their differences, no matter how subtle, among nations that are normally thought of as similar. More insights into these nations can provide practical implications for advertising and communication development and the growth of multinational companies and globalization. Future studies should examine metaphors in a greater number of countries that may help establish cultural differences or similarities in ads across various nations. Including countries from other continents will contribute insights. Expanding the study beyond Western cultures will also help provide real world insights and Confucian dimensions of culture should be incorporated into the review.

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