

**CROSS-CULTURAL DIGITAL MARKETING  
IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION**

An analysis of the current environment, theory & practice of global advertising strategies and a proposal for a new framework for the development of international campaigns.

**Jesús Maroto Ortiz-Sotomayor**



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Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona, Spain

Supervisors:

Professor Frank Austermuehl

University of Auckland

&

Professor Anthony Pym

Universitat Rovira i Virgili

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## Abstract

Globalization, technological progress, new consumer expectations and budgetary limitations have changed advertising around the world. The creative and communication processes used by the majority of advertising agencies no longer satisfy the needs of brands that now engage in a two-way dialogue in the global market, particularly in the e-marketing arena. A new framework and the introduction of a new breed of professional are thus proposed for the development of international advertising campaigns. The model applies *Skopostheorie* to the translation of advertising, positioning the *trans-creator* in the creative process and introducing a distinction between *Tradition-free (global) products* and *Culture-bound (local) products*. Applying the model offers a more comprehensive understanding of the target audience and helps achieve the right level of consistency of communication across the media. Thus improving efficiency and creating a truly global brand based on an internationally shared ideology and locally relevant variations.

**Keywords:** international marketing, e-marketing, global advertising, new media, translation of advertising material, adaptation, localization, globalization, anthropology.



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## 1. Introduction

In recent years globalization and technological progress have changed the advertising environment, creating major opportunities and new challenges. One of the largest challenges is how to advertise across different languages and cultures.

Ever since the first company attempted to promote its products in a foreign market, there have been different approaches to international advertising. For some companies the focus was on the degree of adaptation or standardization of the original advertising strategy to and across the target markets. For others the key differentiating aspect regarded the internal structure of the advertising agency, and therefore we talk about to what degree the marketing campaign is more or less centralized. All these approaches evolved at a time when products commenced to move freely about the globe.

The world is now becoming a global market for an ever-increasing and varied number of companies with a common aim: to sell their products to as many consumers as possible. However, the globalization of the market also means that companies nowadays are addressing an incredibly varied target, with many different languages and, more importantly, cultures. While until recently many international campaigns could afford to be little more than translated domestic campaigns, increasing competition and consumer expectations have enforced substantial changes. All this has happened at a time when many brands now depend heavily on foreign sales. Consumers have also become very sophisticated and demanding, and new media – in particular the Internet, interactive television and even the mobile phone – not only have become new communication channels but have also introduced expectations of interaction and dialogue with the brand. Because of this brands now have to be able to engage in a two-way communication with consumers and earn the consumers respect in

each market in order to increase sales and fight competitors. In fact, “respect” has become the buzzword in markets such as the US and the UK where ethnic marketing campaigns have become a must. As Ralph Lacher, president of the US advertising agency *La gente de RLR*, said last May at the American Marketing Association meeting in Los Angeles:

“Consumers respond best to marketers who invest in relationships—reaching out with respect—first to their hearts and then their wallets. To win, begin at the beginning: listen to your audience; market to their needs; and communicate on their terms.” (Lacher, online)

Brands need to enter the communities, the cultures, in order to gain trust, be accepted and eventually be listened. The only way brands can do this is by respecting the consumers’ language, entering their cultural framework as well as “by presenting target consumers through positive and realistic imagery” (Bernstein, online). On the web in particular, this is becoming a must since research shows that “users perceive a company more favorably when they see a version of its web site in their mother tongue, regardless of their English proficiency” (Hayward & Tong, 2001: 4). To fulfill all these expectations requires the constant creation of large quantities of quality content and communication suited to each specific market, while trying to keep the right level of brand consistency across markets to generate brand value. This necessitates a strong need for coordinated action, a deep knowledge of the target audience and an excellent understanding of the product that is going to be marketed. That is something that not all agencies can offer, primarily because of a lack of foreign-language and cultural knowledge among the personnel that work within them.

New media plays an increasing key role in cross-cultural marketing communications. The localization industry has been “translating” software applications for quite a few years. The technologies and processes traditionally

used in software localization, as well as the knowledge in cultural adaptation and human-computer interaction could be repurposed to allow the localization of new media products with a marketing focus such as websites and webvertising campaigns.

At the same time, the experience accumulated in international press and TV campaigns by the marketing industry could be of use to translators working in the localization of digital communications and to Translation Studies scholars.

In this dissertation I will introduce the reader to some of the concepts and situations mentioned above and that I would like to analyze in detail in a future thesis.

My theoretical framework will be mainly based on *Skopostheorie*, although I will also use Hofstede's dimensions of culture as interpreted by De Mooij to a certain extent.

I will start by describing the reasons that I believe have motivated the changes in the international advertising environment in the last few years. I will then introduce the reader to some of the main global advertising strategies followed in the major advertising networks: *Standardization* vs. *Adaptation of the original advertising strategy*. Afterwards, I will explain the two main agency-dependant approaches: *Centralization* vs. *Decentralization in the production of the marketing campaign*. In all cases I will aim at focusing on the e-marketing arena. The idea of this first section is to show the readers the evidence that I believe supports the second section of my work. In such second section I will introduce a new framework for the development of international advertising based on the integration of a new target culture-sensitive professional with translation expertise and technologically savvy whom I call the trans-creator. The concept of this model is that trans-creators will immerse themselves in the international creative process and will use the latest technologies to their advantage applying different translation strategies depending on which type of product they are dealing with. With regards to products, I will differentiate between *Tradition-free (global) products* and *Culture-bound (local) products*.



This is very significant to me because I believe all products can be divided into these two categories and that the same product can occupy a completely different space in the perception of consumers in different markets, this perception being the result of advertising campaigns combined with local attitudes and culture. In my opinion, this distinction constitutes a new tweak to *Skopostheorie* because it means that it is not only important for translators to understand the purpose of the communication but also the product or service being advertised, since it is the nature of the product and the perception such product has in the target culture what I believe can determine the best translation strategy an advertising agency should follow.

Towards the end of the dissertation, a very basic observational empirical research project will give us an overview of how culture-bound products such as beer and coffee brands deal with some of the situations highlighted in this paper, particularly focusing on how the positioning of the same brand can vary enormously between countries.

It is also important to mention in this introduction that the dissertation considers and expands on the experience of the author at the advertising agencies Euro RSCG and DoubleYou, on the work of authors such as Jon Wilkins, Geert Hofstede, Marieke de Mooij, Nikolaos Papavassiliou, Vlas Stathakopoulos, Christiane Nord, Simon Anholt and Hans Vermeer, and on the interviews carried out with marketing personnel at six multinational organizations: Intel Corporation, Peroni, Nestlé, Lavazza, Lionbridge and Seat.

Finally, this dissertation constitutes the seed from which eventually my thesis project would germinate. The purpose of such thesis project would be to study current practices with regards to the translation of interactive marketing communications, to describe what technologies and processes traditionally used in software localization could be used in the localization of new media communications, to analyze the experience and learnings international marketers have had in TV and press advertising, to research the role of translation studies and its theories in this new field and eventually to propose a prescriptive model

that helps e-communicators achieve cross-cultural communication between specific markets, namely the US, the UK, Spain and possibly Italy. This model would emphasize how translators and localization specialists can work with marketing professionals and would not only study the linguistic aspect, but also include cultural elements such as design and usability preferences.

## **2. Establishing some common ground: a terminological and theoretical framework.**

It is important to define some of the terminology as well as the theoretical framework followed in this dissertation, since both will give the reader a more accurate perspective of the general setting of the research project. Since terminology and theory are deeply intertwined I will introduce both at the same time in this section.

### *2.1. Advertising*

Advertising is defined in Webster's dictionary as “the action of calling something to the attention of the public especially by paid announcements, to call public attention by emphasizing desirable qualities so as to arouse a desire to buy or patronize: promote.” Advertising is a mass-mediated communication. For communication to be classified as advertising it must be:

- a) paid for
- b) delivered to an audience via mass media, and
- c) be attempting to persuade.

In order to persuade, or be effective, the advertisement must communicate to the audience the message it wants to relay, that is, it needs to be understood. Therefore if in international advertising we are aiming at

communicating across cultures, such message needs to be encoded so that it is understood by the target culture. At this point, it is also important to add that advertising is a form of communication that employs not only verbal but also non-verbal signs in order to communicate messages about products or organizations.

## *2.2. Marketing*

The Webster's dictionary defines Marketing as “the process or technique of promoting, selling and distributing a product or service”. I want to add that such process usually carries along the need to make a communication about a product or service. The terms advertising and marketing are usually exchanged and for the purpose of this dissertation they will convey the same meaning.

## *2.3. e-Marketing & Online Marketing*

With the above definitions in mind, it is probably easy to understand that e-Marketing is the process or technique of promoting, selling, and distributing a product or service through the use of electronic communications technology: Internet, e-mail, e-books, iTV, DVD, databases, mobile phones... It is a more general term than online marketing, which is limited to the use of Internet technology to attain marketing objectives.

Dave Chaffey, an Internet marketing consultant, has defined e-marketing as:

“Applying digital technologies which form online channels (Web, e-mail, databases, plus mobile/wireless & digital TV) to contribute to marketing activities aimed at achieving profitable acquisition and retention of customers (within a multi-channel buying process and customer lifecycle) through improving our customer knowledge (of their profiles, behavior, value and loyalty drivers), then delivering integrated targeted

communications and online services that match their individual needs.”  
(Online)

Chaffey's definition emphasizes that “it should not be the technology that drives e-marketing, but the business returns from gaining new customers and maintaining relationships with existing customers” (online). He also emphasizes how e-marketing does not occur in isolation, but is most effective when it is integrated with other communications channels such as telemarketing, direct-mail, personal selling, advertising, publicity, sales promotion, and other promotional techniques. Chaffey also thinks that online channels should also be used to support the whole buying process from pre-sale to sale to post-sale and further development of customer relationships where this is appropriate. He also believes that e-marketing should be based on knowledge of customer needs developed by researching their characteristics, behavior, what they value, and what keeps them loyal. Finally, he also thinks that the web and e-mail communications should be personally tailored to individual buyers based on the information obtained in the research.

Other terms generally used instead of e-marketing, include online advertising, digital marketing and digital advertising.

#### *2.4. Culture*

Britannica.com defines Culture as:

“The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that is both a result of and integral to the human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. Culture thus consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, ceremonies, and symbols.”

Culture is the most important concept in anthropology. Anthropologists commonly use the term culture to refer to a society or group in which many or all people live and think in the same ways. Likewise, any group of people who share a common culture, and in particular, common rules of behavior and a basic form of social organization, constitutes a society. Thus, the terms culture and society are somewhat interchangeable.

“Variation among cultures is attributable to such factors as differing physical habitats and resources; the range of possibilities inherent in areas such as language, ritual, and social organization; and historical phenomena such as the development of links with other cultures. An individual's attitudes, values, ideals, and beliefs are greatly influenced by the culture (or cultures) in which he or she lives. Culture change takes place as a result of ecological, socioeconomic, political, religious, or other fundamental factors affecting a society.” (Encarta.msn.com)

Therefore, in this dissertation, when I refer to cross-cultural digital advertising (or marketing) I am talking about the reformulation of a digital (usually web-based) message about a product or organization that has been created according to the language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, ceremonies and symbols shared by a group, to the knowledge (language, ideas...) of another group of people.

## *2.5. Text*

For the definition of Text, the approach I want to follow is that of linguistics. With this in mind, the Wikipedia says that, “text [in linguistics] is a communicative act [...]. Both speech and written language, or language in other media can be seen as a text within linguistics”. Robert de Beaugrande also

defines it as a communicative event, but he also says, “text contributes to a discourse, which is a set or sequence of mutually relevant texts.” (Online)

## 2.6. *GIL*

GIL stands for Globalization (G11N), Internationalization (I18N) and Localization (L10N), three key terms in the area of marketing that describe the process that is followed by companies with global interests in order to promote and sell their products in countries with different languages and cultures. With the emergence of multinational companies, a whole knowledge management industry sprung into existence; an industry based on the principles of either adapting to or eliminating cultural differences for the sake of economic growth. The numbers in the technical shorthand for each one (G11N, I18N, L10N) indicate the number of letters abbreviated in each case.

## 2.7. *Globalization*

The term Globalization was supposedly born almost twenty years ago in a paper by Levitt called “The Globalization of Markets”. The Harvard professor claimed that thanks to technology, markets are being homogenized worldwide as are peoples’ needs and wishes, thus “the result is a new commercial reality – the explosive emergence of global markets for globally standardized products, gigantic world-scale markets of previously unimagined magnitudes.” (Levitt 1983: 20) Although today these words seem to be truer than ever, thanks to the unprecedented growth of the Internet and its commercial applications, the idea of “homogenized cultures” has been met by strong resistance. The term took on a political tone, personifying US “cultural imperialism” and was demonized by its polemicists. The definition of the term given by LISA (Localization Industry Standards Association) is the following:

“Globalization addresses all of the enterprise issues associated with making a company truly global. For the globalization of products and services this involves integrating all of the internal and external business functions with marketing, sales, and customer support in the world market.” (Source: [www.lisa.org/term/termdefinitions](http://www.lisa.org/term/termdefinitions))

In these terms, Globalization is a function used in the process of globalizing a company, the key that opens the gates of foreign markets to its practitioners.

## *2.8. Internationalization*

A key aspect within Globalization is that of Internationalization. The word that expresses the full meaning of this term better than any other is “enablement”. Internationalization involves the creation of a product that is as culturally neutral as possible by eliminating any culture-specific characteristics it may contain, thus enabling its easy and fast adaptation or tailoring. LISA gives the following definition:

“Internationalization is the process of generalizing a product so that it can handle multiple languages and cultural conventions without the need for redesign. Internationalization takes place at the level of program (or product) design and document development.” (ibid.)

In other words, if a company wants to go global it produces internationalized products that can then be easily localized to attract local consumers abroad.

## 2.9. Translation, localization, transcreation and adaptation

I just mentioned the word “localized”, a term that has become very fashionable in the last few years. Actually, we all often talk about localization when we should be saying translation. In fact, for a lot of people there seems to be a fine line between both terms, and for many there is no clear distinction between them. Furthermore, within the object of my dissertation, the advertising industry, they do not really use either of them. Instead, “trans-creation” or “adaptation” are favored. In order to bring some light into the situation, let’s try to clarify them.

Historically, Nida probably offered one of the most famous definitions of *Translation*: “Translation consists of producing in the target language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, firstly with respect to meaning and secondly with respect to style.” (1959: 19)

A more modern source, the Wikipedia, offers a rather ambiguous but interesting definition in my opinion:

“Translation is an activity comprising the interpretation of the meaning of a text in one language—the source text—and the production of a new, equivalent text in another language—the target text, also called the translation.” (Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Translation>)

Moving into the perspective I want to give to the term translation in this dissertation, I would like to cite Vermeer. According to Vermeer to translate means, “to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances” (cited in Nord 1997: 12). We can slightly modify Vermeer’s definition of translation for the purposes of this dissertation and say that: “To translate *advertising* means to produce an *ad* in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances”. Note that



Vermeer's definition makes no mention of the source text. In fact, "a text in *skopostheorist* approach is regarded as an offer of information" (Karoubi, online), something that suits very much those of us working in advertising. Explaining Vermeer's theory of the purpose or Skopostheorie, Nord (1997: 11) indicates that "Vermeer considers translation to be a type of transfer where communicative verbal and non-verbal signs are transferred from one language into another". She goes on:

"This transfer contains an intention while being part of a situation. Since situations are embedded in cultures, any evaluation of a particular situation, of its verbalized and non-verbalized elements, depends on the status it has in a particular culture system." (Nord 1997: 11)

I believe that Vermeer's approach is crucial to cross-cultural advertising because it agrees with and fulfills the needs of an adaptation approach. Furthermore, Vermeer's definition satisfies the needs of the advertising world, unlike Toury's definition of translation:

"Translation is communication in translated messages within a certain cultural-linguistic system, with all relevant consequences for the decomposition of the source language, the establishment of the invariant, its transfer across the cultural-linguistic border and the recomposition of the target message." (1980: 17)

In cross-cultural advertising the problem would be the establishment of the invariant, since although the creation of a super brand would indeed involve the establishment of those core invariants, in many cases there is not such a thing when translating marketing communications. The key message an advertiser wants to communicate to one culture or market is not necessarily the key message the advertiser wants to communicate to another culture or market. This

opinion could be backed by Arrojo's discussions on essentialist and anti-essentialist approaches. In Translation Studies and according to Arrojo:

“The anti-essentialist postmodernists share as a common ground a radical distrust of the possibility of any intrinsically stable meaning that could be fully present in texts or in any form of oral or written discourse and, thus, supposedly recoverable and repeated elsewhere without the interference of the subjects, as well as the cultural, historical, ideological or political circumstances involved.” (1998: 25)

That distrust against the stable meaning is very similar to the Skopostheorists' consideration of the source text as “an offer of information”. Therefore Vermeer's more functional and flexible approach to translation as well as the anti-essentialist perspective in Translation Studies is what cross-cultural advertisers need and usually have to deal with, and constitute the foundation of the meaning of translation in this dissertation.

At this stage, and before moving into the term localization, I would like to include the definition a localization expert makes about translation. According to Esselink “translation is the process of converting written or displayed text or spoken words to another language” (1998: 3). In advertising, the written word is important, but so are the images, media, sounds, etc... (the “non verbal signs”) that go along with it, since they also contain a lot of meaning.

For the term *Localization*, there are several definitions depending on the emphasis of the author. Pym defines it as “the processes by which a generic (“international”) product is adapted to the requirements of a “locale”, a place with a specific union of cultural and linguistic features” (2004: 129). Notice Pym's emphasis on the nature of the product (generic therefore international). This perspective would mean that the concept of localization is not entirely applicable to advertising because in an online advertising campaign that needs to be adapted to another market, an advertising agency or a translator will not

usually depart from a generic international product. The source product will be a successful campaign developed for a specific market, and most of the time this will be an American, British or French campaign. Furthermore, in my experience, even in the software localization industry that is not usually the case either, with the exception of large corporations who have made a significant investment in software internationalization (i.e. Microsoft) or who have increasingly moved into controlled language practices (i.e. SAP).

Yunker, on the other hand, is a bit more focused on the final result and says that “localization is the process of modifying a product for a specific locale. This includes making technical, visual and textual modifications to the product” (2003: 17). This definition is broader than Pym’s in its scope and accommodates all sorts of new media but at the same time clearly states that the distinguishing feature of the localization process is the adaptation of a product so that it satisfies the needs of a specific target group and that this process involves more than just textual modifications.

Finally, LISA says that: “Localization involves taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold.” (Source: [www.lisa.org/term/termdefinitions](http://www.lisa.org/term/termdefinitions))

So what’s the difference between localization and translation? Even if fairly frequently both terms are used with the same meaning in mind, I think there are three key differences:

- a) The term translation does not necessarily include “non-verbal signs”.
- b) Localization, in general, has a wider meaning than translation.
- c) Localization has a commercial focus (although the commercial aim is also important in the terms I will discuss below).

The term *Adaptation* (meaning “foreign adaptation of advertising copy”) is widely spread in the advertising industry. The company Mothertongue defines it in their website as:

“Working from an existing source text and visual material, as well as a full creative brief, a copywriter/adaptor who has sound knowledge of the source language whilst being a mother tongue speaker of the target language will adapt copy whilst retaining the original idea and staying on brief.” (Source: [www.mothertongue.co.uk](http://www.mothertongue.co.uk))

The idea is that the copywriter (they don't mention the word translator) will always aim to produce copy in their own language, which reflects the tone and nuance of the original - at the same time as creating refreshing copy, which is culturally relevant.

*Transcreation* is a word which is made from the two words: “translation” and “creation” and has the exact same meaning as adaptation. The company The Word Gym says that:

“Transcreation refers to the demanding process of adapting sales copy from the language it was written in (the source language) into another (the target language). Contrary to what you might think, you can't just *translate* copy – a lively, witty headline in English may be a complete turnoff in French. In many ways, transcreation is akin to literary translation – the same search for equivalent idioms and concepts, the same striving to find equivalent registers and resonances – with one significant difference: the result must be capable of selling a brand, product, service or idea powerfully and effectively to the target audience in the target market (culture).”

(Source: <http://www.wordgym.com/html/transcreation.htm>)

In defense of the translation industry, I believe a good translator also transcreates, localizes and adapts. That is just part of the job. But savvy executives (including myself) see an opportunity to offer translation-like services at a better rate using different terms. In fact there are already quite a few

copycats out there, so you will be seeing a lot more of transcreation in the months ahead. Why? In my opinion because since the introduction of websites such as Aquarius.net and Proz.com, as well as Globalization Management Systems such as Idiom, Trados GXT or Elcano, translation increasingly sounds like a commodity; however, transcreation, adaptation and even localization sound like a service.

Independently of the above definitions, there is no doubt that localization has become the new cult in the area of language studies and industry. Localization started as an extra effort by the product managers and grew into a global business imperative. If a company wants to grow out of its regional borders and take full advantage of the potentials offered by the revolutionary technological achievements in transportation and communication, it has to go global, that is, attract consumers and establish its presence all over the globe. Because of the explosive growth of the Internet, companies and firms that strive for economic excellence faced the difficulties that globalization present, thus giving birth to the localization industry.

The practitioners of this trade are slowly but steadily realizing the potential of their business. The New York-based market research firm Allied Business Intelligence Inc. projected that the worldwide market for localization services would grow to \$17.2 billion by 2003 (Doran, online). According to Cecilia Rico, the figure would reach US\$20 billion in 2004 with Microsoft alone executing over 1,000 localization projects (2002, online). In any case, the real amount of money produced is hard to calculate largely due to the invisibility and lack of transparency of the localization process within organizations. The most important development however, is the realization of the necessity of localization as “companies are finding that the cost of *not* translating poses too great a risk to international sales” (Sprung 2000, his emphasis) and the indispensability of language experts in the world of business.

In conclusion, localization has become the notion that redefines the nature of translation practice. A practice that for the purpose of this dissertation I

frame in accordance with Vermeer's theory of the purpose and even in line with the anti-essentialist postmodernists thoughts.

### **3. The new international advertising environment**

Before talking about the present, let's quickly talk about the recent past.

The beginnings of global advertising can be traced back to the ending of World War II. At that time, European nations increased international trade. A decade later, some attention had shifted to Latin American countries as U.S. corporations led the way in looking for external markets. In the 1970's, non-US multinationals began overseas expansion, hoping to mirror the success of the US corporations. The globalization debate received an impetus in 1983 after Harvard Business School Professor Ted Levitt argued that the same products and services could be sold in the same way, everywhere. Meanwhile advertising agencies re-positioned themselves to serve the clients with more emphasis on international expansion and global marketing. The collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe opened up markets filled with consumers eager for new products and services in the 1990's. Since that decade, markets and clients have increasingly become more global and more complex, and the importance of global advertising has increased exponentially. For instance, "in 1960, international billings constituted only 6% of the gross revenues of the top ten US ad agencies. By 1991, this percentage had increased to almost 60%." (Ducoffe, 1998: 303). In fact, in recognition of the situation, advertisers associations such as the US Association of National Advertisers and the UK Institute of Practitioners in Advertising created global marketing committees in the last decade to help their members share problems and find solutions.

The rapid evolution described above as well as what I think has been the most dramatically changing dimension of the advertising industry: the introduction of the Internet, have contributed to the birth of a new advertising

environment. Some of the main reasons that I believe evidence it can be identified as follows:

### *3.1. A global market with different local rules and expectations*

Increasingly, it is possible to launch products worldwide. With the aid of the web, a traditional cheesemaker in a village in La Mancha, Spain, can serve the world (assuming that food regulations do not get infringed along the way). For many years, marketers have tried consciously to develop international advertising campaigns – and many used them that way long ago, without stopping to think how they might be received in “foreign” parts. As a successful example, towards the end of 2001, the world welcomed a global hit movie: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*. However, in the US it had to be called *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*. Apart from that, the movie is a highly successful global brand, as are the books on which the current three films are based. Harry Potter is, in fact, a nice illustration of the potential, and the pitfalls, of international marketing. If you can find a story with near-universal appeal, and attach it to a product that is very widely acceptable, you can have a global brand.

Not every marketer is so lucky. It is usually very hard to find how best to fit a brand into the often-conflicting needs, desires, attitudes and aspirations of several different cultures. The many complex practical, legal and logistical difficulties involved should not be forgotten, as well as all the problems arising from differences in culture and language, market maturity and market position.

One formula will not fit all. Jon Wilkins (2002) draws upon the findings of a very large database of advertisement pre- and post-tests in Europe and the Americas to demonstrate that few ads travel well. Differences from country to country in such factors as the position of the brand and the relations to persuasion of particular executional styles (for example, testimonial, demonstration, atmosphere or humor) mean that the advertising mechanisms that

work best must reflect market conditions, cultural differences and brand history. There is thus a need to look for similarities in behavior and in attitudes that cross national boundaries, feed them into the creative development process and, if possible, produce ads that deliver good in-market results cross-nationally.

So, what are the factors that force us to look beyond globally harmonized advertising? I have followed Jon Wilkins' approach (2002: 2) and have grouped these into "market differences" and "consumer differences":

### a) Market differences

- *Economic factors*: The stage of development and state of the economy play a fundamental role. What is affordable to most in the US may be a luxury in less wealthy markets, affecting the tone and positioning of the advertising.
- *Media environment*: Although global media exist, all markets have their local media landscapes. This affects which media people encounter and how people consume advertising.
- *Advertising regulations/restrictions*: Sometimes, these may prohibit advertising to certain target groups or products altogether – to children in Sweden, or cigarettes in many countries. They can also restrict the content permitted.
- *Category development*: This is one of the most common variables facing advertisers and is a popular means of segmenting markets into less-developed and better-developed groupings. For example, a comparison between mobile telecommunications markets in Western Europe and the Middle East.
- *Competitive development*: Though your own brand may be international, the competitive set can vary widely between countries, both in number and positioning. Contrast the competitive context for San Miguel beer in Spain and the UK.



Equally, order of entry into the market may play a key role, even if the main brands are the same.

b) Consumer differences

- *Cultural differences*: The cultural heritage, values and habits of a country (and different groups within it) influence perceptions and reactions to creative styles, driving the use of humor, settings, casting and tonality. The attitude toward consumption of snacks such as crisps in the UK is entirely different, for example, from France, where consumers generally follow regular meal patterns.
- *Communication syntax*: Each country has social habits or values that influence the expression of emotions, gestures, facial expressions, body language and even verbal communication.
- *Experience with the brand*: How consumers use, consume and interact with the brand may differ, as may their level of experience of the brand.

The consumer and market differences proposed by Jon Wilkins highlight some important factors that limit the scope for finding common conditions across markets. There are clearly many more detailed factors and examples that add further difficulties.

If we focus now on the cultural differences and follow Marieke de Mooij's hypothesis that "all aspects of consumer behavior are culture-bound and not subject merely to environmental factors" ([www.mariekedemoij.com](http://www.mariekedemoij.com)), it becomes clear that we need some help in order to identify the differences in consumer behavior across countries. Fortunately, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch cultural anthropologist Geert Hofstede conducted very interesting research work that shed some light on the problem. He performed detailed

interviews with hundreds of IBM employees in 53 countries. Through standard statistical analysis of fairly large data sets, he was able to determine patterns of similarities and differences among the replies. From this data analysis, he formulated his theory: that world cultures vary along consistent, fundamental dimensions. More importantly, he identified those dimensions and catalogued countries according to them. In my opinion though, there are some obvious weaknesses that invalidate his work to a certain extent. For instance, he maintained that each country has just one dominant culture. However, the general framework he designed is very useful for marketers, it is a good starting point, as authors like De Mooij have acknowledged.

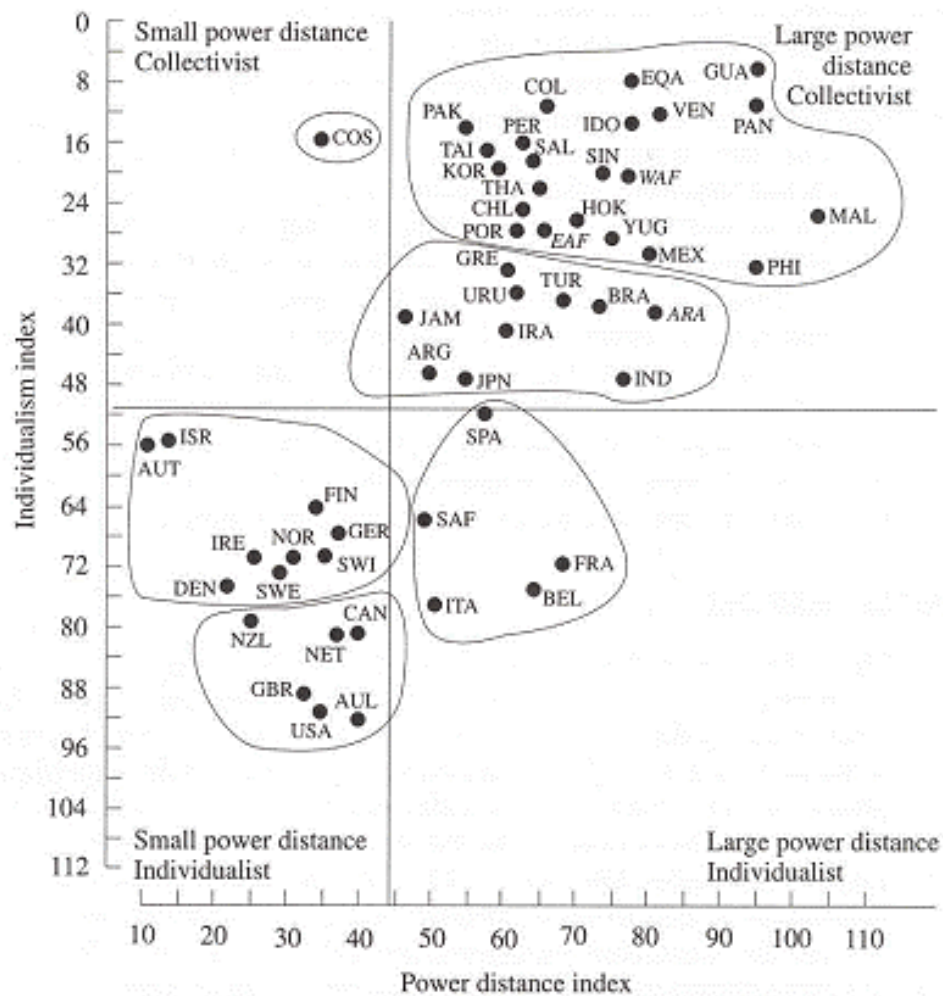
Hofstede (1997) identified five dimensions of culture and rated 53 countries according to them. His five dimensions of culture are the following:

- Collectivism vs. individualism
  - Femininity vs. masculinity
  - Uncertainty avoidance
  - Power-distance
  - Long- vs. short-term orientation
- a. *Collectivism vs. individualism*: Individualist cultures typically emphasize the goals of the individual, individual initiative and achievement, more dominantly than collectivist societies, which are more concerned with collective goals and the group as a whole. In advertising, individualist societies rely more heavily on facts and figures to determine the optimum outcome, whereas collectivist societies put a greater emphasis on personal relationships and group harmony.
- b. *Femininity vs. masculinity*: Masculine cultures typically favor assertive, competitive and tough attitudes, whereas feminine cultures emphasize caring and tender attitudes. Typically, masculine societies offer higher

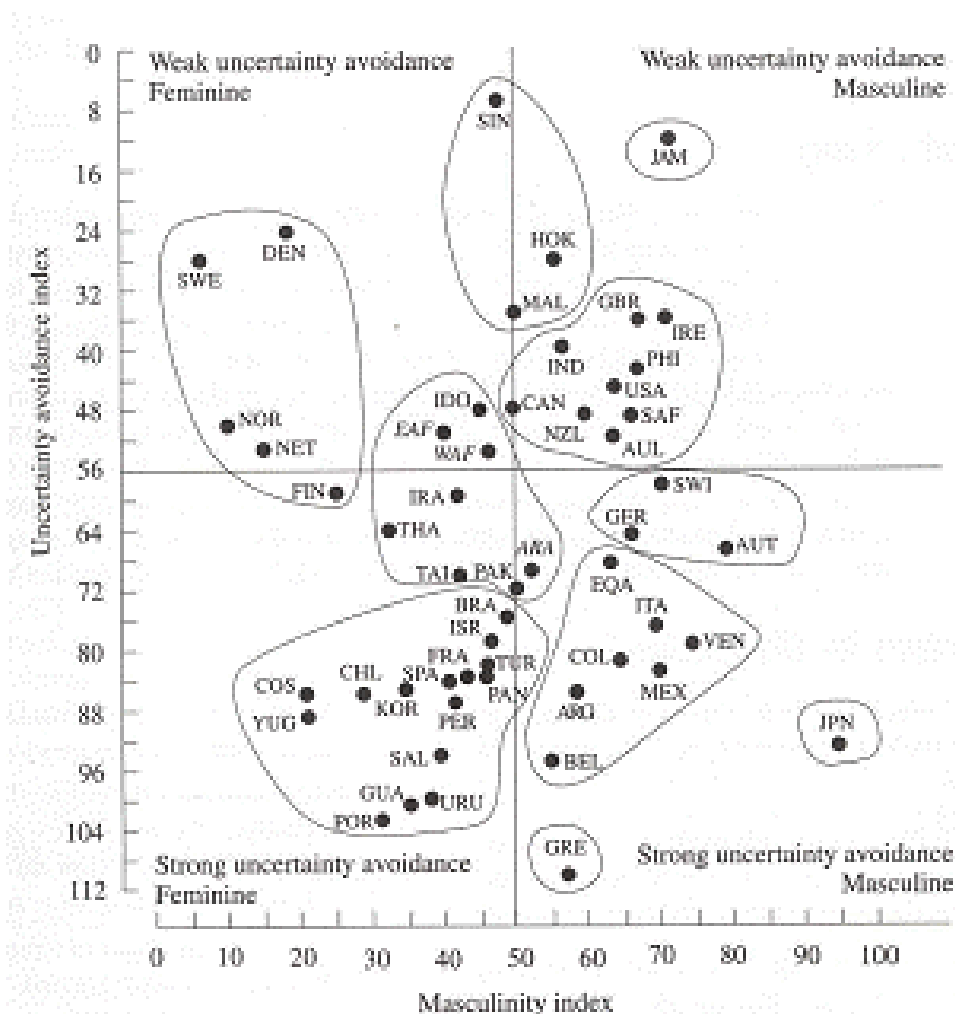
rewards and favor a challenging and competitive environment, whereas in feminine societies the emphasis is more on good relationships and co-operation.

- c. *Uncertainty avoidance*: The degree of risk aversion in a society is central to this dimension. Countries that score low in uncertainty avoidance typically favor taking risks, trying new ways and using novel approaches. Societies that score high however tend to put greater emphasis on the "tried and tested" methods, are unlikely to take on high risks and are generally considered to be averse to ambiguity.
- d. *Power distance*: This dimension is concerned with the respect for authority, hierarchy and status. The respect for authority and status are typically more dominant in high power distance countries than low power distance countries, where decisions from the top can (and should) usually be questioned and are typically based on reasoning and factual information. In extremely high power distance countries, the respect for authority figures, such as teachers, superior managers and parents, is generally so high, that their decisions are not questionable and have to be obeyed.
- e. *Long-term orientation*: This dimension is typically concerned with the time frame in which the individual operates. Short-term orientation is primarily concerned with the present and immediate future, such as favoring immediate benefits over long term gain. The emphasis in long-term-oriented cultures is more clearly on the continuity of the past to the future, such as the adaptation of traditions to modern life, and the perseverance towards slow gains.

Hofstede notes that some relativism is necessary since not everyone in a society fits the cultural pattern precisely, however there is enough statistical regularity to identify trends and tendencies. The good thing for international marketers is that these trends and tendencies, visualized in the country ratings, can be used to their advantage. See the figures below to see where each country fits according to Hofstede's dimensions:



**Figure 1.** Hofstede's classification of countries according to the power distance and individualism indexes. Source: Hofstede (1994)



**Figure 2.** Hofstede's classification of countries according to the uncertainty avoidance and masculinity indexes. Source: Hofstede (1994)

In conclusion, although post-globalization markets (that is, those regions in which peoples' needs and wishes are increasingly being homogenized<sup>1</sup>) are significantly bigger and consequently more attractive than the old home markets, they are also infinitely more complex. There are many local rules and expectations, particularly in terms of differences between markets and

consumers. Among the consumer ones, culture is one of the most important aspects, since as Mooij (1998: 288) suggests, “consumer behavior is culture-bound”. Hofstede believes that world cultures vary along five dimensions and has catalogued countries according to them. International marketers have a very valuable tool in these dimensions but they should not forget the other differences outlined in this section.

### *3.2. Atomization of the media*

The first multinational brands could afford to tackle local markets one by one, with local agencies using local creative work developed according to certain guidelines. They could easily reach their target market via very limited and centralized mass media. Since mass communication was new and exciting, people were more receptive to its message, which was trusted just “because it was on TV”. The message was also seen as reliable because consumers usually shared the values it expressed, as they were produced by their own culture and for that culture. Over the years, that trust has been eroded, while the diversity of brands and the media has increased. Furthermore, with the advent of satellite, cable TV and the Internet, the media have become very atomized and specialized, making it difficult and expensive for brands to communicate effectively with their target audiences. At the same time, international travel, mass tourism and the Internet have eroded borders, making cross-border branding discrepancies apparent and increasing the level of consumer expectations.

### *3.3. Increased competition and consumer expectations*

Big companies are facing a dilemma. For some, the only way to keep growing is to expand abroad, even though this means taking on the challenges of cross-cultural communication. The arrival of new competitors on home turf creates a

greater need to defend the brands at home by offering better communication and higher quality in products and services to compete with these foreign entrants. As a result, the total target market of each company is likely to become more multilingual and the share of the target population speaking the language of the company's home market will shrink. Cross-cultural communication will therefore become a way of life for brands, and very often the only way to survive.

#### *3.4. Consumers interact with brands thanks to new media*

The Internet and the rest of new media are responsible for another major shift in the brand-consumer dialogue. In the past, information about a brand came through TV and radio ads, printed material, and little more. Feedback was limited to a few postal exchanges, resulting in one-way communication. In order to know more about their target audience and how the brand was being understood, companies had to interview samples of people in the street, at home or to organize focus groups. Gathering information took a long time. However, it was important, because "branding has traditionally relied on a two-way dialogue with consumers" (Jones, online).

Mobile phones and especially the Internet have introduced brands into the era of two-way communication. Online communities and websites have become one of the major sources of information for and about brands. Thousands of consumers (and not only those in a focus group) have become accustomed to interacting with the brand, writing emails, volunteering information, and shopping online. They actually expect to be able to give feedback to the brands they feel identified with. Communication is now continuous and two-way, and one medium can lead to the other (from TV and radio to Internet, for instance).

According to Mark Mc Laughlin, Partner at the New York office of MVBMS Euro RSCG, "for everything that's changed in marketing the key is

still the relationship between the brand and the consumer” (online). He also remarks:

"Web advertising has the opportunity to be the pivot, where we take an unknown but interested consumer and get the person to invite our brand into a dialogue. Strong Web media brands create that pivot point. The advertiser gets the opportunity to invite somebody who's in one relationship—with a media brand—into another one. It's not just about serving ads to the right person—it's about finding the right person in the right mindset to start a relationship. The ability to turn that critical corner, and start a relationship on an individual level, is what makes the power of the Web so incredibly exciting" (Mc Laughlin, online).

This dialogue helps companies know their audience much better, it is a planner's dream come true, but the audience has come to expect very high standards in service, speed of response, and quantity of information. Furthermore, what used to be the communication in pre-Internet times, i.e. TV and press advertisements, is now only considered a starting point for a discussion, a statement of intent, which is up for negotiation with the consumer in this brand-consumer dialogue. However, it is worth the effort because "the ultimate ROI is not click-through or even brand awareness, it's the actual business value added—the enhanced relationship with the consumer... and online has proven to be the most efficient way to build this relationship" (Mc Laughlin, online).

The fact that this relationship-building and two-way communication process takes place in a global environment means that the brand is expected to be able to carry out its dialogue with the consumers in their own language: after all no politician would dream of asking you for your vote in a language other than the one you speak, since only in your language will they be able to truly reach you and persuade you. The same applies to brands.



In foreign markets, respect is measured in accordance to the effort that each brand shows in understanding the local culture. A new level of trust and respect between brands and consumers is more important than ever and, thanks to the Internet, more achievable. And respect is just the pre-requisite a brand has to earn in order to gain the right of engaging into a dialogue with the local target.

### *3.5. Consumers become multitasking prosumers*

The relationship between brands and consumers has changed quite dramatically in the last 20 years. Brands have become very significant in consumers' lives, almost a political choice. Therefore consumers have learnt to search for information in order to make more informed decisions. As Antonio Bueno García put it "the receiver has been transformed into an active information seeker" (2000: 37, my translation). This new kind of proactive consumer is also known as *prosumer* and, as Marian Salzman (2003: 196) explains '*prosumers* not only seek out information and opinions prior to purchase, they are marketing savvy and demand that retailers, marketers and manufacturers are aware of their value as consumers and treat them accordingly'.

The Internet has become one of the prosumer's favorite tools to gather information about brands and products. On websites, people can find many answers, and when they do not, they can send an email to the company (or call the free phone number) to enquire about a certain issue. The company is expected to reply, often in real time. Failure to do so could alienate the consumer. If the issue is recognized as important, the website's communication should then be corrected. The Internet also affords the longest<sup>2</sup> interaction time between consumer and brand of all the media, as visitors on average interact with a brand for several minutes, compared to a few seconds for TV, radio and press ads. This means the content comes under much closer scrutiny, and therefore any error or gaffe is much more likely to be picked up.

Very often prosumers are well traveled and learned, multilingual and tend to multitask in their media consumption pattern. This means that reaching them requires great co-ordination of communication across media for best use of media synergies. This also means that international consistency in a brand's core values has to be reached to avoid confusing the global target, while local declinations of these values and other "by-values" can be added to add local flavor.

### *3.6. Budget limitations*

All these changes, including the increased expectations, have taken place in the context of falling advertising budgets due to strong competition, thus forcing brands to rethink their strategies in terms of efficiency and return on investment.

## **4. Global Advertising Strategies: theory and practice.**

In the previous chapters we have agreed on a set of terms, on a theoretical working framework and have introduced the reader to the current advertising environment. In this context, the purpose of examining global advertising strategies is to determine those practices that are employed by the widest range of international advertisers, as well as to decide which ones are more convenient to digital marketers nowadays.

### *4.1. Standardization vs. adaptation of the original strategy*

The communication boom that started in the 1970s with the invention of commercial satellite communication and market globalization led advertisers to invent "international" marketing strategies under the influence of the standardization approach: promoting the same product with the same brand name and the same strategy everywhere in the world.

The strategy of standardization has been successful in a multitude of cases and is approved by marketing managers due to its cost-effectiveness. Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulos in their 1997 paper “Standardization versus Adaptation of International advertising Strategies” list the reasons that make the standardization approach appealing to multinationals:

- a) It allows the multinational corporation to maintain a consistent image and identity throughout the world.
- b) It minimizes confusion among buyers who travel frequently.
- c) It allows the multinational company to develop a single, coordinated advertising campaign across different markets.
- d) This approach results in considerable savings in media costs and advertising illustrative material.

The standardization approach has also been at the forefront of the market globalization process. Dave Chaffey, in his book *E-Business and E-Commerce Management*, notes that:

Globalization refers to the move towards international trading in a single global marketplace and also blurring between social and cultural differences between countries. Some perceive it as *Westernization* or even *Americanization*. (2002: 143)

However, a very important lesson that companies have had to learn in the age of globalization is that the blurring of cultural differences does not mean disrespecting the local culture. In every market, respect is measured in accordance to the effort that each brand shows in understanding the local culture.

In order to overcome the cultural boundaries and to transmit a message across cultures effectively and respectfully, an emerging approach that seems to achieve better results than the standardization approach consists in the adaptation

or localization of the original advertising strategy. Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulos (1997) also provide a list of the arguments introduced by the proponents of the adaptation approach:

- a) Separate messages should be used to reach buyers in different markets by fitting the message to each particular country.
- b) There are insurmountable differences (e.g. cultural, economic, legal, media and product dissimilarities) between countries and even between regions of the same country.
- c) These differences necessitate the adaptation or development of new/different advertising strategies.
- d) Assuming similar buying motives for consumers across foreign markets may be simplistic, or even dangerous.

Therefore an immediate consequence for organizations that wish to compete in the global marketplace, as noted by Quelch and Klein, is that they need an “in-depth understanding of foreign marketing environments to assess the advantages of its own products and services” (cited in Chaffey 2002: 143). Chaffey then acknowledges that:

“Language and cultural understanding may also present a problem [...] On the other hand Quelch and Klein note that the growth of the use of the Internet for business will accelerate the trend of English becoming the lingua franca of commerce.” (ibid.).

The theoretical framework for the supporters of the standardization approach in the online arena, that a single website can operate efficiently as a company’s link to the whole world by overcoming both physical and cultural boundaries, seems to include the assumption that most Internet users can speak

English. Thus English can operate as a lingua franca bringing this new digital world and its inhabitants closer together.

Relevant data show that this might no longer be the case. The notion that English is the dominant language on the Net is now considered outdated. The latest data offered by Nielsen/NetRatings and published by Internet World Stats (see figure 3) shows that more than 68% of the online population in 2005 are accessing the Internet in a language other than English.

<b>The Top Ten Languages Used in the Web</b> ( Number of Users of the Internet by Language )				
TOP TEN LANGUAGES IN THE INTERNET	Internet Users, by Language	Penetration (% Population)	Estimate for Language World Population	Language as % of Total Internet Users
<a href="#">English</a>	296,439,411	26.8 %	1,107,807,851	31.6 %
<a href="#">Chinese</a>	124,014,713	9.3 %	1,329,801,131	13.2 %
<a href="#">Japanese</a>	78,050,000	60.9 %	128,137,485	8.3 %
<a href="#">Spanish</a>	60,471,125	15.5 %	389,587,559	6.4 %
<a href="#">German</a>	55,129,733	57.3 %	96,141,368	5.9 %
<a href="#">French</a>	38,295,745	10.2 %	374,555,140	4.1 %
<a href="#">Korean</a>	31,600,000	43.3 %	73,044,495	3.4 %
<a href="#">Italian</a>	28,610,000	48.8 %	58,608,565	3.0 %
<a href="#">Portuguese</a>	28,575,400	12.6 %	227,628,673	3.0 %
<a href="#">Dutch</a>	14,655,328	60.5 %	24,224,721	1.6 %
<b>TOP TEN LANGUAGES</b>	<b>755,841,455</b>	<b>19.8 %</b>	<b>3,809,536,987</b>	<b>80.5 %</b>
Rest of the Languages	182,869,474	7.0 %	2,610,565,735	19.5 %
<b>WORLD TOTAL</b>	<b>938,710,929</b>	<b>14.6 %</b>	<b>6,420,102,722</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

(C) NOTES: (1) Internet Top Ten Languages Usage Stats were updated on July 23, 2005. (2) Average Penetration is the ratio between the sum of Internet users speaking a language and the total population estimate that speaks that referred language. (3) The most recent Internet usage information comes from data published by Nielsen/NetRatings, International Telecommunications Union, and other reliable sources. (4) The population information is from [world-gazetteer.com](#). ©Copyright 2005, Miniwatts International, Ltd. All rights reserved.

**Figure 3.** Source: [www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm)

The idea that English will be the official language in business and that commercial transactions will in the future take place in a borderless world, under the same legislation and a homogenized culture has been a common utopia in marketing circles for the last few decades. Facts show otherwise: geographical boundaries have just been replaced with cultural ones.

Other scholars in the field of translation studies have also analyzed the issue of standardization vs. adaptation. Veronica Smith and Christine Klein-

Braley in their paper “Advertising – a five-stage strategy for translation” (1995: 182-3), group approaches to the translating of advertisements into five broad categories:

- a) Do not change advertisement: retain both graphics and text.
- b) Export advertisements: play on the positive stereotypes of the originating culture, retaining logo, slogan etc. in the original. If necessary, have additional copy in target language.
- c) Straight translation.
- d) Adaptation: keep visuals, change text slightly or significantly.
- e) Revision: keep visuals, write new text.

Jettmarova, along with Piotrowska and Zauberga in their paper “New advertising markets as target areas for translation” (1995: 187), describe what they consider the three main strategies usually followed in the translation of advertisements:

- a) Major transfer = literalness (image and semantic contents preserved, exotic features of the original highlighted).
- b) Translation with minimum changes = advertising compromise = partial adaptation (various degrees of departure from the original, partly adapted discourses).
- c) Adapted translation = cultural transplantation = total adaptation (images and text transformed to appear more alluring to the target audience, exchange of picture and sound or text for a domestic milieu).

For clarity they quote Hervey and Higgins (1992: 28-35) and say that:

“Literalness and adaptation constitute extreme variants of translational policy, the continuum in between being filled in by various degrees of departure from the original advert.”

This means that each instance of advertising or marketing is a unique one and the strategy adopted is a hybrid of the levels introduced by the two groups of linguists. Even in the same case of marketing translation, a combination of strategies can be used with success.

The issue of standardization vs. adaptation is nothing new. In fact Eugene Nida and Charles Taber discussed it in 1964 when they presented the notion of dynamic equivalence and its counterpart, formal correspondence/equivalence. In their own words:

“Messages differ primarily in the degree to which content or form is the dominant consideration. Of course, the content of a message can never be completely abstracted from the form, and the form is nothing apart from content; but in some messages the content is of primary consideration, and in others the form must be given a higher priority.” (1964: 156)

This the reason the translator must choose either to be faithful to the form of the original message or try to convey to the readers of the target language the same effect that the original text caused to its readers. Nida goes on to explain that there are varying degrees of such translations:

“Between the two poles of translating (i.e. between strict formal equivalence and complete dynamic equivalence) there are a number of intervening grades, representing various acceptable standards of literary translating.” (1964: 160)

Nida and Taber describe these two poles fully in the book *The theory and practice of Translation*. The two authors also observed a tendency of the translators to gravitate towards the first pole; that is translations seem to be oriented towards dynamic equivalence as the essence of the message is valued more than its form. It is true that Nida and Taber were primarily interested in the translation of the Bible and not in marketing. However, Nida and Taber actually claimed with respect to testing bible translations: “this is something like market research” (Nida 1969: 163). In my opinion, both areas have many things in common. After all, religion, like marketing, is about spreading a message to as many people as possible.

On the web, a translated website that is tied to the form of the original one resembles the translations referred to by Nida and Taber as “distorted ones that force the receptor”, in our case the visitor of the website, “to either misunderstand or labor unduly hard”. (1969: 201) This is a luxury that marketers cannot afford, as an article at Business Week reports:

“According to a study by the University of Minnesota, if a site doesn't capture Web surfers' interest within eight seconds, they're gone--off to another one with a click of the computer mouse. Even if they stay, the average visit is only seven minutes. That leaves precious little time for Web publishers, advertisers, and merchants to promote or sell anything.” (Hof et al., 1997: online)

What makes things more interesting are the notions that the two linguists use in order to justify the choice of dynamic equivalence over formal correspondence. These are *the principle of equivalent effect* and *the notion of cultural translation or translation from culture to culture*. According to Nida and Taber, a translation that is based upon the principle of equivalent effect “is not concerned with matching the receptor-language message with the source-language message, but that the dynamic relationship between receptor and



message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message” (1964: 159). This notion is what marketers should ask for from translators when they localize websites: linguistic equivalents in a cross-cultural environment signify a successful localization. An absence of dynamic equivalence and a tendency towards formal correspondence signify a less successful adaptation of the marketing strategy. This process can be applied to both semiotic and linguistic segments of a website alike.

Finally, the strongest arguments in favor of the adaptation approach come from Marieke de Mooij, a scholar who has studied the cultural paradoxes in international marketing and who in her 1998 book *Global Marketing and Advertising* expresses her views on the subject of standardized advertising strategies in the following words:

“Markets are people, not products. There may be global products, but there are no global people. There may be global brands but there are no global motivations for buying these brands.” (1998: 3)

In conclusion, in order to ensure the accessibility of an e-marketing campaign to different cultures, the practice of adaptation or localization is the most appropriate approach. Every marketing strategy has a clear objective, to convince consumers to buy a service or a product. This is the desired effect of every marketing move, of every advertisement ever made, and this is the effect to be duplicated while translating them, to convince new consumers that speak another language to buy from the same source again and again. This is best achieved through an adaptation approach.

*4.2. Centralization vs. Decentralization of the production of the marketing campaign.*

Let us now discuss the practical aspects of a campaign. Here is a very simplified portrait of the traditional creative process followed in an advertising agency. At the center is the Creative Director, who is in control of the whole process, from the briefing to the output of the campaign. If the brief lacks information, creative directors may require some clarifications from their client or planners. Then they interpret what the client wants and think of a way of conveying the message to the target audience. This is followed by a phase of negotiation and approval of the idea with the client, then the production and implementation of the campaign. The Creative Director can decipher and assess the feedback directly and immediately and, since the results are clear and obvious quickly, praise or blame can be attributed with a certain level of confidence.

This approach breaks down when it comes to international campaigns. The Creative Directors find themselves confronted with unfamiliar cultures. Even if a brief is very detailed with regard to consumers in a foreign country, the Creative Director will lack the cultural parameters to evaluate the data and expectations. They may fail to seek clarifications because problems may not even occur to them. Issues vital in a foreign market may appear irrelevant. External consultants might warn about the most obvious pitfalls, but the Creative Director will never have the ease and confidence enjoyed in the home market. Creative Directors and their teams thus suffer from a knowledge deficit.

Since Creative Directors cannot produce a campaign with full awareness of its potential effect, their communication becomes disempowered, and their creative leadership is exposed to criticism and challenged by local agencies and markets. At this point the traditional process can follow two routes: either the campaign is developed as if for the home market and then translated and adapted for the foreign market by translators and localization specialists (as suggested by Ogilvy back in 1983), or the creative work is carried out by different creative

teams in each of the relevant markets. Let us analyze the two approaches in more detail.

#### *4.2.a. The centralized approach*

In this approach both the Creative Director and the client feel reassured because they are acting within familiar territory. However, they risk disappointment when the campaign is launched in foreign markets. The Creative Director and the team could create content that, had they known in deeper detail the target market, they would have never released. This approach also means that the creation of the foreign campaign is entrusted to an external translator, whose work the Creative Director cannot really evaluate and which might not be in line with the client's demands. To overcome this problem, the client's country managers have traditionally carried out the evaluation and given final approval, but this practice is fraught with dangers. Country managers can assess whether the language is correct, but they do not have the wider picture of the whole campaign and they often lack the sensitivity that enables a professional creative or copywriter to tell a *good* translation from a *great* translation. They might also disagree with the corporate line and try to tweak the message to suit themselves. Moreover, since the country manager is also the client, relying on the client for linguistic feedback and cultural consultancy can make both the Creative Director and the client nervous about repercussions, since it gives the client an extra chance to judge the agency.

Additionally, translating a ready-made campaign into a foreign language places an unreasonable burden on the translator. The translator is considered to be the sole agent responsible for the success or failure of a campaign in a given market, even when that market's needs and culture were not considered at an earlier stage.

#### 4.2.b. *The decentralized approach*

In the decentralized approach, on the other hand, brand and message consistency are at risk, and the result might alienate the client, who may feel that certain markets have strayed too far from the core values of the brand. This approach may also entail some other potentially adverse consequences. The implementation of a single big idea may become impossible, undermining the creative leadership. We also find what my colleague at the advertising agency Euro RSCG Mario de Bortoli used to call the *primadonna effect*: creatives from different local agencies squabbling about the superiority of their ideas and local creative teams becoming reluctant to recognize leadership. Local centrifugal forces thus tend to make the control of the campaign unfeasible. In the end the lead agency has difficulty determining responsibilities. Depending on the campaign results, there is a strong chance that the client will seek a change of lead agency.

### **5. A new framework for the development of international advertising campaigns. The role of the trans-creator.**

What we have seen so far with regard to the way advertising agencies (or networks) operate indicates that a new approach needs to be envisaged. The creative and communicative process needs to be nimble, reactive, multilingual, multicultural and economically viable.

I would like to propose a new way of handling international advertising campaigns that I believe achieves these requirements. The approach can be summarized as follows:

- a) Prioritization of communication, in accordance with the principles of Hans Vermeer's *Skopostheorie* of translation.
- b) Integration of the trans-creator in the creative process.

- c) Use of the Internet to understand the target audience.
- d) Synergized integrated communication using all media.
- e) Centralized co-ordination of multilingual communication with the help of trans-creators.

This approach should result in a convergence of the various national sub-brands towards a global brand, which can be built in the very space that advertising can create: the space of imagination.

### *5.1. Application of Skopostheorie to the translation of advertising.*

At the beginning of the dissertation, within the definition of term translation, I discussed skopos theory and concluded that its functional, flexible and adaptative approach is what cross-cultural advertisers need. In this view, translation is conceived primarily “as a process of intercultural communication, whose end product is a text which is capable of functioning appropriately in specific situations and context of use” (Schäffner, 1998a: 3). “A text in *skopostheorist* approach is regarded as an offer of information from its producer to a recipient” (Karoubi, online). “Translation is then a secondary offer of information about information originally offered in another language within another culture” (Schäffner, 1998b: 236). Therefore the translator must interpret the information contained in the source text “by selecting those features which most closely correspond to the requirements of the target situation” (Shuttleworth & Cowie, cited by Karoubi). From this point of view, the translation process is not determined retrospectively by the source text, its effects on its addressees, or the intention of its author, but prospectively by the function of the target text as determined by the target recipient’s requirements, which is the ideal scenario in global advertising.

5.2. *Integration of the trans-creator in the creative process.*

As mentioned above, the rapidly evolving market situation means that most creatives and copywriters no longer have a full picture of what their target market is like. Very often the Creative Director of an international campaign and most agents on their target market do not speak the same language and do not share the same culture. This is a problem for most brands, since foreign markets have become very sizeable and important.

What should be done? In my opinion, the Creative Leader (as opposed to the Creative Director) can retain control of the international campaign to levels that are almost equal to that of domestic campaigns. This can be done by working in close contact with a figure that I call the *trans-creator*.

Who is a trans-creator? A trans-creator is an individual with a thorough knowledge of a target culture and language. A trans-creator would usually be a trained translator with expertise in content localization and with creative awareness. The role of the trans-creator is to mediate between a Creative Leader and a target culture. Trans-creators would therefore act as *alter egos* of Creative Leaders and would provide them with the missing perceptive ability for a given language/culture. They would also provide the insight needed to produce culture-adapted messages. The trans-creator would guide the Creative Leader in the process of creation, by providing background information, interpreting feedback, contributing creative ideas, managing the right level of localization consistency (the aim is to have a global brand not a global bland), and sharing responsibility for successes and failures. The trans-creator would also help to protect the brands identity across markets.

In order for trans-creators to be successful, their relationship with the Creative Leader has to be close. The payoff can be substantial: Creative Leadership can be restored, which will enable the first step towards establishing or consolidating what I call “an international cross-cultural superbrand”.

### *5.2.a. The relationship between the Creative Leader and the trans-creator*

In order for the Creative Leader and the trans-creator to work together, they have to realize that they are creating and implementing a single big idea across more than one culture, and that this requires strong leadership. Note that I am talking about a creative idea and not necessarily about a single message that has to travel across cultures. The Creative Leader and the trans-creator have to be aware that a campaign can be consistently successful across markets only if the Creative Leader is prepared to listen to, trust and take the trans-creator's advice. Being part of the same team means that comments, suggestions and amendments can be made frankly, freely and confidentially, without fear of being judged by the client (as is the case when these functions are carried out by the country manager). When the trans-creator eventually translates the campaign that the Creative Leader has developed, their work will be much easier because the ideas have already been adapted to the target culture. In the end, when the translation is done, both can agree whether the overall campaign conveys a consistent idea, and whether this idea carries the desired values in all targeted cultures.

### *5.3. Use of the Internet to know the target audience*

The Internet is a platform on which the farthest and most diverse cultures are very close, thus highlighting the challenges of cross-cultural communication in an unprecedented way. Nevertheless, for the first time in history, we are offered the opportunity to meet those challenges by learning about foreign cultures at first hand. Enormous amounts of target-market content are available at any time to anyone with an Internet connection. By analyzing websites from the target market one can immediately notice the difference in the general feel of local online communication: things that matter are different (just visit a couple of national newspaper websites), attitudes and opinions are different, emphasis is different, and the relationship with the brands is different.

The sheer size of the interface between brands and consumers offered by the Internet is unprecedented. Thanks to the quantity of feedback, brands can accumulate a staggering corpus of knowledge on the local market culture, which can provide precious indications for offline campaigns. Moreover, the information gathered is 100% relevant to the brand and does not include a huge amount of unnecessary data. Companies are interested in how the target market relates to them; they are not interested in becoming experts in every aspect of a country. This also overcomes the one country equals one culture dogma. Unfortunately, most of the time such specific knowledge is ignored because online communications are largely kept separate from offline activities, leading to error repetition and loss of revenue, on a huge scale.

To improve quality and success rate of international campaigns—thus cutting costs and increasing the return on investment—the first step is to make full use of the enormous cultural quarry represented by the brand's websites. Trans-creators could also help in this area since they would have the means to choose what is relevant, thus identifying the values that can be used to build a cross-cultural brand. In fact, I consider this ability of prime importance and would like to explore it in more detail in my theses.

### *5.4. Integrated communication across media.*

We have seen how the Internet and all the new interactive medias can become very precious tools in understanding the target market. The integration of the media should thus start at the level of feedback, since the information gathered can help the brand in adjusting its communication or its products to local needs. Brands also have to realize that they need the dialogue-based reality of today's target markets, where understanding feedback from the consumers is as important as communication itself.

Providing a lot of two-way communication in many languages and targeting different cultures is certainly desirable for any company, both to



increase client satisfaction and to obtain more information on the consumers. However, using the traditional process to achieve this would make costs spiral out of control.

This is why integrating the trans-creator at the heart of the creative process can cut a lot of costs. It can avoid long “ping-pong” email sessions between the creative team, the translators and the local product managers, as well as by saving on production costs and research costs. It would also avoid the added cost of having to use many different creative teams. The biggest savings, however, in an environment of atomized media, are those involving the use of all the possible cross-media synergies.

In the past it was not unusual to see the same campaign being translated separately for use in the print media, on TV or online. However, recent experience has shown that such an approach is not only a waste of money but also counter-productive, since people are consumers of multiple media and inconsistencies become apparent immediately. For example, in 2003 one of my own clients decided to launch a promotional campaign for a product across several countries, in which the TV campaign, the direct marketing activity and the online activity would each be led by different agencies competing against each other. This meant that the campaign message was translated three times (a loss of money) and in three different ways (a loss in consistency). The TV and the direct marketing were to drive traffic both to the points of sale and to the website. The website was to generate traffic to the points of sale. The direct marketing was also responsible for setting up the points of sale. The discrepancies were therefore going to be impossible to miss by the target audience. A few days before the campaign was launched, after I indicated to the client the possibility of serious differences in the translations, I was offered the chance to check the TV campaign. Discrepancies were found between the advertising headline in the superimposed title of the TV ad and the one used online. This led to other checks and the discovery of inconsistencies in all

languages. Urgent editing work had to be carried out at an enormous cost, and in some cases it was too late to correct the discrepancies.

If a central repository of content<sup>3</sup> had been used, including the translations to be used across all media, this situation could have been avoided. This aspect of the process should be coordinated by the trans-creator. In fact, with their knowledge of translation and globalization management systems, they could certainly advise advertising agencies on the most suitable system for their needs.

Another finding on the way people consume media confirms the need for more media-integrated campaigns. In summer 2003, Euro RSCG Worldwide conducted an online survey of 764 American adults in an effort to gain a better understanding of new trends in media consumption. They found that media consumption in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is far less focused than in previous decades. Of those surveyed, 81% reported engaging in at least one of the eleven listed types of media consumption behavior while watching TV. The percentage was even higher among the 151 respondents identified as *prosumers*, the information-empowered and more demanding consumers who tend to be ahead of the curve in their behaviors. No fewer than 88% of the prosumers reported consuming at least one other media feed at the same time as they watched TV, compared to 79% of the 613 consumers in the sample. Some 37% of the sample combined TV viewing with at least two other media consumption behaviors. The most popular media consumed alongside TV are emails, online shopping, reading a newspaper or listening to the radio, in all sorts of combinations.

Consistency in communication is thus very important, and exploiting the synergies between the media not only allows savings on production and translation, but also ensures that the message reaches an increasingly multi-tasking target group, without any discrepancies.

### *5.5. Centralized co-ordination of multilingual communication with the help of trans-creators. A final word.*

If a market is truly global, the brand has to speak in several languages at the same time, and address several cultures. This can have a strong centrifugal effect on the core values of a brand, with each culture trying to interpret the brand according to its own values and beliefs.

Today, a brand wishing to retain strength and credibility at global level must be able to communicate universally recognized core values at the same time as it adds a local spin in each target market. By delivering a constant message around a certain core value, every new instance of communication will reinforce the association between that value and the brand. Any contradiction in the message could confuse the consumer and damage the association with the universal value. The way this universal value needs to be delivered depends very much on the target culture since, as Child (2002: online) points out, “in presenting the same face to the world, a company risks presenting the wrong face to entire nations”.

I believe that the only way to guarantee consistency in the core values and the respect of local needs is to have a centralized process, which includes a person who can help the brand communicate its values to the target markets, the trans-creator. The same person will be able to decipher the feedback and feed the new cycle of communication. However, this function (i.e. the linguistic function of advertising) can be properly performed by trans-creators only if they become a permanent part of the creative process. As Guidère acknowledges, “the language function needs to be permanently ingrained in the communication process, a language function which covers a much wider spectrum of competences than that of pure linguistic transcoding” (2002: online).

Since we are talking about commercial communication, the ultimate function of the trans-creator is that of helping the Creative Leader to create the most effective and flexible adaptations, with a wide range of applicability to

various media, in order to save costs. This means that their influence on the creative idea is bound to be significant, especially because, according to Anholt:

“Creative people are often quite bad at distinguishing between concepts that are striking because they sound good in their own language, and concepts that are good because they are actually based on a more universal truth, which will appeal to human beings on a profounder level, irrespective of language and culture”. (1998: online)

By identifying those universally recognized values, the trans-creator can help brands discover what their core values will have to be in a completely new market, the global market.

Again, technology can help trans-creators find solutions in their work. Translation memory tools, glossaries, intranet systems and content management systems allow the trans-creator, the Creative Leader and their team (including planners) to be in control of the communication and to guarantee a maximum of consistency and flexibility across the media and across cultures. The process does not need to be duplicated in each market, thus increasing effectiveness and reducing costs.

One of the consequences of lower production costs, especially when it comes to the adaptation of advertising, is that the foreign markets that were previously unviable in terms of communication return on investment can now be explored thanks to the money saved. This, in turn, makes the brand even more international.

## **6. A hypothesis. Different translation strategies for different products:**

### **Tradition-free vs. Culture-bound products**

Having analyzed the current situation international marketers have to deal with, the strategies traditionally followed when dealing with cross-cultural campaigns and proposed a profile for the ideal person to help in the international creative process, I would like to move now into discussing a non-textual dependent translation strategy. I want to remark that at the beginning of this dissertation, and in the previous chapter, I emphasized that a functional approach to translation is the kind of strategy suited to achieving the translation of cross-cultural advertising textual components (with text being made up of verbal and non-verbal elements), in line with Vermeer's Skopos theory and even Arrojo's anti-essentialist discourse. I still agree with that. However, I now want to add a new layer to that functional translation strategy that I think is very important to the translation of advertising materials.

I would like to propose an approach based on the nature of the product being promoted, a concept that was tested with the work carried out at the Translation, localization & cross-cultural services department I managed at Euro RSCG between 1999 and 2004. This approach was first presented at the *Multilingual digital world conference* organised by the Localisation Research Centre in Dublin in 2003 in the presentation "Challenges of cross-cultural communication".

In my opinion, all products in the world can be divided in two categories:

1. Tradition-free (global) products.
2. Culture-bound (local) products.

*Tradition-free products* can be identified with technological, scientific or financial products, whose main selling points are based on performance. They

are the engines that drive globalization since they do not encounter much resistance.

On the other hand, *culture-bound products* are those deeply rooted in national, local or sub-cultural traditions. For example, food, entertainment, lifestyle, some sports, travel, etc. Culture-bound products take longer to adapt, and in order to enter the global era they often have to change their image substantially and create a new set of values suited for the international market which often coexist alongside the home market ones.

### *6.1. Tradition-free products translation strategies*

Tradition-free products require much less cross-cultural adaptation, since their perception and values are based on facts, performance and achievement; they are measurable and not very emotional. Communication from technological, financial or scientific companies is usually quite easily adapted from one culture to another, at least when it comes to core values. There might be local variations in the perceived purpose of technology within the local context, but no fundamental resistance. This means that the global strategy can be very consistent, and that much of the creative work and content can be shared across the media and across nations. The level of cultural adaptation required in the translation of technological promotional material is far less than the one needed for culture-bound products.

It comes as no surprise that these products and their brands are leading the process of globalization, but while this has taken place, the quality of their communication has had to improve internationally and become consistent across borders, and across media. I believe that the reason for this is that the main clients of these brands are precisely those cosmopolitan, well-traveled, media-multitasking prosumers who belong to a new class of global citizens, who are money-rich and time poor, computer and media savvy and often multilingual and/or multicultural. These are the new aristocracy that brands want to woo, as

the Euro RSCG Worldwide report *Prosumers 101* (2004: 10) indicates. But reaching them requires a very consistent communication capable of building a strong global brand, and a sophisticated media strategy in tune with the multiple media consumption pattern of this target group. Examples of this would include Intel, Ing Direct, HP, Apple, Sony, Novartis and Bayer.

## *6.2. Culture-bound products translation strategies*

Culture-bound products require a much more *glocal* (global but local) approach. While traditional local products have slowly gone global thanks to mass travel and tourism, satellite TV and the Internet, the global market has proved a lot less homogeneous for these products. Perceptions can be very different from one country to another. While computer technology or detergents do not seem to be particularly linked to a nationality, food and drink products, the entertainment industry, or even tobacco products and the car industry appear to be very culture-bound. So the positioning of the same brand can vary enormously between countries. The first obvious difference in perception is the local vs. foreign. Being qualified as foreign can be fine if the perception is positive. For example German cars are considered superior to their local equivalents in many countries. But sometimes it is not. Instant coffee is not even regarded as coffee by Italians: they regard it as some barbarian brew from abroad.

So how do brands work to promote their culture-bound products? They have to resort to imaginative strategies, either exploiting positive local perceptions, or addressing the negative ones by changing them. Brands educate a given market to their product, and the local culture finds a place in which to position it. The greatest challenge posed by globalization is to build new global super-brands with internationally shared brand values, which allow for local interpretations. This is the most pioneering area of today's commercial communication.

Finally, the translation of material referent to culture-bound products is much more difficult than for tradition-free products since the information to convey to the target market and the purpose will have to be carefully thought.

In the case study that follows I will look at how culture-bound products such as beer and coffee position themselves in markets as diverse as the UK and Italy.

## **7. Case study: The advertising of culture-bound products such as coffee and beer in the UK and Italy**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide some real life examples that hopefully will clarify the need to understand well the concept of culture-bound products. The aim is also to demonstrate the theoretical concept introduced in the previous chapter in an applied setting, thus bridging the gap between theory and practice.

The study is based on the actual work carried out between 2002 and 2003 as part of a pitch for the UK advertising account of the Italian beer Peroni Nastro Azzurro. The work on the coffee brands was carried out in 2003, but just as an internal exercise to further study the translation strategies used in culture-bound products.

For the analysis of the advertisements, I followed Jon Wilkin's approach, as described in chapter 3, and analyzed the market and consumer differences. I particularly focused on the consumer differences, since culture-bound products depend heavily on them in my opinion. I also checked the cultural differences, the communication syntax differences and the experience with the brand in the market. Then I checked the degree of standardization or adaptation between the advertisements produced for each country, trying to see what kind of functional approach had followed the advertising agency when translating the campaign.

Hofstede's classification of countries was particularly insightful and the ads clearly show that the UK is more individualist and has a lower power



distance index (lowest respect for authority – a legacy of the punk era?) than Germany and Italy. In the classification Germany is the most collectivist among the three and Italy the culture with the highest power index.

In terms of media, I have mainly checked TV ads and websites, as well as press advertising or direct marketing when available. In all online examples it seems that advertisers agree with Chaffey's opinion that online channels should be used to support the whole buying process as well as further development of customers relationships, as we discussed in chapter 2.

I do not want to end this introduction without mentioning that the case study is not terribly thorough and detailed. The aim I had with the creation of it was to have a set of examples that could quickly illustrate the concept of culture-bound product as well as provide some light into why they are so much harder to translate than tradition-free products.

### *7.1. Beer*

In this section I analyze several beer ads from Italy, some promoting foreign beer brands and others promoting the Italian Peroni/Nastro Azzurro brand. I will then show Peroni as advertised in the UK to try and understand what this brand stands for in each of the two markets and what distinguishes them.

#### *7.1.a. German beer goes to Italy – Beck's – TV*

Please go to the folder "TvAds" in the accompanying CD and double click on "1-ItalyBecks.mpg" to see the commercial.

This ad contains the elements that define what beer means to Italians:

1. Sailing (beer is something fresh and dynamic)
2. Hot weather (beer is considered a refreshment)
3. Friends on the beach (beer has a social aspect and is mainly drunk during the summer)

The tagline "The Beck's experience" is in English, which conveys a more international feel. This is because in Italy beer is perceived as a foreign product

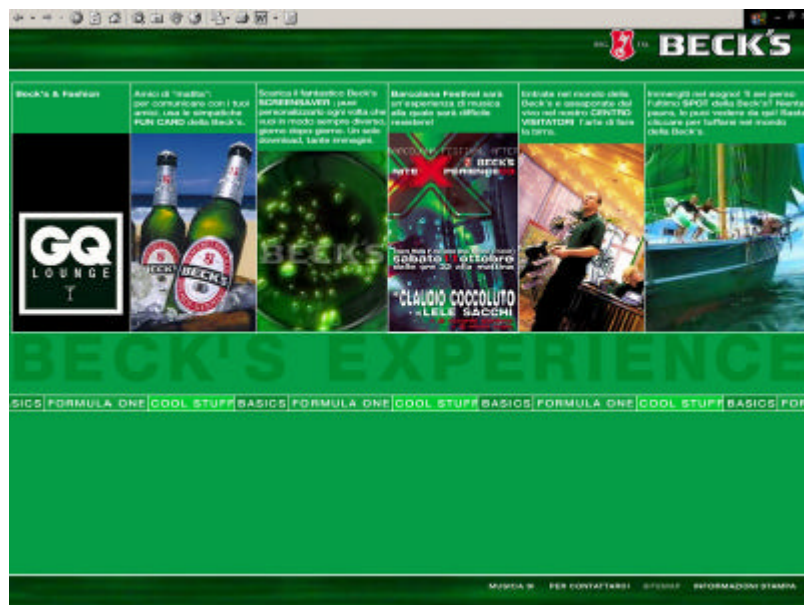
and therefore an international character is an asset. Also, in the past few years Beck's sponsored the Kite Surfing Championship in Italy, which links into the above-mentioned elements.

So as you can see, in this case the Germans have done a good job at disguising a foreign product as something that could fit in perfectly with what Italians think of beer.

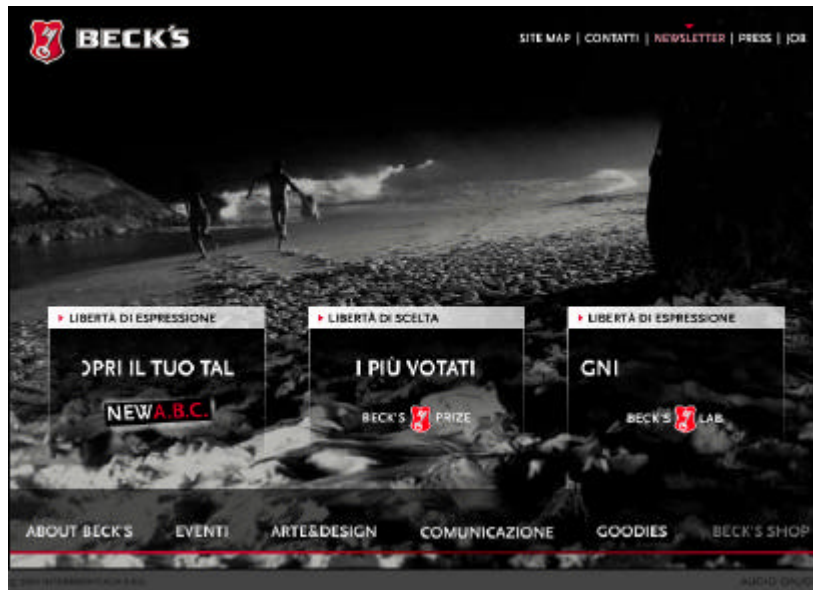
### *7.1.b. German beer goes to Italy – Beck's – Website*

The Italian web site is quite lively and content-heavy (see below the 2004 and 2005 versions of the site) reflecting Hofstede's classification of Italy as a nation with a high uncertainty avoidance index.

The site also the values linked to beer in Italy: seaside, refreshment, and fun with friends. The latest dimension associated with it is fashion, and the website does not forget this. It also includes a lot of elements in English in order to convey that it is a foreign product and therefore something trendy.



**Figure 4.** Beck's Italy 2004 website.



**Figure 5.** Beck's Italy 2005 website. [www.becks.it](http://www.becks.it)

#### *7.1.c. German beer goes to the UK – Beck's – Website*

Countries like the UK or other northern European countries prefer uncluttered environments as we can see on this screenshot of the UK website of Beck's (see figure 6). Again reflecting Hofstede's classification of Britain as a low uncertainty avoidance nation. Furthermore, it also reflects the fact that in the UK minimalism is associated with modernism.

This link with contemporary fashion is also represented in the fact that in the UK Beck's is associated with contemporary arts through the Beck's Futures exhibition and prize.



Figure 6. Beck's UK 2004 website.



Figure 7. Beck's UK 2005 website. www.becks.co.uk

#### *7.1.d. Italian beer in Italy – Peroni – TV*

Please go to the folder “TvAds” and double click on “2-ItalyPeroniFridge.mpg” to see the commercial.

The Peroni blonde woman is one of the great historical icons of Italian advertising. In Italian, lager is known as “blonde beer”, because of its color, and the blonde woman is therefore a personification of beer. In this ad Peroni celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary as “your natural blonde”, with a play on words, which intends to convey the natural aspect of the beer. Italian men, moreover, view blonde women as exotic and exciting creatures from the North (Germany, Holland, Scandinavia), and therefore the imagery has a strong appeal. It is interesting to notice that Peroni ads have no foreign elements and contain no English.

Again the classic elements qualifying beer in Italy:

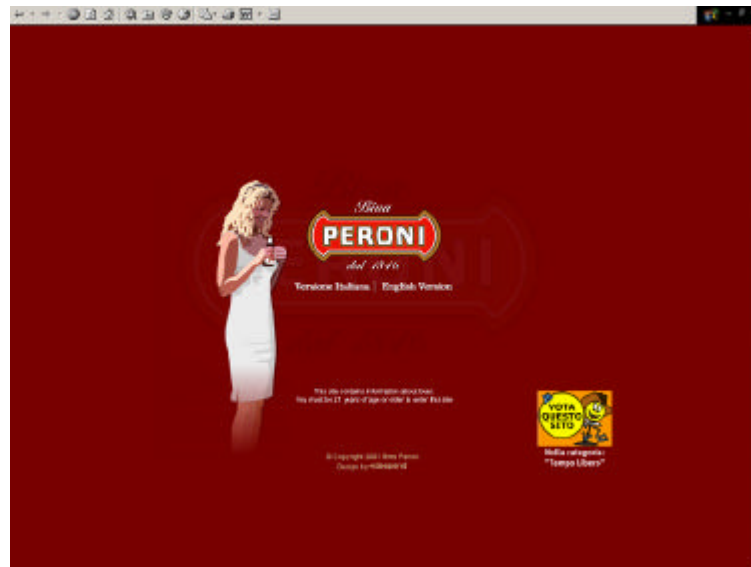
- a) Friends (beer is a social drink, as opposed to romantic)
- b) Summer
- c) Beer as cool refreshment.

Let’s have a look at another ad. Please go to the folder “TvAds” and double click on “3-ItalyPeroniBlonde.mpg” to see the commercial. In this ad the man encounters the Peroni blonde everywhere he goes. This is to convey the idea that Peroni is available everywhere.

This ad also uses one of Italy’s most well remembered taglines “Call me Peroni, and I will be your beer”. Such a tagline would not go down well in the UK, where women’s rights activists would have a field day.

*7.1.e. Italian beer in Italy – Peroni – Website*

As you can see below, the landing page for Peroni in Italy shows the historical symbol of the brand: the blonde woman. In Italy the Peroni brand is associated with cheap national beer and this is also symbolized by the blonde woman.



**Figure 8.** Peroni, Italy, landing page. [www.peroni.it](http://www.peroni.it)

Once you are in the site, as in the Italian Beck's site, there is plenty of information for the consumer. In fact the site seems a bit cluttered. This is because Italians, as well as Germans, not only love technology, design and quality, in Hofstede's map both cultures are very close in terms of the degree of masculinity and strong uncertainty avoidance both nations have. This need for uncertainty avoidance explains the overload of information.



**Figure 9.** Peroni, Italy, 2004 website.



**Figure 10.** Peroni, Italy, 2005 website. [www.peroni.it](http://www.peroni.it)

#### *7.1.f. Italian beer in Italy – Peroni Nastro Azzurro – TV*

Please go to the folder “TvAds” and double click on

“4-Italy NastroAzzurroValentino.mpg” to see the commercial.

The Peroni sub-brand Nastro Azzurro is the one associated with sports sponsorships in Italy, while it has been used as the core brand abroad.

In this ad we can see the other great component of the Peroni image, the endorsement of some Italian sports stars such as Valentino Rossi (motorbike racer), who is young and fun, and perfectly represents and appeals to the Italian

youth. It adds an element of entertainment and dynamism to the brand. Previous sports endorsement included the Nastro Azzurro yachting team.

*7.1.g. Italian beer goes to the UK– Peroni Nastro Azzurro – TV*

Please go to the folder “TvAds” and double click on “5-UKPeroniNastroAzzurro.mpg” to see the commercial.

The message and style of this advertisement are completely different to what we have previously seen in Italy. In this commercial we see paint dripping down the side of a beautiful shorthaired woman’s head. The paint oozes sensually down the head and the neck. The ideas conveyed are of arty character, sensuality, Italian flag, creativity, and refined humor as opposed to the brash laddish humor on Brit beer ads. It is a very upmarket proposition.

The commercial also reflects British individualism and masculinity identified by Hofstede. The ad seems to suggest that if the consumer buys the produce he will stand out from the crowd, therefore reinforcing the individualistic message. Marieke de Mooij (1998: 273) suggests that

"the United Kingdom is the only European country in which class differences are recognized in advertising. Some commercials are designed for the lower classes. They do not appear to be making a hard sell. They show real people telling the viewer how inexpensive the product is, yet show it also meets the best standards. These commercials are not stylish or edited or cut at a fast pace. In contrast are the advertisements directed at the upper classes, whose buying power is targeted for trend-setting images, style and brand names. These possibly reflect the other half of the society in which competition, striving for individualism, and style are all important."

This ad fits in perfectly with her description.



#### *7.1.h. Italian beer goes to the UK– Peroni Nastro Azzurro – Press Ad*

The press ads reinforce the TV advertising and show how Peroni becomes sensual when going international. Nastro Azzurro is not associated with sports but with Italian sensuality in the UK.



**Figure 11.** Nastro Azzurro UK. Press advertising.

#### *7.2. Coffee*

Following beer I tackle coffee by analyzing several sets of commercials for the Italian coffee brand Lavazza and for Nescafé. This will help us understand how, when we talk about coffee, the word itself covers a completely different semantic field in the two cultures (Italy and the UK). A sign that Nescafé cannot sell as coffee in Italy is to be seen in the Nescafé “Brunch” site, especially developed for Italy.

*7.2.a. Coffee – Italy – Nescafé Cappuccino – TV*

Please go to the folder “TvAds” and double click on “6-ItalyNescaféCappuccino.mpg” to see the commercial.

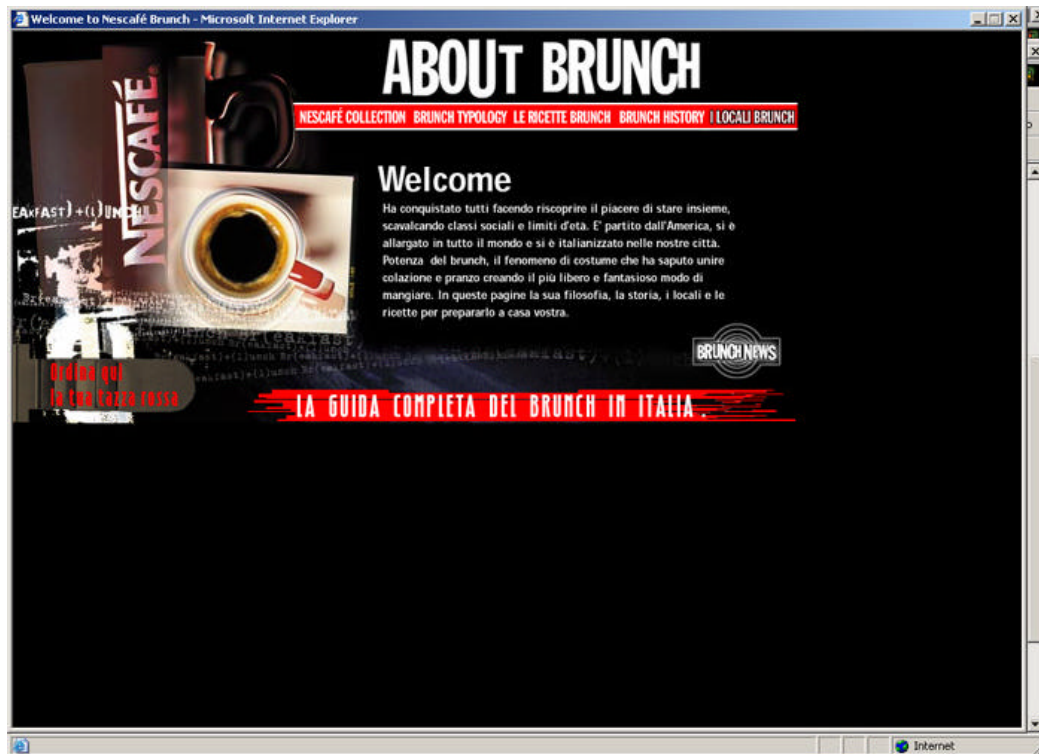
Nescafé has had a hard time selling in Italy. It is consumed almost exclusively by foreign expats living there. The main problem is that for Italians coffee is identified as a small cup of espresso. Therefore if espresso *is* what good coffee should be, instant coffee can only be perceived as bad. It also lacks all the rituals that accompany Italian coffee making (espresso machine, little hob caffettiera), and drinking (e.g. standing at a bar counter).

Nescafé tries therefore to sell products that are not “really” coffee, like the Nescafé Cappuccino. In the ad we see that the situation is a mix of social, fun and romantic, but not “sensual”. The highlighted benefit is the creaminess of the product, and not the goodness of the coffee.

*7.2.b. Coffee – Italy – Nescafé “Brunch” – Website*

Following the We-are-not-selling-coffee rule, Nescafé created a website called Brunch for its classic Nescafé brand: [www.brunch.it](http://www.brunch.it) and [www.nescafe.it](http://www.nescafe.it)

The interesting thing about this site is what is missing: the word coffee is never mentioned; and the Nescafé product is presented as something international and cosmopolitan (therefore foreign and not coffee), which is linked to the latest fashion that Italy has imported from abroad “The Brunch”. Nescafé becomes a part of the Brunch experience, because they both belong to the category of foreign and international. Italians will drink Nescafé during a brunch in the same way that they go to an Irish pub to drink beer: to get the REAL experience.



**Figure 12.** Nescafe Brunch Italy. [www.brunch.it](http://www.brunch.it)

#### *7.2.c. Coffee – Italy – Nescafé Latte – TV*

Please go to the folder “TvAds” and double click on “7-ItalyNescafeLatte.mpg” to see the commercial.

Some of what I mentioned above about Nescafé Cappuccino applies here too. The situation we see in the ad is very social plus the ad tries to show the ability of the product to wake people up. Caffè Latte is also always pronounced in full, probably to move the mind of the consumer away from the word coffee. The tagline is “It wakes up your milk” (Sveglia il tuo latte). Again, it falls short of mentioning the goodness of the coffee.

#### *7.2.d. Coffee – Italy – Lavazza – TV*

Please go to the folder “TvAds” and double click on

“8-ItalyLavazza.mpg” to see the commercial.

This ad is incredibly culture-bound. It assumes that the viewer will be familiar with all the Christian/Catholic iconography, with the idea of sin, confession, repentance, forgiveness and punishment, with Saint Peter, with the traditional image of the Carabinieri (the Italian state police). It is a very traditional comedy set up, with the two friends being disloyal to each other, but then sharing the punishment. The coffee, presented in a proper espresso cup (it would not be coffee otherwise), acquires a heavenly attribute. In the final scene with the snow machine one of the characters complains about the backwardness of Italian snowmaking at the beginning of the third Millennium, (a typical Italian thing to do since Italians are convinced other countries have more advanced technology).

The sentence “Crema e Gusto, ogni momento è quello giusto” (Cream and Taste, every moment is the right moment) is very well remembered in Italy. It also reinforces the Italian belief in the “sacred” nature of coffee breaks.

#### *7.2.e. Coffee – International – Lavazza – Website*

To launch its product internationally, Lavazza had to make its coffee a fashionable ritual, detached from its Italian idiosyncratic uses. The shift is certainly well represented by the <http://www.lavazza.com> website. The ultramodern design conveys an idea of contemporariness.



Figure 13. Lavazza International 2004 website.

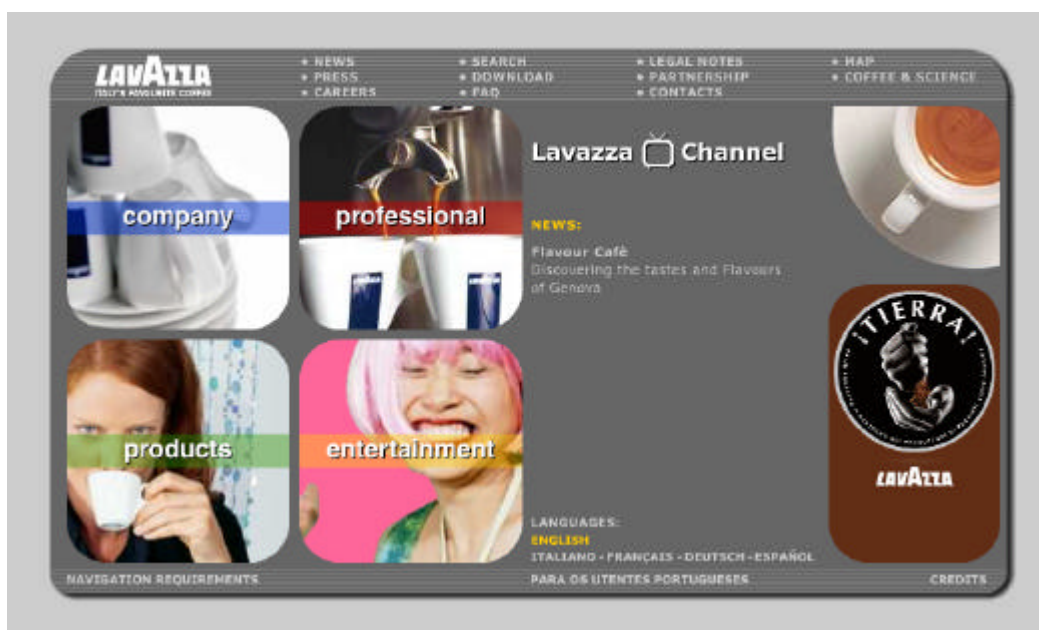


Figure 14. Lavazza International 2005 website. www.lavazza.com

*7.2.f. Coffee – International – Lavazza – Calendar*

The link to contemporary art and creativity is materialized through the Lavazza calendar, by now one of the most talked about calendars in the world beside the Pirelli calendar. Each year a different famous photographer makes a few shoots around the theme of coffee. The 2004 calendar was the work of Thierry Le Gouès. The theme is Mission to Espresso.



**Figure 15.** Lavazza 2004 calendar.

For 2005 the author was the award winning Dutch photographer Erwin Olaf and the theme is the Circus of Glamour.





**Figure 16.** Lavazza 2005 Calendar. July & August.



**Figure 17.** Lavazza 2005 Calendar. September & October.

*7.2.g Coffee – UK– Nescafé Original – TV*

Please go to the folder “TvAds” and double click on “9-UKNescafeOriginal.mpg” to see the commercial.

The dizziness of the morning is conveyed by the “underwater” shots. But what we can see in this ad is that to the UK audience Nescafé means coffee. It is considered comforting and cozy as well as energizing. It has more intimate traits than its cappuccino and caffelatte counterparts in Italy. The people portrayed are filmed in close-up, so you identify much more with their individual psychological space, and their interaction with other people is significantly less dynamic than on the Italian ads.

*7.2.h. Coffee – UK– Nescafé Gold Blend – TV*

Please go to the folder “TvAds” and double click on “10-UKNescafeGoldBlend.mpg” to see the commercial.

Very culture-bound. The flat-mate culture, which in Britain is partially dictated by the very high cost of property and rents, as well as by a need for independence from the family (which simply does not exist in Italy), generates a situation which is likely in the UK but very unusual in the eyes of Italians. There is also a link between coffee and romance, which is alien to Italians, especially referring to instant coffee.

*7.2.i. Coffee – International – Nescafé – Website*

The most striking fact when visiting the worldwide website for Nescafé is that it does not have a channel for Italy. As I mentioned before, Italians cannot accept instant coffee as coffee. Therefore it seems to me that Nestlé has learnt the lesson.





Figure 18. Nescafé International 2004 website.



Figure 19. Nescafé International 2005 website. www.nescafe.com

*7.2.j. Coffee – UK – Lavazza – TV*

Please go to the folder “TvAds” and double click on “11-UKLavazzaRossa.mpg” to see the commercial.

This ad contains all the clichés British people have of Italians, with a weird concept of romance, the jealous husband, the over-zealous stalker. To Italians nothing could be more irritating. The music is not Italian but Spanish, and the clichés are unbearable for a country striving to be considered on a par with its northern neighbors. Italians rarely use glass cafetières and the clothes are too unfashionable.

*7.3. Some thoughts with regards to the case study*

Understanding what is country-specific and what is universal is essential for the design of marketing and translation strategies that can be successfully implemented across national markets. In this case study I have tried to present an approach to this situation but from the product side. In my view, before coming up with a creative idea that can sell a product internationally, it is very important to determine the kind of product we are dealing with. To help in this situation I have introduced the reader to two categories of products: tradition-free (global) products and culture-bound (local) products. I believe all products in the world fit in either of those two categories. With regards to the categories, I mentioned that culture-bound products are the most difficult ones to sell internationally and I have provided a few examples to demonstrate how advertisers tackle the problems.

In general, I hope I have made it clear that international marketing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not about ignoring or overriding cultural differences, but about understanding, accommodating and harnessing them in the service of global

brand building. In fact, as I said at the beginning, international brand building is no longer a choice, it is a necessity. And culture is not the problem: it is the solution.

## **8. Towards a truly global brand?**

In 1990 the Belgian translation theorist Dirk Delabastita asserted that:

advertising texts—like literature—are a clear representation of the social and cultural environment of a given language or country; its nature is dynamic and metamorphic: the influence it receives could be comparable to the one it exerts. (1990: 97)

When Delabastita wrote those lines, two-way dialogue was not yet normal in corporate communication. His statement, however, can help us understand the nature of the interaction between corporate communication and culture. If corporate communication has to move within the culture it addresses by using codes familiar to that culture, it also has the possibility of contributing to the evolution of the culture. By coordinating the communication of various target markets according to the principles of *Skopos* theory, in this case according to their commercial and branding objectives, brands can achieve a cross-cultural convergence towards a super-brand, with core values that are shared across all markets, and additional local values that increase relevance in specific markets.

The main difference between trans-creators and traditional translators, even those involved in advertising campaigns, is that they know how to put their knowledge of the target culture at the service of specific commercial aims or *Skopoi*.

What remains to be defined is where in each culture the super-brand and its core values can find a suitable place. While it is true that each culture has a rich heritage to draw on, there is always an area that each culture offers to the creative mind: the world of imagination, which is the remit of advertising. By creating a new layer in the collective imagination of consumers worldwide, a strong cross-cultural core of values can be established, capable of interacting with each culture on its own terms and overcoming cultural antagonisms. In order to define this new space, two fundamental sets of skills are needed: the linguistic and cultural skills of the trans-creator, and the creativity and imagination of the Creative Leader. When these skills work together at their best, core values can be conveyed to many cultures, as brands like Nike or Coca-Cola know.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A quick word on the anti-globalization movement. In the context of global homogenization, the local cultures not only can, but should survive. The communications revolution, thanks to its rapidity and outreach, has made the world a global village. On the other hand, inter-ethnic, inter-cultural and inter-religious conflicts are prevalent everywhere. Multiculturalism is a hotly debated topic, particularly after the London bombings in the summer of 2005 and the massive increase in the number of immigrants settling in Spain. Subaltern groups and indigenous peoples are affirming and defending their cultural and social identities. People are searching for their roots. Are these rear-guard actions of a dying social order? Can they withstand the onslaught of the globalizing forces? Many people think that they cannot. They may even welcome global homogenization as the context for building up global community. I think that the contemporary situation is quite complex but that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Furthermore, I intend to look at it analytically in the thesis. With regards to authors, I personally think that the work and thoughts of Rosario G. Manalo, Helena Norber-Hodge and Michael Amaladoss (see References for further details) are inspirational. They could provide further details, particularly in order to have a clear idea of culture and cultures so that to understand the impact globalization might have in them and in order to find a way to handle the dynamic of globalization.

<sup>2</sup> US Internet users say they are spending more time online and less with other media, according to a survey by Burst! Media. The survey found a sharp increase in Internet use (with 60.9% indicating that they were spending more time online in April 2005 than a year ago), while use of other media held steady or declined.

Over 35% of respondents said they were watching less TV, and nearly as many said they were spending less time with magazines. Some 30.3% said newspapers were getting less of their attention. The findings also show that consumers are continuing to spend their media time among various media types which has made it increasingly difficult for marketers to not only reach their target consumer, but also get their attention. Clearly advertisers are going where the audiences are going, as spending on the Internet also continues to grow. eMarketer, May 2005.

(Source:

[www.etcnewmedia.com/review/default.asp?SectionID=10&CountryID=93](http://www.etcnewmedia.com/review/default.asp?SectionID=10&CountryID=93))

<sup>3</sup> For further information on the topic of advertising creativity and content management systems, see the notes and the presentation *Fusing Technologies: Website localization using content management, translation memory and database-driven image production tools*, that I gave at the Localisation Industry Standards Association conference in October 2002 in Heidelberg, Germany. Available from [http://www.lisa.org/archive\\_domain/](http://www.lisa.org/archive_domain/)