

CULTURAL DIMENSIONS IN INTERNATIONAL ADVERTISING: A HOFSTEDE-BASED ANALYSIS OF ITALIAN BRANDS IN DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

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Abstract. This study examines how Italian brands adapt video advertisements when entering Eastern European markets, employing Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework to bridge the gap between theoretical cultural models and their practical application in international advertising. Through a qualitative content analysis of Gucci and Barilla campaigns in Italy and Poland, the research addresses gaps in the existing literature: the underrepresentation of Eastern and Southern European markets in international advertising research that applies Hofstede's dimensions, and the lack of studies that cover all dimensions together. The analysis employed a three-point scoring system (–1, 0, 1) for each dimension, applied to four video advertising elements: messaging, visual style, characters, and narrative. Findings revealed a hierarchy of cultural dimensions in video advertising representation. Power Distance, Individualism versus Collectivism, and Masculinity versus Femininity frequently proved difficult to convey visually, whereas Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation and Indulgence versus Restraint demonstrated clearer representation and more successful adaptation across campaigns. Based on these findings, the study proposes a comprehensive tool for international marketing specialists, comprising a cultural profile engine, an AI generation module and a recommendations system, serving as an informed starting point to inspire culturally sensitive creative directions.

Keywords: Hofstede's cultural dimensions, international marketing communication, cross-cultural advertising, AI in marketing

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Introduction

Culture fundamentally shapes how communication messages are perceived, making it a critical consideration for international advertising. Among the most influential cultural frameworks is Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, a well-established systematic model for understanding cross-cultural differences. It emerged as one of the most widely used and cited social models of the twentieth century, largely because of its ability to produce quantitative representations of cultural variation. The framework enables scoring of each of the six factors, thereby making cross-national comparisons easier¹.

This paper analyses Italian advertising campaigns through the lens of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. According to the Best Countries Report 2022, Italy's brand value grows at 8.6%, ranking first in cultural influence and prestige². In 2024, Italy ranked third in the Anholt Nation Brands Index, being one of the most influential indices in the industry³. With a well-known global heritage and a strong domestic identity, Italy is an insightful country to explore in international advertising. These factors highlight the relevance of selecting Italian brands for this examination.

International advertising has become an increasingly explored research area, with 122 articles published between 1990 and 2002 and 57 studies applying Hofstede's cultural framework from 1992 to 2012 (Săplăcan & Alt 2018). Nevertheless, there remains a significant need to devote more attention to underrepresented regions, such as Eastern and Southern Europe (Săplăcan & Alt 2018). The most studied cultural dimension is individualism/collectivism (Saleem & Larimo 2017). Consequently, there is a lack of studies covering other dimensions, or exploring them all together.

Although numerous studies have examined international advertising through the lens of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, few have conducted comparative analyses of domestic and international campaigns for the same brand, particularly with

¹ Greene J. 2024. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. *EBSCO Research Starters*. URL: <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/business-and-management/hofstedes-cultural-dimensions-theory> (accessed 15 November 2025).

² Pigoli A. & Mancini V. Nation Branding: The Impact of a Country's Image on the Economy. *Rome Business School*. URL: <https://romebusinessschool.com/blog/nation-branding-the-impact-of-a-countrys-image-on-the-economy-2/> (accessed 15 November 2025).

³ Anholt Nation Brands Index (NBI) 2024: Key Highlights and Trends. *The Place Brand Observer*. URL: <https://placebrandobserver.com/anholt-nation-brands-index-nbi-2024/> (accessed 15 November 2025).

a comprehensive evaluation of all six dimensions. Moreover, limited attention has been paid to identifying which cultural dimensions are most frequently considered and how they are operationalised in practice.

This lack of focused research contributes to the absence of practical, actionable frameworks for businesses to guide culturally informed advertising strategies. While companies increasingly acknowledge the importance of cultural sensitivity, there remains a need for systematic tools to effectively integrate Hofstede's framework into advertising decision-making across diverse markets.

The primary objective of this study is to examine how Italian brands adapt their advertising strategies to cultural differences when entering Eastern and Central European markets. By conducting a comparative analysis of video advertisements in Italy and selected Eastern European countries, the study evaluates the application of all six of Hofstede's cultural dimensions in advertising design and narrative, and identifies which dimensions are most critical for effective cultural adaptation. Ultimately, the study seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical models and real-world marketing practices by offering practical guidance on how companies can systematically apply Hofstede's framework in advertising planning and localisation efforts.

A qualitative research method is applied through comparative content analysis of video advertisements. The study includes a descriptive examination of the ads, an evaluation based on Hofstede's six cultural dimensions, and a quantitative scoring system to compare each ad's score with those of the target country. Domestic and international versions are examined to assess how cultural traits are expressed or adapted, enabling the identification of the dimensions that demonstrate the most consistent localization. The research analyses video advertisements from two Italian brands in distinct sectors: Gucci in Italy (fashion) and Barilla in Italy and Poland (food).

These advertisements are chosen to reflect both cultural distance and real-world marketing activity in Southern and Eastern Europe.

Literature Review

Hofstede's cultural framework has been widely used to examine how culture influences advertising. To systematically analyse how this model has been applied in international advertising research, publications from 2010 to 2025 are examined across Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar, focusing on geographical coverage, dimensional frequency and methodological approaches.

Current research reveals a strong methodological shift towards digital platforms, particularly Facebook* advertising, with traditional media such as TV and print appearing less frequently in recent studies (Abuhashesh et al. 2021; Laroche et al. 2014). Geographically, while major regions including the USA, India, Spain, Indonesia, Japan,

* Facebook is owned by Meta Platforms, an organisation designated as extremist and banned in the Russian Federation.

and Central Europe are represented, specific countries in Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe and the Middle East remain underexplored (Săplăcan & Alt 2018). This Western-centric bias is reflected in broader trends: Hofstede's framework initially generated limited research (109 papers in 20 years), but adoption surged post-2000, peaking at 106 annual publications by 2015, with research remaining predominantly psychology-focused and limited in non-Western contexts (Zhou & Kwon 2020).

Regarding dimensional analysis, individualism/collectivism emerges as the most studied dimension (Saleem & Larimo 2017), while comprehensive studies examining all six dimensions simultaneously remain rare. Most research incorporates multiple dimensions but seldom provides a holistic analysis (Cheong et al. 2010; Valaei et al. 2017). Common methodological approaches include Likert-scale surveys, content analysis quantifying cultural themes, cross-cultural comparative studies and meta-analysis (Hassan 2015; Tong & Lou 2025; Moon & Chan 2005; Hornikx et al. 2023).

Despite widespread application, Hofstede's model faces significant criticism. The framework's static nature presents culture as fixed, when cultures evolve through globalisation, technological advancement and generational shifts. Reducing cultural differences to numerical scores risks oversimplifying complex societal dynamics and overlooking regional variations within countries (de Mooij 2015).

Additionally, the assumption that national-level traits apply uniformly to individuals ignores the influence of personal values, socioeconomic status and media exposure beyond national culture on consumer behavior. This limitation is particularly problematic in countries with substantial regional distinctions, where diverse cultures are treated as monolithic (McSweeney 2002).

The model's Western-centric origins, based on IBM employee surveys from the 1970s, raise concerns about its relevance to contemporary non-Western, digitally connected societies. Furthermore, fundamental theoretical disagreements about culture's definition persist: while Parsons (1951) framed culture as the system of value-orientation whose generalised symbols of action orientation solved the problem of double contingency in social systems, Luhmann (1995) later challenged this view, removing culture as the only solution to the problem of double contingency.

This study utilises primary materials published by brands and publicly accessible media content. Video advertisements were sourced from official brand YouTube channels: “Gucci Lido” campaign⁴ and Barilla's “*In viaggio verso di voi*” campaign⁵. For the localised version, a third-party source was consulted — Media Marketing Polska Online⁶ for Barilla's Polish campaign.

⁴ The Gucci Lido Campaign. *YouTube*. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_z2GbGyIxc (accessed 17 November 2025).

⁵ In Viaggio Verso di Voi. Fusilli. *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgfJ1baYu8E> (accessed 17 November 2025).

⁶ 2017 Barilla Poland. *YouTube*. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_JMEuyWKn0 (accessed 18 November 2025).

Methods

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory provides a systematic framework for analysing cross-cultural social differences within the context of international business interactions. Originally introduced in 1980 by the Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede (1928–2020), the theory comprises six dimensions that assess how divergent cultural values influence business practices across different societies. Developed during a period marked by rising globalisation and economic interconnectivity, Hofstede's theory quickly gained prominence. It became one of the most frequently applied and referenced social models of the twentieth century (Greene 2024).

The key characteristics of each cultural dimension, as outlined in Hofstede's (2011) work, were synthesised and presented in the form of a summary table (Table 1) (Hofstede 2011).

Table 1

Summary of Key Characteristics of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Cultural Dimension		Description
<i>Power Distance</i>	Small Power Distance	• Hierarchy is perceived as inequality of roles • Parents treat children as equals • Education is student-centred • Income distribution in society is relatively even • Religions emphasise equality
	Large Power Distance	• Hierarchy reflects inherent inequalities • Parents favour obedience and authority • Teacher authority is emphasised • Income distribution is significantly uneven • Religious structures are hierarchical
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance</i>	Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	• Life's uncertainty is accepted • Stress and anxiety are low • Diversity is accepted • Fewer rules are preferred • Emphasis is placed on relativism
	Strong Uncertainty Avoidance	• Uncertainty is perceived as a threat • Stress and emotionality are high • Intolerance towards difference is exhibited • Order and structure are preferred • Belief in absolute truths is held
<i>Individualism vs Collectivism</i>	Individualism	• Individual identity and autonomy ("I" consciousness) are emphasised • Personal privacy is highly valued • Independent opinions are expected • Norm violations are guilt-based • Tasks are prioritised over relationships
	Collectivism	• Group identity and collective responsibility ("we" consciousness) are emphasised • A strong sense of belonging is present • Opinions are determined by group consensus • Norm violations are shame-based • Relationships are prioritised over tasks

End of table 1

Cultural Dimension		Description
<i>Masculinity vs Femininity</i>	Masculinity	• Clear distinctions between gender roles are maintained • Work is prioritised over family • Admiration is shown for strength and success • Female political representation is low • Attitudes towards sexuality are moralistic
	Femininity	• Minimal differences in gender roles are observed • Work-life balance is valued • Support for the vulnerable is provided • Female political representation is high • Attitudes towards sexuality are open
<i>Long-Term vs Short-Term Orientation</i>	Long-Term Orientation	• Focus is placed on the future • Adaptability is valued • Traditions are adapted to change • Thrift and perseverance are prioritised • Success is linked to effort
	Short-Term Orientation	• Focus is on the past and the present • Traditions are preserved • National pride is emphasised • Consumption and social spending are high • Success is seen as a matter of luck
<i>Indulgence vs Restraint</i>	Indulgence	• A sense of control over personal life is maintained • Importance is placed on freedom of speech • Greater emphasis is given to leisure activities • Birth rates are higher in educated countries • Sexual norms are more lenient in wealthy nations
	Restraint	• A feeling of helplessness is present • Freedom of speech is less prioritised • Leisure activities are less valued • Fewer people recall positive emotions • Stricter sexual norms are found in wealthy nations

Source: compiled by the authors based on data from Hofstede G. 2011.

As the paper aims to assess the cultural adaptation of video advertisements for Italian brands in the domestic and international markets, a scoring system for each dimension must be established. Hofstede scaled each dimension from 0 to 100. However, given the qualitative research method and content analysis approach, such a wide range to assess video ad elements cannot be used, as it would increase subjectivity and could lead to incorrect conclusions. Consequently, the decision was made to use the following scores: -1, 0 and 1 (Table 2).

Table 2

Interpretation of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Using a Three-Point Scale

Cultural Dimension	Scores		
	-1	0	1
<i>Power Distance</i>	Small Power Distance	Medium acceptance of hierarchy, or the dimension is unclear in the context of an ad	Large Power Distance
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance</i>	Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	Moderate tolerance for uncertainty, or the dimension is unclear in the context of an ad	Strong Uncertainty Avoidance
<i>Individualism vs Collectivism</i>	Collectivism	A balanced mix of group and individual focus, or not clear in the context of an ad	Individualism
<i>Masculinity vs Femininity</i>	Femininity	Balance between assertiveness and care, or the dimension is not clear in the context of an ad	Masculinity
<i>Long-Term vs Short-Term Orientation</i>	Short-Term Orientation	A balanced time horizon, or the dimension is not clear in the context of an ad	Long-Term Orientation
<i>Indulgence vs Restraint</i>	Restraint	A balanced outlook on life's pleasures, or the dimension is not clear in the context of an ad	Indulgence

Source: compiled by the authors.

Using this framework, it would be possible to assess every element of video advertising while keeping it straightforward and clear. However, there is potential for future research to adapt the scale and make it more complex to obtain multi-faceted, detailed results.

Case Study Analysis

The selection of Italian brands operating in Italy and Poland addresses the identified research gap in Southern and Eastern European advertising studies (Săplăcan & Alt 2018). Moreover, this enables examination of cultural adaptation across two theoretically significant product categories: Gucci's luxury positioning in aspirational products where cultural symbolism and status perceptions are crucial, while Barilla's food products examine adaptation in everyday, culturally embedded categories where local tastes and family traditions significantly influence consumer behaviour.

Each advertisement is systematically evaluated through four core elements that shape video advertising communication: messaging (tone, language, and emotional appeal), visual style (aesthetics, settings and colour palette), characters (roles, interactions and representation) and narrative style (structure, pacing and temporal orientation). Following a descriptive analysis of these elements, each campaign is scored using the three-point Hofstede framework (-1, 0, 1) and compared with target-country cultural profiles to assess localisation effectiveness.

Gucci campaign in Italy is examined in the paper: “Gucci Lido”, focusing on the international and Italian markets.

The “Gucci Lido” campaign celebrates the Italian summer through cinematic storytelling featuring Daisy Edgar-Jones, Aliocha Schneider and David Jonsson⁷. Inspired by iconic Italian beach clubs, the campaign emphasises ease, elegance and exploration, blending visual storytelling with sensory narrative⁸.

Messaging. The tone is symbolic, sensual and playful, with no direct slogans. Communication evokes carefree elegance and Mediterranean nostalgia through mood rather than product pitch.

Visual Style. Scenes alternate between Mediterranean coastline, vintage beach clubs (lidos), garden villas and yacht decks, shot in a vintage aesthetic with sun-drenched lighting. The colour palette spans sun-washed coral, faded blues, bleached neutrals and soft greens, creating a languid, meditative mood with long takes and slow motion.

Characters. The campaign stars Daisy Edgar-Jones, Aliocha Schneider and David Jonsson, styled as a trio of sun-lit contemporaries. They represent modern youth archetypes who are not posed models but friends drifting through moments. Fluid styling softens traditional gender cues. Roles are egalitarian, with no hierarchy. They move in tandem yet separately, suggesting shared space without entanglement.

Narrative Style. The video avoids conventional narrative arc, presenting instead a montage of sensory moments: arrivals, sunbathing, silent boat rides, garden strolls. Editing is unhurried with minimal cuts. Time orientation is impressionistic and timeless, with no closure, inviting viewers into an eternal summer frame (Table 3).

Table 3

Cultural Dimensions Analysis of the “Gucci Lido” Campaign

Cultural Dimension	Score	Justification
<i>Power Distance</i>	–1 (Small Power Distance)	No hierarchy or dominance exists between characters; all individuals share equal space and status
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance</i>	0 (Not clear)	Ambiguity is embraced within a controlled, stylised environment — there is no anxiety, but also no display of risk, suggesting moderate tolerance
<i>Individualism vs Collectivism</i>	1 (Individualism)	Characters act independently with minimal interaction; the focus is on self-expression and individual pleasure rather than group identity
<i>Masculinity vs Femininity</i>	–1 (Femininity)	Aesthetic beauty, emotion and softness are emphasised over achievement — fluid gender presentation is combined with intimate gestures that prioritise quality of life and harmony

⁷ Daisy Edgar-Jones, Aliocha Schneider, and David Jonsson Star in the New Campaign that Captures the Essence of an Italian Summer. *Gucci*. URL: <https://www.gucci.com/us/en/st/stories/article/the-spirit-of-escape> (accessed 19 November 2025).

⁸ The Gucci Lido Campaign. *YouTube*. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_z2GbGyIxc (accessed 19 November 2025).

End of table 3

Cultural Dimension	Score	Justification
<i>Long-Term vs Short-Term Orientation</i>	0 (Not clear)	Time is non-linear and abstract, with no focus on legacy, planning or tradition; likewise, there is no emphasis on instant gratification or impulsive decision-making
<i>Indulgence vs Restraint</i>	1 (Indulgence)	Sensuality, relaxation and leisure are celebrated; emotional and physical enjoyment are encouraged without guilt, signaling free expression

Source: compiled by the authors.

As the Table 4 shows, this ad shows no clear tendencies in Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientations. Still, this does not lead to the conclusion that these dimensions are not critical for use and adaptation, as it also depends on the ad's creative concept.

After breaking down the ad analysis, these scores are compared with Italy's scores. It is important to note that this ad was created not only for the Italian market but also for the international one. Therefore, it allows for a broader space of acceptance for any mismatches.

Table 4

Alignment Between the Ads and Italy's Scores on Cultural Dimensions

Cultural Dimension	Ad's score	Italy's score	Comment
<i>Power Distance</i>	-1	0	The ad promotes more equality than is typical in Italy
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance</i>	0	1	The ad does not clearly reflect Italy's high preference for structure
<i>Individualism vs Collectivism</i>	1	1	Full alignment: both emphasise individual identity and autonomy
<i>Masculinity vs Femininity</i>	-1	1	Strong contrast: the ad leans towards nurturing values, unlike Italy; however, the limits of Hofstede's state-based approach must be recognised here: specific industries (such as fashion) or individual corporate cultures (like Gucci) may exhibit values that contradict their home country's dominant cultural orientation
<i>Long-Term vs Short-Term Orientation</i>	0	-1	The ad lacks a clear temporal focus, whereas Italy prefers short-term goals
<i>Indulgence vs Restraint</i>	1	-1	Complete opposition: the ad promotes enjoyment, unlike Italy's restraint; it is essential to note the model's limitations, as national cultures encompass diverse sub-regional, industry and corporate cultures that diverge from national tendencies; in our case, iconic fashion culture may align more with enjoyment than restraint values

Source: compiled by the authors.

There is only one dimension with full alignment — Individualism versus Collectivism. Moreover, two dimensions are opposite: Masculinity versus Femininity and Indulgence versus Restraint. Based on this data, it can be concluded that although this ad was created with Italian aesthetics (lidos, the seaside, olive trees), it is more targeted towards an international audience than an Italian one. This becomes particularly evident when looking at the Indulgence dimension. The Italian “Dolce Vita” is a brand associated with living in the moment and enjoying the present. However, this concept has now been highly internationalised, whereas the actual culture and society in Italy are more restrained than the video suggests. This opens up another challenging topic: how a national brand conveys its true culture, how many elements can be lost in image creation, and the role of the audience in enriching that brand.

The Italian case study features a campaign that was clearly international in tone and distribution, which influenced the cultural readings and introduced ambiguity in alignment. To obtain more precise insights, the Barilla case study will be examined.

Further, two Barilla campaigns are analysed: the campaign tailored for the Italian market, “On a journey to you”, and the video ad adapted to the Polish market, “Bravo to you”.

The “On a Journey to You” campaign by Barilla, launched in 2016 and featuring renowned Italian actor Pierfrancesco Favino, is a warm, emotionally resonant series of advertisements that reframes the everyday act of cooking pasta as a personal experience. Created by the agency J. Walter Thompson and directed by Oscar-winning filmmaker Gabriele Salvatores, the ad emphasises authenticity, Italian heritage and the quiet beauty of human connection through food. The phrase “A volte anche i migliori possono migliorare” (translation from Italian: “Sometimes even the best can improve”) encapsulates the brand’s commitment to quality⁹.

Messaging. Warm, humble and emotionally resonant, consistent with Barilla’s identity rooted in tradition and emotional storytelling. The tone is gentle and nostalgic, with subtle humour in how the father learns from his daughter. Language is semi-formal yet accessible, using relatable Italian; emotional appeal centres on familial warmth, growth and pride, with product secondary to emotional journey.

Visual Style. Soft, natural aesthetic evoking warmth and comfort. The primary setting is a bright, cozy kitchen that reflects everyday intimacy, interspersed with outdoor shots that connect to Italian life. A warm, subdued colour palette, dominated by earthy tones, conveys a sense of home and tradition, with Barilla blue subtly present — enhancing a contemplative, serene mood through slow camera movements and natural lighting.

Characters. Centres on young Giulia and her father. Giulia initially appears disappointed after realising her limitations in a team game, then confidently teaches her father about the new fusilli. This role inversion is handled with tenderness. The father

⁹ In *Viaggio Verso di Voi*. *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgfJ1baYu8E>. (accessed 21 November 2025).

shows humility and affection, embodying progressive emotional intelligence. Gender roles are balanced: the father cooks and learns, while Giulia demonstrates cleverness and assertiveness.

Narrative Style. Slow, deliberate pacing allows emotional beats to breathe. Editing is smooth and cinematic with no flashy transitions. The narrative focuses on the present with no flashbacks, enhancing realism and providing a clear narrative arc from problem to resolution (Table 5).

Table 5

Cultural Dimensions Analysis of the “On a Journey to You” Campaign

Cultural Dimension	Score	Justification
<i>Power Distance</i>	0 (Moderate)	Father and daughter interact as equals with confident exchange, yet subtle paternal authority remains; this reflects respect for hierarchy alongside closeness and open communication
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance</i>	1 (Strong Uncertainty Avoidance)	A clear, linear storyline in a familiar home environment; pasta innovation is introduced gently, reflecting a preference for structure, tradition and reassurance when facing change
<i>Individualism vs Collectivism</i>	0 (Balanced)	The focus on family connection and shared learning, yet Giulia concentrates on her personal game performance while her father cooks independently; both individual and collective elements are present
<i>Masculinity vs Femininity</i>	0 (Balanced)	A warm, caring tone (feminine) is combined with Giulia’s concern for achievement and her drive for competence (masculine); empathy and ambition coexist
<i>Long-Term vs Short-Term Orientation</i>	1 (Long-Term Orientation)	Improving traditional products is linked to personal growth, signalling long-term thinking; learning, continuity and quality are valued
<i>Indulgence vs Restraint</i>	-1 (Restraint)	Joy is subtle and emotional, without excess; a meaningful meal shared at home reflects moderated pleasure tied to family and care values

Source: compiled by the authors.

It is noticeable that the results are moderate on the Masculinity versus Femininity dimension, as the ad combines emotional appeal and fluid gender roles with a clear drive for achievement. A similar balance is seen in the Individualism versus Collectivism dimension. Although there are signs of collectivism, it is important to note that the girl is focused on her individual performance in the game, reflecting personal ambition and skill. Additionally, the father is shown cooking and improving his culinary abilities independently. While the girl offers advice, she is not actively involved in the process (Table 6).

Table 6

Alignment Between the Ads and Italy's Scores on Cultural Dimensions

Cultural Dimension	Ad's score	Italy's score	Comment
<i>Power Distance</i>	0	0	Strong alignment: the ad's informal but respectful family dynamic reflects Italy's moderate acceptance of hierarchy, softened by close relationships
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance</i>	1	1	Strong alignment: both the ad and Italian culture emphasise stability, tradition and clear structure to reduce uncertainty
<i>Individualism vs Collectivism</i>	0	1	Partial alignment: the ad shows family-centred interaction alongside the pursuit of self-realisation, while Italian culture leans more towards individual achievement and independence
<i>Masculinity vs Femininity</i>	0	1	Partial alignment: the ad balances emotional warmth and ambition, whereas Italy tends to emphasise achievement and competitiveness more strongly
<i>Long-Term vs Short-Term Orientation</i>	1	-1	Partial contrast: the ad's future-oriented message, with its emphasis on constant development and improvement, differs from Italy's generally short-term, tradition-focused cultural outlook
<i>Indulgence vs Restraint</i>	-1	-1	Strong alignment: both the ad and Italian culture demonstrate restrained, modest expressions of pleasure and emotional control

Source: compiled by the authors.

As the table shows, there is a strong alignment in three dimensions: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Indulgence versus Restraint. Two other dimensions exhibit partial alignment, as the ad presents dualistic values, so the exact focus cannot be established with certainty. There is one dimension with a contrast — Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation. While Italy's initial score of 39 suggests a strong inclination towards short-term orientation, the ad favours long-term orientation, adding value to development and improvement.

Barilla's "Bravo to You" advertising campaign was developed globally in 2016 and localised for different markets. The concept of the video ad is to reveal the secrets of being good at cooking pasta¹⁰.

Messaging. The messaging in the ad is informal, playful and easygoing. Rather than giving serious instructions, it uses humour and charm to suggest that great cooking is simple. The "three steps" structure adds a light narrative hook. Slogan-like phrases such as "Choose the best Italian pasta (Barilla)" are seamlessly woven into the dialogue. The overall tone feels relatable and entertaining, appealing to viewers who appreciate quality with a touch of fun.

¹⁰ 2017 Barilla Poland. *YouTube*. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_JMEuyWKn0. (accessed 21 November 2025).

Visual Style. Visually, the ad is set in a modern, cozy kitchen, creating a warm and familiar atmosphere. The surroundings are clean but inviting, with soft lighting and neutral tones that keep the focus on the action. The editing is dynamic, with quick shot changes that add energy and rhythm to the scene.

Characters. The ad centres on two characters: a father and his young daughter, creating a warm and familiar atmosphere. The father takes on the role of the home cook, while the daughter watches, tastes and finally praises him with a cheerful “Bravo!”. Their interaction is informal, playful and affectionate, reflecting a close family bond. There is no formality or traditional authority, just a moment of shared joy in everyday life. This kind of authentic, family-based storytelling resonates strongly with Polish viewers, who often value close parent-child relationships and the emotional meaning behind home-cooked meals.

Narrative Style. Simple, linear, light-hearted, built around three playful cooking steps. Clear arc: preparation (beginning), cooking with humorous touches (middle), tasting and approval (end). Short, self-contained story with satisfying emotional payoff (Table 7).

Table 7

Cultural Dimensions Analysis of the “Bravo to You” Campaign

Cultural Dimension	Score	Justification
<i>Power Distance</i>	0 (Moderate)	The informal and playful interaction between father and daughter shows closeness and equality, though the father retains subtle authority as the cook; this reflects moderate respect for hierarchy alongside open communication
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance</i>	1 (Strong Uncertainty Avoidance)	A clear, easy-to-follow narrative with familiar home settings and simple steps provides reassurance and structure
<i>Individualism vs Collectivism</i>	0 (Balanced)	Family interaction highlights connection and cooperation, yet centres on individual roles (father cooking, daughter tasting)
<i>Masculinity vs Femininity</i>	0 (Balanced)	The ad combines warmth and affection with a playful achievement moment (“Bravo!”), balancing feminine traits of care and masculine traits of success and recognition
<i>Long-Term vs Short-Term Orientation</i>	-1 (Short-Term Orientation)	The ad emphasises immediate enjoyment and praise in the present moment, valuing instant gratification and small victories
<i>Indulgence vs Restraint</i>	-1 (Restraint)	Joy is subtle and warm, expressed modestly without excess, and focuses on family bonding and everyday moments

Source: compiled by the authors.

In this ad, it is evident that there is the same challenge as in the previous one. It is difficult to classify the dimensions of Individualism versus Collectivism and Masculinity versus Femininity. Although the dimension of Individualism is the most studied, an analysis of the ad reveals mixed signals. Dichotomous categories are especially popular

in the West. However, as Sinha and Tripathi (2003) discussed in their work on Individualism in a Collectivist Culture, both individualistic and collectivist traits can coexist in people and cultures. In this regard, the choice of balanced score on this dimension can be justified (Table 8).

Table 8

Alignment Between the Ads and Poland's Scores on Cultural Dimensions

Cultural Dimension	Ad's score	Poland's score	Comment
<i>Power Distance</i>	0	1	Partial alignment: while the ad shows almost no hierarchy in the relationship between father and daughter, Polish culture itself favours hierarchical structures
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance</i>	1	1	Full alignment: both the ad and Polish culture appreciate structure, predictability and clear messaging
<i>Individualism vs Collectivism</i>	0	-1	Partial alignment: the ad expresses both individualistic and collectivist values, whereas Poland tends slightly towards collectivism; however, the message may still resonate, especially among urban or younger audiences
<i>Masculinity vs Femininity</i>	0	1	Partial alignment: the ad reflects a more balanced approach, while Polish culture is somewhat masculine
<i>Long-Term vs Short-Term Orientation</i>	-1	-1	Full alignment: both the ad and Poland favour short-term orientation, emphasising pragmatism, tradition and quick outcomes, which strengthens cultural congruence
<i>Indulgence vs Restraint</i>	-1	-1	Full alignment: restrained attitudes are expressed; both the ad and Poland suggest self-control and adherence to norms, which supports message acceptance

Source: compiled by the authors.

Overall, the full alignment in three dimensions — Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation, and Indulgence versus Restraint — is evident. In the other three dimensions, there are no direct contradictions, but only partial alignment. This suggests that either these dimensions are not clearly expressed in the ad or that the messaging includes mixed signals reflecting both cultural tendencies. Given that the chosen advertisement was not created specifically for the Polish market but was merely adapted and localised, it can be concluded that it aligns reasonably well with the Polish cultural context and does not present any significant contradictions with Poland's cultural dimension scores.

To conclude, the comparative analysis of Gucci and Barilla advertisements in their Italian and Eastern European versions highlights different levels of cultural adaptation. Gucci's Italian ad appears designed for an international audience with minimal alignment to domestic cultural dimensions. Barilla, by contrast, demonstrates a more balanced approach in both markets, achieving strong or partial alignment across most dimensions through careful localisation without losing brand consistency.

Notably, some dimensions consistently received a score of “0” in the ads, indicating that they were either not clearly communicated or intentionally left neutral. This pattern suggests that certain cultural values may be more difficult to visually represent or less central to the storytelling strategies used in commercial advertising. Most frequently, the score of “0” was assigned to Power Distance, making it the least distinct dimension across the analysed campaigns. Individualism versus Collectivism and Masculinity versus Femininity also frequently received neutral scores, placing them second in terms of low visual clarity. This suggests that these elements are more challenging to adapt and convey in video ads, as they often produce mixed signals or remain ambiguous in tone and representation.

Conclusion

Based on two case studies of Italian brands’ advertisements, both locally and abroad, the Hofstede framework appears useful for campaigns requiring a high level of localisation. This paper aims to transform theoretical insights into practical tools that enable businesses to apply Hofstede’s dimensions in crafting ideas for international advertising campaigns. The proposed framework is just one of the working ideas for implementing the research results in real business environments.

Ford et al. (2024) analysed AI advertising research and noted the immense potential of AI to drive future advertising growth. Gao et al. (2023) examined the advancements, challenges and ethical considerations of AI in advertising, focusing on areas where AI implementation can help increase efficiency. Given the rapidly growing interest in AI, a framework for its use was developed.

The proposed framework consists of three integrated components: the Cultural Profiling Engine, which converts Hofstede scores into simplified three-point scales; the AI Generation Module, which uses large language models to generate culturally adapted advertising concepts; and the Recommendation System, which provides specific guidance on textual and visual elements.

The Cultural Profiling Engine serves as the foundational data layer, transforming complex cultural research into actionable insights for advertising creation. When a user selects a target country, the system retrieves the country’s six Hofstede dimension scores from the database and applies a mathematical conversion algorithm to simplify each score into a three-point scale. Hofstede scores of 0–40 correspond to –1.41–59 to 0.60–100 to 1. For example, a Power Distance score of 64 becomes “1” (Large Power Distance), while an Individualism score of 26 becomes “–1” (Collectivism).

Each converted score comes with detailed descriptions explaining what this means for the advertising strategy. As the basis for the description to be implemented in the model, Table 1, “Summary of Key Characteristics of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions”, can be utilised. As a result, beyond simple number conversion, the engine enriches each profile with cultural context metadata.

The AI Generation Module is grounded in computational creativity theory (Colton et al. 2009). The module operationalises Hofstede's cultural dimensions through algorithmic interpretation, transforming abstract cultural constructs into concrete advertising directives. It draws on the cultural profile from the first component and uses advanced language models to generate advertising concepts tailored to the target culture. The AI Generation Module operates through sophisticated prompt engineering that translates cultural insights into creative direction by taking the three-point cultural profile and generating specific advertising concepts, copy and creative directions using large language models (LLMs). The AI requires basic product details and key features to integrate with cultural dimensions.

Generally, there is a two-step processing architecture. First, the prompt is constructed by synthesising the three-point cultural scores and their descriptions with product attributes and other input parameters. Second, LLMs generate multiple advertising concepts (Anantrasirichai et al. 2025).

The Recommendation System serves as the strategic advisory component, providing specific, actionable guidance for optimising advertising content based on cultural insights. It analyzes the AI-generated content and provides detailed recommendations for improvement. For textual elements, it might suggest replacing individual-focused language with collective terminology for collectivist cultures. For visual elements, it might recommend specific color palettes that resonate culturally or suggest composition approaches that respect cultural hierarchies.

Beyond improving existing content, the system generates alternative creative approaches that might be more culturally appropriate. It might suggest entirely different campaign concepts that better align with cultural values, offering marketers multiple strategic options. Essentially, it is a final-check mechanism to ensure that the content culturally aligns with the chosen country's scores and to propose any refinements, if possible.

To use the model effectively, it is essential to understand its constraints and possible areas for refinement.

LLMs Flattening. Large language models tend to reduce nuance, originality and tone by generating consensus-based summaries, thereby increasing the likelihood of "safe", statistically common ideas¹¹. Flattening occurs on two levels: micro (LLMs reproduce dominant patterns within a topic, smoothing or ignoring unconventional ideas) and macro (LLMs influence how users explore and engage with new knowledge). Paschalidis (2025), in a UNESCO context, describes a related Default Approach Problem: if LLMs consistently prefer certain words or formulations, less-used terms and the perspectives they represent may gradually disappear¹². For the proposed model,

¹¹ Gavoyannis D. 2025. LLMs Don't Reward Originality, They Flatten It. *Ahrefs Blog*. URL: <https://ahrefs.com/blog/llms-flatten-originality/> (accessed 23 November 2025).

¹² Paschalidis A.I. 2025. AI and the Great Linguistic Flattening. *UNESCO IdeasLab*. URL: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-and-great-linguistic-flattening/> (accessed 23 November 2025).

this means AI-generated ideas should be treated as directional guidance rather than final creative outputs, especially since flattening effects can undermine originality and brand voice.

3-Score-System. Simplifying Hofstede's 100-point scale to a -1/0/1 format inevitably removes nuance. While adequate for idea generation, a more granular system could enable finer localisation.

Cultural Nuances. The model cannot replace international marketing specialists. Cultural sensitivities are complex, and technological tools may overlook critical details, as illustrated by well-known localisation failures (e. g., Parker Pen's mistranslation in Spanish or Revlon's use of camellia flowers in Brazil, where they are associated with funerals). Thorough cultural analysis, therefore, remains essential.

Hofstede's Framework. Hofstede's dimensions themselves pose limitations: they are often criticised for static structure, Western orientation and reliance on individual questionnaire responses that may not represent whole cultures.

The proposed AI-driven model operationalises Hofstede's framework and can assist in brainstorming for international video advertising campaigns. However, its use in practice requires awareness of key limitations: LLM flattening, the simplified scoring system, persistent cultural nuances, and the constraints of Hofstede's own theoretical structure.

The study makes several significant theoretical contributions to International Marketing and cross-cultural advertising research. First, it extends Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework by demonstrating its differential applicability to visual communication formats, revealing that certain cultural dimensions are more effectively communicated through video advertising than others. This finding challenges the assumption that all cultural dimensions are equally transferable across communication mediums. Second, the study bridges the gap between cultural theory and practical advertising implementation by demonstrating how abstract cultural concepts can be operationalised and measured in real advertising campaigns, contributing to the growing body of literature on applied cultural marketing research.

The research introduces several methodological innovations. The transformation of Hofstede's 100-point scale into a practical three-point assessment tool provides a replicable and accessible methodology for analysing cultural adaptation in video advertising. This simplified scoring system improves practical applicability for both researchers and practitioners. Additionally, the mixed-methods approach combining quantitative scoring with qualitative descriptive analysis provides a robust methodology that captures both measurable cultural alignment and nuanced contextual insights, offering a template for future cross-cultural advertising research.

The study has some limitations. The limited sample of two brands and the narrow focus on Italian companies in Eastern European markets restrict the breadth of conclusions. Cultural dimension scoring remains partly subjective, and dependence on Hofstede's framework introduces its own theoretical constraints. The analysis centres on video advertising only, excluding sound, music and interactive elements, and does not examine consumer response or purchase intent.

Looking ahead, several perspectives open for future research. Platform-specific studies could explore how cultural adaptation differs across emerging digital formats. Quantitative evaluations using engagement data and consumer metrics would link cultural alignment to real advertising effectiveness. Methodological advances may include AI-driven sentiment analysis, eye-tracking and neurological measurement to deepen understanding of cultural perception. Comparative analyses of localised versus fully customised approaches could help determine optimal strategies and assess cost-effectiveness for international marketing.

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МОДЕЛЬ КУЛЬТУРНЫХ ИЗМЕРЕНИЙ Г. ХОФСТЕДЕ В МЕЖДУНАРОДНОЙ РЕКЛАМЕ: АНАЛИЗ АДАПТАЦИИ ИТАЛЬЯНСКИХ БРЕНДОВ НА ВНУТРЕННЕМ И ЗАРУБЕЖНЫХ РЫНКАХ

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Аннотация. В настоящей статье рассматривается адаптация видеорекламы итальянских брендов на рынке Восточной Европы с применением модели культурных измерений Г. Хофстеде. Целью данной работы является сокращение разрыва между культурными теоретическими моделями и их практическим воплощением в международной рекламе. На основе качественного контент-анализа рекламных кампаний Gucci и Barilla в Италии и Польше авторы выявляют пробелы в существующей литературе: недостаточную представленность восточноевропейских и южноевропейских рынков в исследованиях, применяющих модель Хофстеде, а также отсутствие работ, охватывающих все культурные измерения в комплексе. В рамках анализа используется трехбалльная система оценок (–1, 0, 1) по каждому измерению, охватывающая четыре элемента видеорекламы: коммуникативную стилистику, визуальное оформление, персонажей и нарративную структуру. Результаты указывают на существование иерархии культурных измерений с точки зрения их репрезентации в видеорекламе, согласно которой измерения «Дистанция власти», «Индивидуализм — Коллективизм» и «Маскулинность — Фемининность» в большинстве случаев оказались сложными для визуальной передачи, тогда как «Долгосрочная — Краткосрочная ориентация» и «Сдержанность — Потворство желаниям» продемонстрировали более высокую степень визуального отображения и успешную адаптацию в рамках рассмотренных кампаний. Опираясь на полученные данные, исследование предлагает комплексный инструментарий для специалистов по международному маркетингу, который включает механизм построения культурного профиля, модуль генерации на основе искусственного интеллекта и систему рекомендаций, лежащих в основе создания культурно-ориентированных креативных решений.

Ключевые слова: культурные измерения Г. Хофстеде, международная маркетинговая коммуникация, кросс-культурная реклама, искусственный интеллект в маркетинге

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