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Author(s)	Jenni Eskola	Student number	
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Supervisor (s)	Lic. Sc. (Econ.) Martti Salo M. Sc. (Econ.) Birgitta Sandberg		

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the impact of national culture on a television advertising message. This research problem was approached with the help of three sub-research problems:

- 1) What is the impact of national culture on a copy part of television advertising message?
- 2) What is the impact of national culture on an art part of television advertising message?
- 3) What is the impact of music on a television advertising message?

In order to make a cultural comparison possible, these sub-problems were studied in two different cultures, Finnish and Italian.

The theoretical background for this study was taken from Hofstede's four dimensions of national culture and the three parts of an advertising message. Hofstede's four dimensions for national culture include power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity and uncertainty avoidance. The three parts of an advertising message are the copy the art and the music, which correspond the verbal, the non-verbal and the musical communication in an ad. These two theoretical choices were combined in order to build a framework for rating television advertising messages in different cultures. Some basic assumptions about Finnish and Italian television commercials were made based on their national cultures according to Hofstede.

The basic method in this thesis was content analysis, which suits well for analysing advertising messages. The content analysis was done in a quantitative manner with the help of an observation table. The observation table operationalised the different cultural aspects of a television advertising message. The copy included the operational equivalents of language, voiceover, rhetoric style and information content style. The art included the operational equivalents of characters and artistic style. The music included the operational equivalents of presence, structural elements and role. The commercials rated were taped in two respective commercial TV-channels, MTV3 in Finland and Canale5 in Italy during one week and during the prime times of both channels. The Finnish sample consisted of 225 commercials whereas the Italian sample consisted of 178 commercials. The actual analysis was done with the help of SPSS. The internal validity of the research was found rather good, but the external validity only mediocre. In the reliability of the research the stability was good, the reproducibility mediocre and the accuracy could not be estimated at all.

The Finnish and Italian commercials were treated as two separate samples in order to make the comparison between them possible. The analysing included frequencies and cross-tabulations with Chi-Square tests, from which the inferences were made. The further analysis between the two samples was done in two product categories: food/snacks/soft drinks and well-being products. Both the copy and the art of the advertising message seemed to be relatively much affected by the national culture. Especially the individualism/collectivism dimension explained most of the cultural variations found in the two samples. The effect of power distance and uncertainty avoidance was more modest. The masculinity/femininity dimension did not seem to have much of an effect in either of the cultures. Not all the variation in the two samples could be explained by the national culture: sometimes the product category had a bigger effect. The results received from this study cannot be generalised into the whole population; they hold true for this study only. More research and more culturally comparable data is needed in order to make thorough inferences about the impact of national culture on television advertising messages.

Key words	national culture, advertising message, television advertising
Further information	