

**Czech University of Life Sciences Prague**  
**Faculty of Economics and Management**  
**Department of Management and Marketing**



## **Master Thesis**

**Analysis of Social Media Marketing across Cultures:  
Consumer Behaviour on Facebook between Cultures**

**Bc. Mohit Vaghjibhai Thumar, BBA**

# **DIPLOMA THESIS ASSIGNMENT**

Bc. Mohit Vaghjibhai Thumar, BBA

Business Administration

Thesis title

**Analyses of social media marketing across culture: Consumer Behaviour on Facebook between Cultures**

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## **Objectives of thesis**

The thesis will examine how cross-culture characteristics can impact an organisation's marketing communication for connecting to their customers.

The broad objective of this thesis is to identify how cultural dimensions affect social media marketing and customer preferences of a brand.

Specific objectives of the thesis are as follows:

- 1) To evaluate the application of Hofstede's cultural dimensions in social media marketing
- 2) To investigate the role of cultural differences in the motivation for the customers to purchase online.
- 3) To identify the challenges for the companies directly with the customers on the online platform

## **Methodology**

This thesis contains two main parts: Theoretical and Practical.

The theoretical part comprises a thorough review of current academic, and other reliable literature.

The practical part will be qualitative research, in collaboration with the primary data gathering research strategy in this thesis.

The majority of the information will be gathered using closed-ended questionnaires and surveys.

The data will be analysed using appropriate techniques to derive the conclusion regarding cultural dimensions influencing a brands' social media marketing strategy.

## The proposed extent of the thesis

approx 60-80 pages

## Keywords

Cross-cultural dimension, Hofstede cultural model, social media marketing, consumer behaviour, customer engagement

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## Recommended information sources

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## Expected date of thesis defence

2022/23 SS – FEM

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## **Declaration**

I declare that I have worked on my master's thesis titled "Analysis of Social Media Marketing across Cultures: Consumer Behaviour on Facebook between Cultures" by myself, and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the bachelor thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights.

In Prague on date of submission

\_\_\_\_\_30/11/2023\_\_\_\_\_

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Ing. Richard Selby, Ph. D. for his support and encouragement throughout the writing of this thesis. Also, I would like to also express my gratitude to my family for their support both financially and morally throughout my studies.

# **Analysis of Social Media Marketing across Cultures:**

## **Consumer Behaviour on Facebook between Cultures**

### **Abstract**

This dissertation explores the relationship between culture and social media marketing. Differences in consumer behaviour on social media are analysed. Hofstede's cultural dimensions are employed to predict these differences between cultures. The data was organically gathered from 4500 posts from 225 different Facebook brand pages and 15 different countries. The gathered data included the engagement metrics such as the number of likes, shares and comments and the various versions of likes such as: love, wow, funny, angry and sad. To the authors knowledge this is the first study that uses real world organic data to analyse differences between cultures on social media. Descriptive results are displayed through charts and then the statistical significance is measured through linear regressions. Interesting differences were found that could be explained by Hofstede's dimensions. One of these is that countries low in individualism and & or high in power distance share posts more than comment on them. Also, the use of the funny and wow emoticon responses seems to be related to higher scores on individualism. These findings have theoretical and practical implications. Some academics posit that cultures are converging, and cultural dimensions are becoming obsolete, because of new communication platforms such as social media. Findings from this dissertation imply that Hofstede's dimensions could still be powerful predictors of some consumer behaviour patterns, even on Facebook. Managers could adopt more viral marketing campaigns in countries where posts get shared more and use invitations to tag friends in the opposite countries. Furthermore, they could become more aware of cultural differences in emoticon sentiment that might influence their success and cater to these expectations accordingly.

**Keywords:** *Social Media Marketing, Facebook Marketing, Cultural Differences, Consumer Behaviour, Hofstede Dimensions*

# Title

## Abstraktní

Tato disertační práce zkoumá vztah mezi kulturou a marketingem na sociálních sítích. Jsou analyzovány rozdíly v chování spotřebitelů na sociálních sítích. Hofstedeho kulturní dimenze se používají k predikci těchto rozdílů mezi kulturami. Data byla organicky shromážděna ze 4 500 příspěvků z 225 různých stránek značek na Facebooku a 15 různých zemí. Shromážděná data zahrnovala metriky zapojení, jako je počet lajků, sdílení a komentářů, a různé verze lajků jako: láska, wow, vtipná, naštvaná a smutná. Pokud je autorům známo, jedná se o první studii, která využívá organická data z reálného světa k analýze rozdílů mezi kulturami na sociálních sítích. Popisné výsledky jsou zobrazeny prostřednictvím grafů a poté je statistická významnost měřena pomocí lineárních regresí. Byly nalezeny zajímavé rozdíly, které by se daly vysvětlit Hofstedeho rozměry. Jedním z nich je, že země s nízkým individualismem a/nebo s vysokou mocenskou vzdáleností příspěvky více sdílejí, než je komentují. Zdá se také, že použití odpovědí vtipných a wow emotikonů souvisí s vyšším skóre individualismu. Tyto poznatky mají teoretické i praktické důsledky. Někteří akademici předpokládají, že kultury se sblíží a kulturní dimenze se stávají zastaralými kvůli novým komunikačním platformám, jako jsou sociální média. Zjištění z této disertační práce naznačují, že Hofstedeho dimenze by stále mohly být silným prediktorem některých vzorců chování spotřebitelů, a to i na Facebooku. Manažeři by mohli přijmout virálnější marketingové kampaně v zemích, kde jsou příspěvky sdíleny více, a používat pozvánky k označení přátel v opačných zemích. Kromě toho by si mohli více uvědomovat kulturní rozdíly v emotikonovém sentimentu, které by mohly ovlivnit jejich úspěch a odpovídajícím způsobem tato očekávání uspokojit.

**Klíčová slova:** Marketing na sociálních sítích, Facebook marketing, kulturní rozdíly, spotřebitelské chování, Hofstedeovy dimenze

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# 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the realm of business has witnessed a significant shift towards globalization. Contemporary business enterprises frequently opt to explore opportunities in foreign markets. This surge in international business is facilitated by the increased global connectivity. The advent of the Internet and the prevalence of social media have greatly simplified the task of reaching individuals beyond one's national borders. Presently, a staggering 90% of the global population is connected to the Internet, with 60% utilizing Facebook. However, while it is undeniably easier to reach a global audience, it is crucial to recognize that each country possesses its unique culture. To achieve success in foreign ventures, understanding the local culture and devising an appropriate strategy are imperative. (Hofstede, 2020)

For instance, the CEO of PepsiCo, a pioneer in adopting standardized marketing programs in the early 1980s, recently acknowledged that maintaining standardized practices while considering local nuances has become vital for success. Numerous other studies and practical cases, which will be explored in this dissertation, underscore the importance of aligning communication with the cultural context of the target country to achieve optimal marketing outcomes. This dissertation's objective is to illuminate the cultural distinctions among countries worldwide and how these distinctions manifest in consumer behavior on Facebook. (Chua & Banerjee, 2021)

Since the explosive growth of the Internet in the realm of international business, an ongoing debate has revolved around whether companies should standardize their online content across all regions or customize it for each cultural context they engage with. Initially, some believed that the internet's rise would create a virtual culture and a so-called global consumer. There was an argument for a global consumer culture positioning for brands, which assumed that people would attribute the same significance to places, people, and objects due to increased interconnectedness facilitated by new media. However, subsequent studies have demonstrated that, despite heightened interconnectivity, individuals still respond favourably to their own cultural values. (Wang & Zhang, 2023)

Even today, the standardization versus localization debate remains pertinent because each approach has its advantages. Standardization can significantly reduce costs but has been criticized for being product-centric and lacking a customer-centric nature. Conversely, many companies lack the resources to tailor their communications to every culture they engage with, compelling them to adopt a standardization strategy out of necessity. With the ever-increasing interconnectivity between individuals worldwide through new communication platforms, it is crucial to shed more light on this debate, particularly in the context of social media. (Krishna & Court, 2021)

On social media, in contrast to traditional advertising, it is possible to instantly and organically gauge customer responses through metrics such as likes, love, wow, funny, angry, or sad reactions, comments, and shares. The findings of this study could provide further insights into whether cultural differences are diminishing in significance as a result of increased interconnectivity and globalization. The examination of cultural distinctions on platforms like Facebook is especially compelling, as these social media platforms are often credited with driving the shift toward a global consumer culture. When observable variations persist in how customers engage with content created by companies, it suggests that culture remains a significant factor in international business, even in the realm of the internet and social media platforms. (Guo & Wang, 2022)

Prior studies have relied on surveys to analyse differences in social media usage across countries and have proposed theoretical models for optimizing international social media marketing. To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first study that employs real-world, organically collected data in the form of engagement metrics to analyse cultural distinctions. The managerial implications of this study are profound. Managers can gain insights into cross-cultural differences in social media engagement metrics and adjust their international strategies accordingly. For example, if people in certain countries tend to share content more than commenting on it, managers could consider implementing more viral marketing campaigns. When particular emoticon responses are more prevalent in a specific culture, managers can craft content that resonates with these sentiments. (He, 2020)

In the subsequent chapters, the study will review the pertinent literature. The first part will delve into culture and cultural models in a broader context. The second section will outline the influence of culture on marketing, and the final part will focus on the relevant literature related to social media. The most pertinent literature will be considered to formulate five distinct hypotheses. Subsequently, the methodology section will elucidate how these hypotheses will be tested. The outcomes of these assessments, along with descriptive results, will be presented in the results section. Finally, the discussion section will scrutinize these findings and link them back to the relevant literature to propose theoretical and practical implications. To conclude, this dissertation will summarize the key findings, and future research directions will be outlined.

## **2. Objectives and Methodology**

### **2.1 Objectives**

The primary objective of this thesis is to outline differences in how countries interact with Facebook posts. Specifically, the study aims to investigate whether Hofstede's cultural dimensions can account for disparities in how consumers engage with companies on Facebook. For instance, is there a higher likelihood that a collectivist country will share a post compared to an individualistic country? Similarly, is there a connection between the utilization of emoticon sentiments and cultural dimensions? The study utilizes data from 15 countries across the globe to examine the impact of culture on engagement metrics. Despite all the chosen countries being from the same continent, they exhibit diversity in Hofstede's cultural dimensions, making them an excellent basis for assessing whether cultural dimensions have explanatory power in understanding the variations in consumer behavior.

### **2.2 Methodology**

Facebook served as the chosen platform for evaluating variations in social media engagement across different countries. The decision to utilize Facebook, rather than alternative social media platforms, was driven by several compelling factors. Firstly, Facebook enjoys unparalleled global popularity and recognition as a preferred means for individuals to connect with and interact with companies. Few of the companies examined in this study maintain a uniform Instagram or Twitter presence across all countries, while Facebook pages for each country are notably more widespread.

Secondly, Facebook provides a broader array of engagement options compared to Instagram or Twitter. On Facebook, users can express their reactions through various emoticons like "like," "love," "wow," "funny," "angry," or "sad," as well as leave comments and share content. This diversity of engagement tools surpasses those offered by the other two platforms.

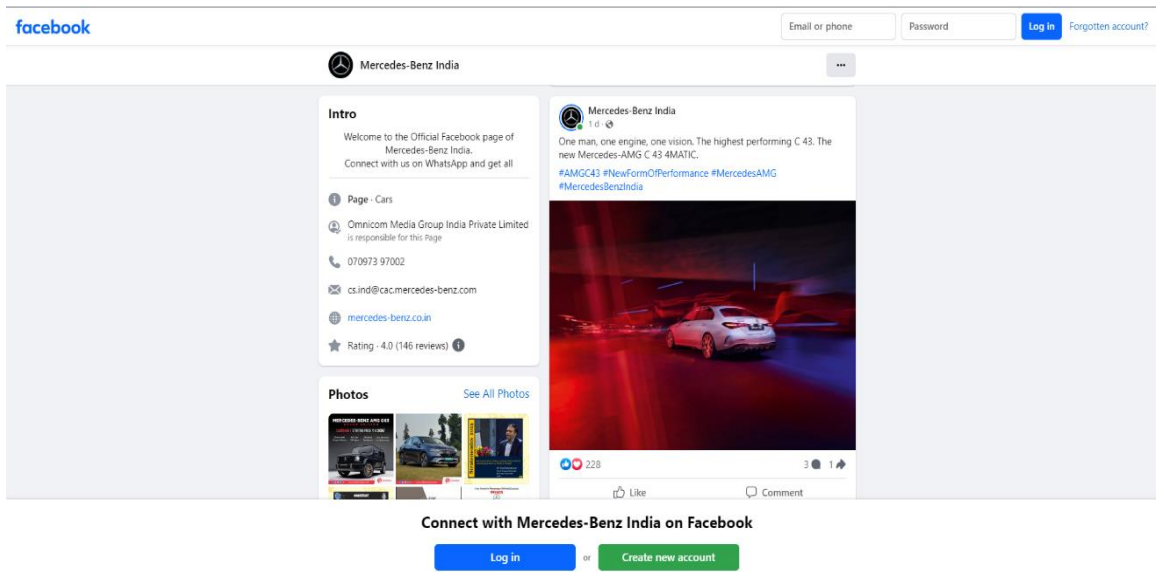
Thirdly, Facebook boasts a larger global user base when compared to Instagram and Twitter. This wide reach contributes to its suitability for this cross-country analysis.

Both the size of a company and its industry sector exert a significant influence on the extent of engagement garnered on Facebook. For instance, a major entertainment conglomerate like Nickelodeon typically garners more engagement than an automotive manufacturer such as Volvo. Furthermore, some companies demonstrate more active participation in certain countries than others. To ensure the generalizability of the study's findings, an analysis encompassed 15 companies spanning diverse sectors and operating across 15 countries. Appendix 1 provides an overview of Hofstede's dimensions scores for each country. The companies included in the study are Mercedes-Benz, Volvo, PepsiCo, Nickelodeon, Garnier, Monster, Ford, Hitachi, IKEA, Unilever, Subway, Nescafe, Johnson & Johnson, Xiaomi, and Hyundai.

The criteria for selecting these companies for the research were as follows: they must hold a market share in each country according to Euromonitor country reports or rank among the top 100 global brands, maintain a dedicated Facebook page for each country, and demonstrate a sufficient level of activity on their respective Facebook pages. Companies posting fewer than 15 times per year were excluded due to an insufficient volume of posts for meaningful analysis. Additionally, companies whose Facebook pages in one or more countries received minimal engagement, with the first 15 posts garnering an average of fewer than 50 likes, were also excluded due to the limited data available for comparative purposes.

From each company's Facebook page, 20 posts were selected, commencing from the same date for every page and concluding after 20 posts were collected. For each post, the following data points were captured: shares, comments, likes, and emoticon responses, including "love," "wow," "funny," "angry," and "sad." To illustrate, we present a sample post below to clarify the types of information collected.

Figure 1 - Mercedes-Benz India Facebook Post



*Reference: Mercedes-Benz India Facebook Page*

This post, shared in October 2023 by Mercedes-Benz India, features an image paired with a concise caption. Below the image, you'll find three primary options for user interaction: liking, commenting, and sharing. When you hover over the "like" option, you'll see various emoticon responses that you can choose from instead of simply liking the post. Data collection involved 20 posts from each company in every country, resulting in a total of 4,500 gathered posts. Some of these posts were promotional giveaways, where users could win prizes by leaving comments. These giveaway posts received a notably higher level of engagement, especially in the form of comments. However, they were excluded from the analysis, as the main focus was to highlight cultural distinctions in engagement metrics. Including these giveaway posts would skew the results and provide an inaccurate portrayal of the genuine differences in engagement metrics.

The only other posts omitted from the analysis were those allowing users to vote using emoticon responses. For instance, users might be asked to vote for their favorite product by using "like" for product A, "love" for product B, and "wow" for product C. Once again, these posts were excluded to maintain the clarity of the analysis, which aims to uncover cultural disparities in engagement metrics.

Originally, the intention was to automate the data extraction process using a web scraper. Unfortunately, due to recent controversies involving Cambridge Analytics, obtaining the necessary licenses to access the Facebook library proved to be challenging. Consequently, all the data had to be manually collected, which did offer the advantage of incorporating a wider range of emoticon options, such as "love," "wow," "funny," "angry," and "sad," which are often overlooked in automated extractions of Facebook posts.

It's important to note that the countries included in this study have varying population sizes, and specific brands may enjoy greater popularity in one country compared to another. For instance, India has a significantly larger population than Denmark, making it highly likely that a page in India will receive more shares, comments, and likes simply due to a larger follower base. As discussed in the literature review, page likes are typically global for most companies, meaning that the total number of people worldwide who have liked the page is the only available metric. Therefore, to measure differences between countries, all the variables in this study are expressed as ratios. For example, to gauge a country's tendency to share a post rather than comment on it, the shares of the posts are divided by the comments, resulting in a shares & comments measurement. Detailed explanations of these ratios can be found in the accompanying table.

Table 1 - Variable Explanation

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Shares & Comments Measurement	The measurement of post shares to post comments.	The increased shares-to-comments measurement suggests a greater inclination to share posts, whereas a decreased measurement implies a stronger inclination to comment on them.
Emoticon & Likes Measurement	The emoticon reactions (including love, wow, funny, angry, and sad) on posts, divided by post likes.	The preference for using emoticons over likes, while a diminished measurement indicates the opposite. It is crucial to highlight that each user can select only one like option for each post.
Funny & Likes Measurement	The proportion of funny reactions on posts relative to post likes.	The greater inclination to employ humorous responses, as opposed to a lower measurement.
Wow Likes Measurement	The measurement of wow reactions on posts to post likes.	The greater propensity to utilize the "wow" response, as opposed to a lower measurement.

*Reference - Based on own understanding*

Differences exist among brand pages in terms of how and to what extent consumers interact with Facebook posts. A brand page refers to the Facebook page associated with a specific company-country combination, such as Volvo Brazil or PepsiCo Croatia. Various companies and industry sectors exhibit varying levels and types of engagement. For example, Nickelodeon's posts receive significantly more engagement and are shared more frequently compared to posts by Monster. This dissertation's primary focus is on highlighting disparities between countries, not sectors.

To ensure equitable consideration of each company and facilitate the analysis of disparities between countries, the following procedure was executed: commencing with the full sample of 4,500 posts (20 posts from 225 brand pages), each variable (shares, comments, likes, love, wow, funny, angry, and sad) was aggregated per brand page. Subsequently, variables were divided by one another, such as the total shares of a brand page divided by total comments. This process yielded a sample of 225 entries with ratios for each variable for each brand page. These ratios were then summed for each country, resulting in country-specific scores for each measurement. The outcome is a condensed sample of 15 entries with the country-specific ratios for each variable.

It is important to reiterate that this approach was adopted due to variations in engagement levels between industry sectors and companies. Simply aggregating likes, shares, and comments would lead to skewed results, as Nickelodeon would be disproportionately represented compared to Monster, given the higher shareability of Nickelodeon's posts. By calculating ratios on a per-company basis, every company receives equitable representation, enabling the measurement of distinctions between countries.

To visually depict the relationship between the variables and cultural dimensions, graphs were constructed, with one line representing the variable and another line representing the cultural dimension. On the left side of the y-axis, the score for the dimension is represented, while the right side of the y-axis displays the variable score. Abbreviations were employed for the cultural dimensions: power distance (PD), individualism (ID), motivation towards achievement and success (MS), uncertainty avoidance (UA), long-term orientation (LO), and indulgence-restraint (IR).



Correlation analysis and linear regressions were employed to scrutinize the variables and identify which Hofstede dimension explains these dependent variables and the extent to which these dimensions clarify variance in the dependent variables. Emphasis is placed on dimensions hypothesized to predict differences in engagement metrics, though other dimensions are also tested to observe whether they explain variance in engagement metrics.

### **2.3 Hypothesis**

Collectivist nations tend to foster stronger in-group bonds and place a greater reliance on Word-of-Mouth as an information source when compared to individualistic societies, where information is predominantly sourced from other channels. Moreover, individuals hailing from high power distance cultures tend to lean more towards Word-of-Mouth and personal sources for information, while their counterparts gravitate towards objective facts and impersonal sources. One method to engage in Word-of-Mouth is by sharing a post on social media platforms like Facebook.

Through this, one can disseminate information, entertainment, or promote a product to their entire circle of friends. Additionally, countries low in these cultural dimensions invest extra effort in nurturing relationships, as these aren't inherently ingrained in their identity. Tagging someone in the comments of a post is a specific approach to maintaining or cultivating friendships with a particular individual. In contrast, collectivists often perceive themselves as naturally belonging to a group and may opt to share the entire post with their circle of friends.

H1: The frequency of post sharing, in contrast to commenting, demonstrates a negative correlation with individualism and a positive correlation with power distance.

According to Hofstede, nations with a high inclination towards uncertainty avoidance tend to exhibit more emotional expressiveness when compared to countries low in this dimension. Furthermore, highly individualistic countries display greater emotional expressiveness, particularly in terms of amazement and surprise, and are more inclined to express emotions, particularly negative ones, in connection with businesses.

H2: The overall use of emoticons in responses shows a positive correlation with individualism and uncertainty avoidance.

Countries characterized by high uncertainty avoidance and power distance, while low in individualism, are more inclined to employ drama, entertainment, or metaphors as advertising styles. Conversely, nations with low uncertainty avoidance and power distance, and a high degree of individualism, tend to employ humor as a prevalent advertising style. On platforms like Facebook, users can utilize funny emoticons to express their amusement.

H3: The utilization of funny emoticons exhibits a negative correlation with uncertainty avoidance and power distance and a positive correlation with individualism.

Highly individualistic countries often express emotions more openly, especially when it comes to amazement and surprise, which can influence the prevalence of Wow emoticon responses.

H4: The use of the wow emoticon response demonstrates a positive correlation with individualism.

## **3. Literature Review**

### **3.1 Culture Overview**

The concept of culture originates from the Latin term "colere," which originally referred to the cultivation of the soil. However, by the early 16th century, it had expanded to encompass the cultivation of one's intellect, abilities, and behaviours. Culture, in this context, is commonly defined as the collection of values, beliefs, and practices that distinguish one group from another. The term "subjective culture" is used to emphasize that cultures have a distinctive way of perceiving their surroundings, based on past successful experiences. These fundamental values are then transmitted from one generation to the next. In the words of Clifford Geertz, culture serves as the means through which people communicate, sustain, and evolve their understanding of life attitudes. (Fernandez, 2021)

Culture constitutes the framework of meaning that human beings employ to interpret their lives and direct their actions. Another elucidating description of culture is provided by Spencer-Oatey. Culture is described as a flexible set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioral norms, and fundamental assumptions and values shared by a community of people, influencing the actions of each member and their interpretations of others' behavior. This definition introduces the crucial element of interpreting the actions of others. In this context, culture is often likened to a fish in water; the fish remains unaware of the water unless it is removed from it. (Appadurai, 2020)

The countries typically only become conscious of our own culture when our mental framework is challenged, such as when we encounter individuals from different cultures, resulting in what is often termed "culture shock." In the increasingly interconnected modern world, the likelihood of individuals experiencing culture shock to the same degree has diminished. Most people are now well-informed about other countries, their cultures, and customs through news broadcasts, social media, and various other sources. Cross-cultural differences have been identified as early as 1961 by Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck. Their framework of value orientations is based on the idea that people in all cultures confront the same fundamental, universal challenges in life but differ in the solutions they adopt to address these challenges. (Gudykunst, 2021)

Even if a society is aware of alternative solutions, it tends to favor one over the other. Most cultural research operates under the assumption that people encounter the same universal challenges but differ in the solutions that have developed and become customary over the years. The five universal challenges identified by Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck are as follows: (Turner, 2020)

1. What is the individual's relationship to others: Lineal, Collateral, or Individualistic? Lineal indicates the extent to which authority is hierarchically structured, Collateral reflects the extent to which individuals make their own decisions but seek input from others, and Individualistic assumes that individuals should exert control over their own lives.

2. What is the temporal focus of human life: Past-oriented, Present-oriented, or Future-oriented?

3. What is the modality of human activity: Being, Being-in-becoming, or Doing? The distinction between the latter two lies in Being-in-becoming's emphasis on personal development leading to growth and Doing's emphasis on how activity defines us and must achieve goals.

4. What is a human being's relationship with nature: Subjugation, Harmony, or Mastery?

5. What is the character of innate human nature: Good, Evil, or Neutral? These initial beliefs influence how people approach the prospect of change and their initial approach and trust toward strangers. Hofstede critiqued this method of categorizing cultural values because it conflates different levels of aggregation (culture, organization, individual) and is based on limited empirical data from a specific geographic region. A more comprehensive study, validated by broader empirical data from diverse regions, distilled national culture into three distinct dimensions, which are outlined below.

Relation to authority; Conception of self, including the individual's concepts of masculinity and femininity; Primary dilemmas or conflicts, and ways of dealing with them, including the control of aggression and the expression versus inhibition of affect. Interestingly enough these three dimensions that were outlined 20 years before Hofstede acquired his data from IBM, correlated significantly with the dimensions found in Hofstede's analysis without initially testing for them. Hofstede found four dimensions of culture: individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity. Later two other dimensions were added: long term vs. short term orientation and indulgence vs. restraint. (Hofstede & Minkov, 2020)

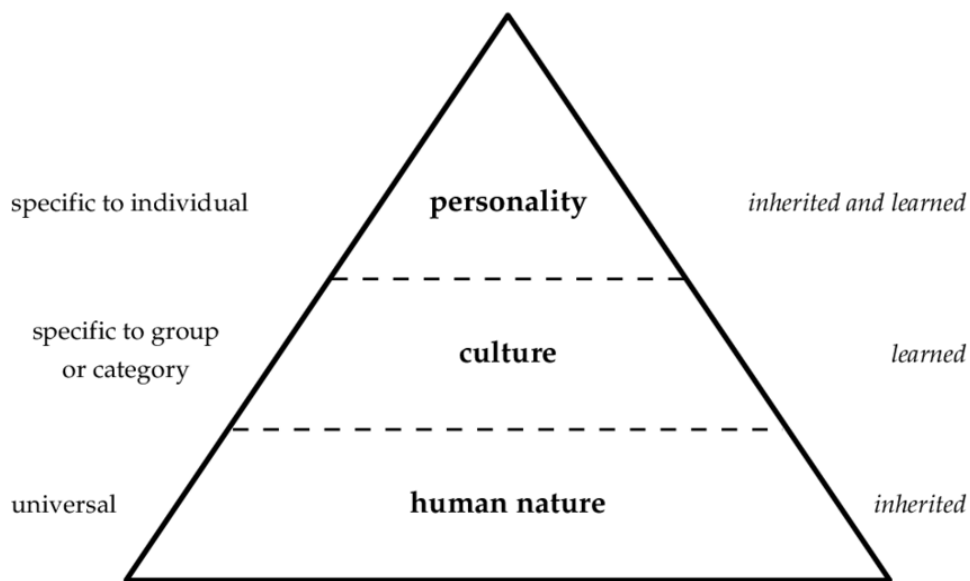
These dimension will be discussed in more detail in the next section, first the concept of culture will be explored in a more general sense. Hofstede posits that different societies not only choose different solutions to the basic problems of human life but also evolved different sets of values and behavioural systems to deal with the with the distinct environment where they have been situated. Hofstede defines culture as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from another. (Fiske & Markus, 2022)

This mental programming is learned in early childhood through the family when a person is most receptive of new ideas, and is later reinforced in school, work and other social institutions. Culture in this sense could be seen as the unspoken rules of the social game. This definition of culture is akin to the concept *Habitus* coined by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. *Habitus* is a system of durable, transposable dispositions learned from everyday practices and experiences. The knowledge acquired from everyday practices is variable, imprecise, and generative to the extent that it fits broad cultural context and yet provides scope for intercultural variation. (Kroeber, 2022)

This *Habitus* forms the basic stratum of simplified world knowledge acquired by an individual through every day practices in the society. People from different cultures have different schemata that is structures of knowledge a person possesses about objects, events, people or phenomena. To place newly acquired information in memory, it must be encoded according to existing schemata. Usually, acquired information is organized into a schema that already exists in memory. When a set of complex schemas become inter-subjectively shared by a group of people, complex schemas then represent cultural models of a society. (D'Andrade, 2020)

This is the case when, everybody in the group knows the schema, and everybody knows that everyone else knows the schema, and thus cultural models of doing and understanding things are evolved and understood as obvious facts by the individuals in the society. Culture is learned and not genetic, furthermore belonging to a particular culture does not immediately make you exactly the same as every other member of that culture. The figure illustrates three levels that make a person who they are. (Bartlett, 2022)

Figure 2 - Mental Programming



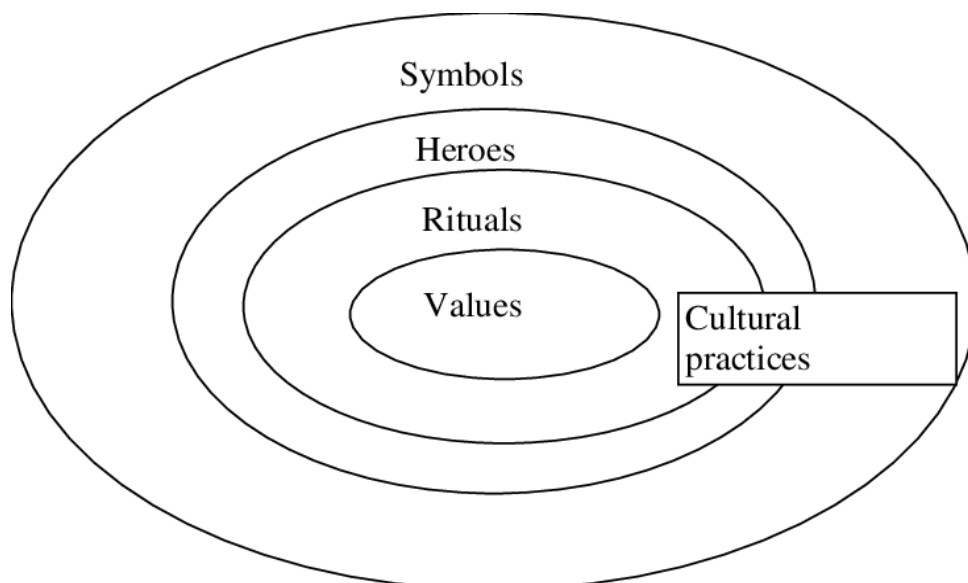
Reference - Hofstede et al., 2010

Human nature exhibits universal characteristics across all individuals worldwide, reflecting our inherent capacity to experience emotions and navigate our fundamental drives. The interpretation assigned to these innate drives and emotions, as well as the manner in which they are expressed, is profoundly influenced by the cultural context. Personality, on the other hand, represents the distinctive and individualistic facets of each person. It is, to some extent, genetically inherited, yet culture, in which one resides, and personal experiences further contribute to its development. (Bourdieu, 2020)

The five-factor model offers a framework for understanding personality distinctions, encompassing the dimensions of Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Intriguingly, these personality factors demonstrate correlations with Hofstede's cultural dimensions, such as the alignment between Extraversion and Hofstede's Individualism dimension. These correlations serve to substantiate the premise that culture plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's personality. (Schwartz, 2022)

Hofstede likens culture to an onion with distinct layers. The behaviors and practices found in the outer three layers are readily observable to outsiders, while the values residing within remain concealed. These internal values are believed to exert influence over the rituals, heroes, and symbols that manifest within a culture. Symbols encompass elements like language, gestures, imagery, objects, flags, clothing, and more. These symbols evolve over time as a culture undergoes transformation. Heroes are individuals, living or deceased, who serve as admired figures and exemplify role models for the population. Rituals, on the other hand, denote activities that, while not strictly necessary for achieving a specific objective, hold significant social and cultural importance within the society. (Hofstede & Minkov, 2021)

Figure 3 - Cultural Levels



*Reference - Hofstede et al., 2010*

Values represent the foundational layer of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Within this framework, values denote the collective inclination to opt for one choice over another. Various cultures differ in their determinations of what is deemed bad or good, dirty or clean, unsafe or safe, unprohibited or prohibited, indecent or decent, immoral or moral, ugly or beautiful, unnatural or natural, abnormal or normal, paradoxical or logical, and irrational or rational. In stark contrast to practices, values exhibit significantly greater durability over time. In this analogy, culture is frequently likened to an iceberg, where the observable aspect, akin to the tip of the iceberg, pertains to practices, while the more influential underlying values propelling these practices remain inconspicuous. (Mooij, 2021)

### **3.1.1 Cultural Models**

Hall's dimensional model is one of the earliest models for analysing cultural differences was developed by anthropologist Edward T. Hall. He introduced two fundamental dimensions of culture: the Low-Context vs. High-Context and Polychronic vs. Monochronic dimensions. In the Low-Context vs. High-Context dimension, cultures are classified based on the amount of pre-programmed information in a communication context. High-context cultures involve abundant information embedded in the receiver and the setting, with minimal reliance on the transmitted message. (Trompenaars, 2022)

In contrast, low-context cultures require most of the essential information to be conveyed explicitly in the transmitted message due to the lack of context. In terms of marketing implications, advertising in low-context cultures emphasizes verbal, textual, and direct information transmission, whereas high-context cultures prioritize symbolism, metaphors, and aesthetics. Although this dimension is widely accepted, measuring it statistically remains challenging, and there is limited empirical evidence to categorize countries definitively. Recent research comparing the advertising responses between the Netherlands (low-context) and Belgium (medium-context) validated the hypothesis that high-context cultures respond more favourably to high-context advertisements. (Hall, 2023)



Hofstede's studies indicate a correlation between the context level and the individualism-collectivism dimension, which will be discussed below. Individualistic cultures tend to be low-context, while collectivist cultures tend to be high-context. The Polychronic vs. Monochronic dimension addresses a culture's perception of time, with Monochronic cultures emphasizing the completion of one task at a time and Polychronic cultures prioritizing the simultaneous handling of multiple tasks, with time subordinate to interpersonal relationships. Similar to the previous dimension, empirical cross-cultural testing of this concept remains challenging, leading to a lack of statistical studies. Furthermore, this dimension is directly incorporated into Trompenaars' attitude towards time dimension. (Hofstede, 2021)

Trompenaar's dimensional model is heavily influenced by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's framework of value orientations. This model is built on the premise that people worldwide encounter the same fundamental life problems but choose divergent solutions to address them. The model encompasses seven distinct dimensions, which are elaborated in the table below. (Trompenaars & Turner, 2020)

Trompenaar underscores that these dimensions should not be considered value judgments, but rather, the optimal approach often involves finding a balance between the two extremes to generate synergy. It is evident in this study that these dimensions are all significantly influenced by Kluckhohn's Value Orientation Framework. The first five dimensions primarily pertain to how cultures relate to people, while the remaining two concern our perspectives on time and the environment. (Lewis, 2022)

Trompenaar emphasizes the dynamic nature of cultures, discouraging the view of cultures as fixed entities firmly situated at one end of the spectrum. Instead, cultures tend to oscillate between their preferred starting point and the opposing end, seeking to reconcile differences. This dynamic process is illustrated in the figure. In this context, cultures may exhibit a preference for one end of the spectrum, but they ultimately cycle back to find a balance. Trompenaar criticizes Hofstede for depicting cultural categories as static and, as a result, excluding the opposite end of the spectrum. (McSweeney, 2021)

Table 2 - Trompenaar Dimensions

Dimension	Explanation
Universalism vs Particularism	The Universalist perspective asserts that universally applicable standards of what is good and right exist, whereas Particularism advocates a context-specific approach, refraining from rigid adherence to established rules.
Individualism vs Communitarianism	This dimension explores whether individuals identify primarily as independent entities or as integral members of a collective.
Neutral vs Emotional	Neutral cultures tend to exhibit restrained emotions and prioritize objectivity and detachment in interactions. In contrast, Emotional cultures regard emotions as an inherent and essential element of interpersonal engagements.
Specific vs Diffuse	Specific cultures tend to compartmentalize distinct aspects, whereas diffuse cultures adopt a more holistic perspective. For instance, in diffuse cultures, one's superior maintains authority across various contexts, even in non-professional settings like sports. In specific cultures, these domains remain separate, with one's superior role limited to the workplace.
Achievement vs Ascription	This dimension assesses whether power is attributed based on factors like age or education, or earned through exemplary performance.
Time Attitude	Differing emphasis may be placed on the past, present, and future, with some cultures viewing time as a linear progression of events and others as a synchronic continuum where past, present, and future interconnect, influencing current actions.
Environment Attitude	Cultural perspectives also impact the relationship with nature. Cultures perceiving nature as more potent than individuals tend to have an external focus, while those believing in individual mastery over nature exhibit an internal focus. This distinction is referred to as an inner locus of control or an outer locus of control.

*Reference - Trompenaars et al., 2011*

Hofstede vehemently critiques Trompenaars' framework, contending that it lacks scientific verifiability and asserting that its dimensions are primarily rooted in speculative sociological theories from the 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, Hofstede asserts that the questions utilized in Trompenaars' framework are directly derived from these theories, making them less than ideal for the study of cultural differences. Additionally, he casts doubt on the validity of Trompenaars' database of respondents, primarily due to the absence of publication in reputable scientific journals. Notably, a sole statistical analysis of this database conducted by other researchers revealed the potential reduction of dimensions into two overarching categories, both correlated with Individualism-Collectivism, and one of them further linked to Power Distance. (Trompenaars, 2020)

Hofstede's dimensional model took shape when he fortuitously acquired a dataset comprising respondents employed at various international branches of IBM. These respondents, given their homogeneity, provided a distinctive platform for exploring cultural nuances. Through rigorous statistical analysis of respondents' answers across different countries, Hofstede identified the initial four dimensions of his framework: Power Distance, Collectivism-Individualism, Feminine-Masculine, and Uncertainty Avoidance. The scores assigned to individual countries were derived by comparing responses to the survey alternatives from a similar group of employees in each respective nation. It is essential to note that these dimension scores are relative, utilizing a straightforward mathematical equation to scale them between 0 and 100, enabling clear distinctions between countries. Subsequently, a fifth dimension, Long-term orientation vs. Short-term orientation, was introduced following the insights of the Chinese Culture Connection. Finally, additional research unveiled a final dimension known as Indulgence-Restraint. (Hofstede & Minkov, 2020)

Figure 4 - Culture Reconciliation



*Reference - Trompenaars et al., 2011*

Despite the initial discovery of the first four dimensions in 1980 using data solely from IBM personnel, they have since undergone empirical validation in numerous studies. These findings have been corroborated by various studies that replicated the same questions with diverse groups of personnel across different industries. Moreover, they have proven successful in marketing-related investigations, as discussed later, and have been validated against conceptually related external data. For instance, Power Distance exhibits correlations with political systems and economic development, while Uncertainty Avoidance relates to mental health. The list of external validations continues to expand, with over 400 significant correlations having been established between these dimensions and the results of other studies. (Hofstede & Trompenaars, 2021)

Table 3 - Hofstede Dimensions

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Power Distance	The extent to which individuals in institutions and organizations with less authority anticipate and embrace disparities in the allocation of power and wealth.
Individualism- Collectivism	The society exhibits individualism when interpersonal bonds are weak, and individuals are anticipated to prioritize their self-sufficiency and the welfare of their immediate family members. The society demonstrates collectivism when individuals are integrated into close communities that provide lifelong security in exchange for unwavering loyalty.
Masculinity- Femininity	The society is considered masculine when there is a clear division of emotional gender roles, with men expected to display assertiveness and toughness while focusing on material success, and women expected to exhibit humility and tenderness with an emphasis on the quality of life.
Uncertainty Avoidance	Uncertainty avoidance measures the extent to which individuals in a culture are disconcerted by uncertain and unfamiliar circumstances, manifesting as stress and a desire for predictability. People favor situations where both formal and informal regulations exist.
Long Term Orientation & Short Term Orientation	Long-term orientation is exemplified by the pursuit of future rewards through persistence and thrift, while short-term orientation is characterized by an emphasis on the past and the present, with a focus on tradition, avoidance of damage to reputation, and adherence to societal norms.
Indulgence & Restraint	Indulgence signifies the extent to which individuals in a society seek to satisfy fundamental human desires for enjoyment and leisure. Restraint reflects the degree to which individuals in a society believe that these fundamental human desires should be restricted and governed by strict social norms.

*Reference - Hofstede Insights, 2018*

Hofstede's model has faced its share of criticisms, with some noteworthy limitations that warrant discussion. It has been contended that his model oversimplifies the intricacies of culture, as it attempts to encapsulate the entirety of cultural phenomena within a limited set of dimensions. Moreover, detractors argue that these dimensions were derived within a specific corporate context, namely at IBM, and may not be universally applicable to diverse marketing contexts. Additionally, critics assert that the model falls short in the realm of management-related studies, as it gauges culture at a broad level rather than examining individual or organizational nuances. Some academics have also accused the model of exaggerating actual cultural disparities between countries. Notably, Trompenaar asserts that the dimensions within the model are overly static and fail to account for the dynamic nature of a country's culture. (Trompenaars, 2020)

Despite these drawbacks, the Hofstede model continues to be the most prevalent choice in marketing studies. This is largely because alternative cultural models offer limited improvements. Furthermore, the widespread adoption of Hofstede's cultural classification can be attributed to several factors. One such factor is the extensive coverage of countries within the model, providing a comprehensive scope for cross-cultural analysis. Additionally, the model's simplicity in terms of its dimensions is appealing to both academics and practitioners. It is worth noting that the original dimensions of the Hofstede model have garnered validation from more than 200 external sources of data, underscoring its explanatory prowess. (Brown & Alnawas, 2021)

Consequently, for the purposes of this study, the Hofstede model is employed to compare countries in the context of social media marketing. The scores on the dimensions for the countries under consideration in this study are presented in the appendix.

### 3.1.2 Cultural Level

Determining the optimal level of analysis for exploring cross-cultural distinctions presents a significant challenge. Typically, researchers opt for a national-level analysis to examine cultural differences, although this approach does not always provide a precise depiction of the overall culture within a specific group of people. For instance, consider the notable discrepancy in individualism scores between India and Norway, with India exhibiting a higher degree of individualism. Such findings often lead to the general understanding that the Northern Hemisphere tends to lean towards individualism compared to the Southern Hemisphere. Italian culture, conversely, is commonly characterized by a collective orientation, placing strong emphasis on familial bonds. (Triandis, 2020)

The reason behind India's notably high individualism score can be attributed to the data source utilized, derived from the IBM headquarters. It is commonly acknowledged that the North of India shares more cultural similarities with the Northern Hemisphere, whereas data gathered from the Southern regions of India might skew towards collectivism, aligning with trends observed in other nations. Additionally, the presence of various subcultures and diverse ethnicities within certain countries introduces further complexity to the analysis. Take the United States, for instance, a nation with numerous ethnic groups, large metropolitan areas, small rural communities, and a multitude of subcultures rooted in music, hobbies, and interests. (Valsiner & Niane, 2021)

Researchers predominantly opt for a national-level analysis due to the relative ease of ascertaining an individual's nationality compared to establishing their specific subculture. Moreover, individuals can belong to multiple subcultures concurrently, adding to the intricacy of the analysis. Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that disparities between nations tend to surpass differences within nations. Even in a diverse nation like Brazil, characterized by its 27 distinct states, each influenced by global, African, and indigenous cultures, studies examining regional disparities reveal that these regions exhibit more cultural similarities with each other than with neighbouring countries. This phenomenon extends beyond Brazil and is also observable in the United States. Considering the practicality of identifying individuals by their nationality and the tendency for greater distinctions to exist between nations than within them, it remains the most logical approach to scrutinize cross-cultural distinctions at the national level. (Kitayama & Markus, 2022)

## **3.2 Marketing Culture**

Culture exerts a significant impact on various aspects of marketing, encompassing consumer behavior, communication strategies, and advertising techniques. Earlier in this review, various cultural frameworks were explored, and for the purposes of this study, Hofstede's model is considered the most suitable. Moreover, this research focuses on the national level of analysis, aiming to elucidate distinctions between countries in the context of social media marketing.

### **3.2.1 Global Context**

The ongoing debate centres on whether companies should maintain a standardized approach for their online content or customize it to cater to the unique characteristics of the cultures they engage with. A.C. Fatt, dating back to 1967, explored various strategies for international business. He advocated for standardization, asserting that while cultures differ, there are universal aspects that resonate with people worldwide. The foremost universal appeal lies in the pursuit of a better life for oneself and one's family. (Steenkamp, 2020)

The traditional cultural distinctions were diminishing due to increased global travel, suggesting that people share common problems, although they might choose different solutions. A similar perspective was echoed by M. Levitt, emphasizing the advantages for multinational corporations in adopting a standardized approach. He argued that focusing on common desires was superior to catering to the preferences of a specific group. Moreover, Levitt posited that customers generally favoured standardized products with high quality and lower prices over locally customized, pricier alternatives. (Hofstede, 2021)

It's important to note that while this approach assumes rationality in consumer behavior, some scholars argue that this may not align with the complexities of cultural contexts. The standardization approach offers several advantages. Firstly, it allows a company to maintain a consistent image and identity globally. Secondly, frequent travelers are not perplexed by conflicting advertising messages. Thirdly, it permits the company to execute a single coordinated marketing campaign across all countries. Lastly, it reduces the costs associated with content localization. It's crucial to consider the nature of the product; standardized messages are more feasible for industrial goods than for consumer goods. (Triandis, 2020)

In the consumer goods sector, a distinction can be drawn between durable goods, which are better suited for standardization, and non-durable goods, which often align with unique societal habits, tastes, and customs. Empirical evidence supports this, with one study indicating that durable goods are relatively insensitive to advertising, making them suitable for standardization. A separate study on Canadian consumer goods found that durable goods tend to be standardized more frequently than non-durables. However, this convergence of consumer preferences has a limit. As wealth levels align across nations, cultural values may become more distinct again, influenced by factors such as cultural traditions. (Markus & Kitayama, 2021)

With the advent of the internet and its widespread adoption, many argue that globalization has intensified, causing cultural differences to shrink due to increased information and communication flows between countries. Recent studies have investigated the cultural orientations of countries such as Denmark, Japan, and Morocco, revealing shifts from previously established norms. These findings suggest a trend towards cultural convergence as a result of globalization. However, another recent study indicates that consumers are moving towards a global consumer culture while still holding onto their cultural traditions. (Matsushashi & Mori, 2021)

Although cultures evolve over time, Hofstede's research posits that differences between countries tend to persist, as his scores represent a country's position relative to other countries. Hofstede argues that while technological modernization fosters culture change and leads to some similarities across societies, it does not erase variety in other dimensions. In fact, it may exacerbate differences as societies adapt to technological changes based on their pre-existing value systems. Hofstede dismisses the idea that globalization will lead to a single global culture, maintaining that the differences observable at the end of the 20th century were already apparent in earlier centuries and will likely persist beyond 2100.

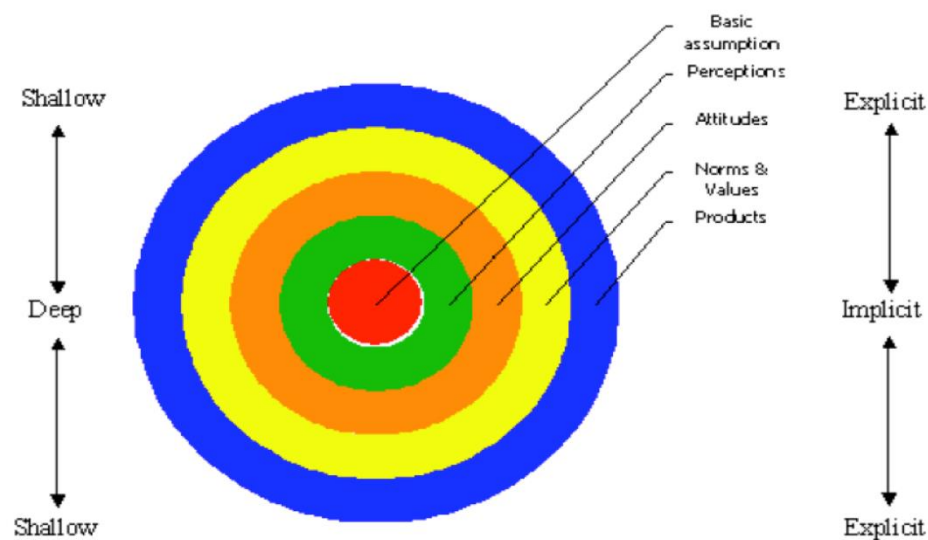
Considering the diversity of results and perspectives, it is intriguing to investigate potential cultural variations in how consumers interact with social media posts. Social media, with its remarkable ability to enhance global communication, stands as a prime example of a technological advancement that has bridged cultural gaps.



### 3.2.2 Consumer Perspective

Now that the discussion has been delineated, we will delve into a more in-depth analysis of the impact of culture on various aspects of marketing. To structure the diverse expressions of culture within the marketing domain, we employ a framework derived from Hofstede and De Mooij, as illustrated below. Commencing with the upper central circle representing the consumer, we then progress to cognitive processes and social interactions, followed by considerations in branding and advertising, and lastly, disparities in digital communication.

Figure 5 - Cultural Models



*Reference - Hofstede, 2010*

An essential aspect to understand in consumer behavior is the relationship between consumers' self-image and their purchase decisions, as individuals often buy products or services that align with their self-concept, aiming to move closer to their ideal self. Culture plays a significant role in shaping this self-image, with the ideal self often reflecting the values and norms of a particular culture. Moreover, the concept of self and personality varies across cultures. In individualistic societies, individuals are seen as autonomous, possessing distinct attributes, qualities, or processes that drive their behavior, and consistency over time is highly valued.

In contrast, collectivistic cultures embed the self within the context of relationships and surroundings, allowing behavior to adapt from one situation to another. In individualistic cultures, self-esteem is often based on individual capacities, while in collectivistic cultures, it stems from one's relationships with others. For instance, in individualistic countries like the United Kingdom, independence is associated with positive emotions, whereas in collectivistic cultures like Croatia, independence is linked to negative emotions. (Kumar, & Sharma, 2021)

Identity and image are two related but distinct aspects of self-concept. In Western individualistic cultures, individuals typically evaluate their identity based on their unique personality and characteristics, whereas in collectivistic cultures, the assessment is centered on their ability to maintain harmonious relationships. In individualistic cultures, body image is closely tied to self-esteem, and an attractive appearance is expected to boost self-esteem. Conversely, in Japan, success is often attributed to external factors, and the body's role in enhancing self-esteem is less pronounced. A study on women's self-perception of beauty revealed that the perception of attractiveness is influenced by individualism, low power distance, and low uncertainty avoidance. (Wang, 2022)

Emotions and motivations of consumers also exhibit cultural variations. Collectivistic cultures and those with high power distance tend to display more subdued emotions, whereas individualistic cultures show greater emotional expressivity, especially concerning happiness and surprise. Furthermore, individuals in collectivist cultures may be inclined to suppress negative emotions to maintain group harmony. In Asian cultures, the fear of losing face can lead dissatisfied customers to refrain from directly complaining to a company and instead engage in negative word-of-mouth within their social circle. (Hu et al., 2021)

Cultural distinctions also extend to information processing. Collectivistic cultures rely on high-context communication, making extensive use of symbols, signs, and metaphors. In contrast, individualistic cultures are more verbally oriented, favoring explanations, persuasion, and rhetoric. People from individualistic, low uncertainty avoidance, and low power distance cultures tend to be verbally oriented, engaging more with books and newspapers. They tend to categorize objects based on rules and properties, while collectivistic cultures emphasize the relationships between objects. (Shavitt & Han, 2020)

Additionally, individuals from individualistic cultures with low power distance actively seek information from various sources and friends before making purchase decisions, which enhances their sense of being well-informed. In collectivistic cultures with high power distance, information acquisition often occurs through implicit, interpersonal communication, and buying decisions are influenced by trust in the company. Cultural dimensions also impact various aspects of relationship marketing. (Chen & Yang, 2021)

Individualism-collectivism plays a vital role in relationship marketing that emphasizes long-term social bonds, while power distance affects efforts related to status, and uncertainty avoidance influences marketing efforts aimed at addressing risk and uncertainty. Overall, relationship marketing tends to be more effective in collectivistic cultures, as individuals from these cultures place greater importance on relational partners and harmony. (Naldi et al., 2023)

The way consumers relate to brands also varies across cultures. In countries with higher individualism, there is a tendency to attribute personalities to brands, expecting brands to be unique and consistent in their characteristics. In contrast, more collectivistic cultures conceptualize brands in the context of the product or company itself. This encourages consumers to build relationships with corporations and prioritize factors like product features and the trustworthiness of the company. In individualistic cultures, relationships are established with the abstract brand itself, and decisions are often based on the brand's personality. (Al-Haddad & Al-Shehry, 2021)

Additionally, culture influences advertising strategies, with corporate logos featured more prominently in TV advertisements from Japanese and Korean companies, emphasizing the importance of the corporate relationship with customers. As a result, people in collectivistic cultures tend to be more open to brand extensions, while individualistic cultures may view extensions as less fitting. Furthermore, different cultures attribute diverse personalities to brands. For example, countries high in uncertainty avoidance may associate global brands with being friendly and trustworthy, while countries high in power distance may emphasize prestige. Brands may also be interpreted differently in various cultures, highlighting the limitations of applying Western branding theories universally. (Wang, & Zhang, 2020)

Anthropomorphism, the act of attributing human-like qualities to objects or brands, is significant in social media marketing. The degree to which people anthropomorphize objects or brands is linked to a higher score on the uncertainty avoidance dimension, as cultures with a need for comprehensibility and predictability are more likely to engage in anthropomorphism. Recent research has shown that anthropomorphizing a brand and encouraging frequent social media interactions work better in high uncertainty avoidance cultures, where frequent interactions reduce uncertainty and build trust. (Kacen & Lee, 2019)

The culture exerts a substantial influence on various aspects of marketing, including consumer behavior, communication, and advertising. The discussion above primarily utilizes Hofstede's cultural dimensions model as a framework for understanding these cultural differences, focusing on the nation-level analysis to highlight variations in social media marketing practices across countries. The following section delves deeper into the standardization versus adaptation debate in marketing. (Kwong, 2018)

### **3.2.3 Advertising Practices**

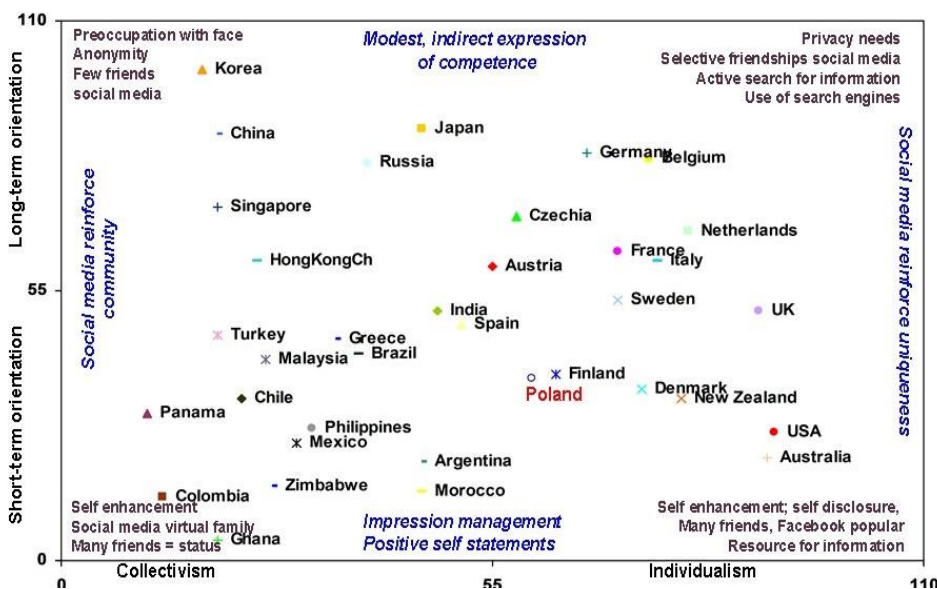
The significance of aligning advertisements with the prevailing culture has been the subject of numerous investigations. As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, the concept of schemata has been examined. Individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds possess varying schemata, which are essentially cognitive structures used to interpret information. When individuals are exposed to advertisements that do not align with their existing schemata, there is a potential risk that not all the conveyed information will be retained or that it may be interpreted differently from the intended message. (Douglas & McKerras, 2021)

Cross-cultural studies have scrutinized different countries with respect to the content and reception of television and print advertisements. A majority of these investigations have centred on the dissimilarities in advertisement content and have frequently employed the various advertising appeals identified by researchers. These appeals are then correlated with cultural dimensions. To a lesser extent, some studies have delved into topics such as character portrayals, celebrity endorsements, and other related aspects, but the bulk of the research has concentrated on the content of advertisements. (Okumus et al., 2021)

These research endeavours have revealed that distinct advertising appeals are employed in different cultural contexts, often aligning with Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Furthermore, certain studies have included performance criteria and have concluded that adapting the content to the specific target culture is advantageous for enhancing a firm's success. It is worth noting that a significant portion of advertising and advertising theory originates from Western sources, particularly the USA and UK. Therefore, when these advertisements or theories do not consider the cultural element, they tend to reflect the prevailing cultural values of their place of origin, such as an emphasis on independence and autonomy. Consequently, they may be less effective when applied to a substantial portion of the global population. (Dowling & Yoon, 2022)

Numerous cross-cultural studies have emphasized the importance of accounting for cultural values in advertising strategies. Previous research has developed a framework that outlines the types of advertisements that are most effective for cultural dimensions such as collectivism and long-term orientation, as depicted in the accompanying figure. Additionally, the relationship between advertising styles and individualism, long-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and collectivism is illustrated in the following figure. (Sundar & Singhal, 2021)

Figure 6 - Advertising Styles



Reference - Mooij, 2004

The provided statistics offer a comprehensive glimpse into the preferred consumer styles across various cultures and the prevalent advertising techniques employed by companies within each cultural context. For instance, it is evident that humour finds greater acceptance in societies characterized by lower uncertainty avoidance and power distance, while exhibiting higher levels of individualism. Conversely, cultures with contrary attributes tend to favour strategies that leverage entertainment and metaphors. (Quelch & Jeannet, 2021)

### **3.2.4 Digital Communication**

Numerous studies have examined the comparative analysis of digital content across different nations, leading to arguments in favour of customizing digital content to align with the culture of the target audience. These investigations primarily delve into the digitalization process, highlighting how it can be tailored to mirror cultural values and practices. Their consistent conclusion is that consumers generally prefer digital content that is culturally congruent with their values and practices. Prior research outcomes can be categorized into three distinct themes: cultural values represented in digital content, cultural markers within digital content, and the impact of culture on users' perceptions of online stimuli. (Luo & Hsiao, 2021)

When it comes to representing cultural values, virtually all studies consistently demonstrate that digital content from local companies significantly reflects the cultural values of their respective countries. For instance, a study spanning different nations and various digital contents revealed substantial disparities in the four key cultural dimensions: individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance. Recent cross-national studies have also discovered significant differences, reinforcing the idea that, despite the rapid pace of globalization, cultural values remain significant. Additionally, companies operating in foreign markets frequently employ an adaptation strategy when communicating with their target audiences. (Al-Khouri & Lowe, 2022)

Cultural markers encompass the structural and design elements of digital content, contributing to its visual appeal and ease of navigation. Preferences for these markers are culture-specific, often referred to as "culturability," a blend of culture and usability. Research in this domain has established that individual consumers' preferences for these markers are rooted in their cultural affiliations. (Hofacker et al., 2016)

Lastly, the relationship between cultural adaptation and consumers' attitudes toward digital content is of paramount importance. A review of studies exploring this aspect consistently indicates that a high degree of cultural congruity positively influences users' perceptions. This, in turn, results in more favourable evaluations of various aspects of the site, including users' attitudes toward the site, navigational ease, online trust, and the overall presentation of information. These findings collectively underscore the preference for local or culturally adapted digital content over standardized alternatives. (Lin & Wang, 2020)

The majority of reviewed studies confirm that local digital content accurately reflects the cultural dimensions of the respective countries and that international digital content is often already customized for the target market. Moreover, other studies reveal that consumers generally respond more favourably to culturally adapt or locally tailored digital content compared to standardized alternatives. Consequently, there is empirical evidence suggesting that, especially for companies with a strong customer-centric approach, which is highly recommended in modern marketing, the customization of online content plays a pivotal role in their international business success. (Zhang & Zhao, 2021)



### **3.3 Social Media Marketing**

The concluding segment of the literature review delves into the pertinent aspects of social media marketing. The framework of this section will encompass the following components: commencing with the emergence of social media, it will be followed by an exploration of consumer conduct on social platforms. Subsequently, the focus will shift towards engagement dynamics, with a particular emphasis on the intricacies of Facebook engagement mechanisms. Thereafter, the review will address electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and ultimately, the impact of cultural factors on the realm of social media marketing will be scrutinized.

#### **3.3.1 Recent Advancement**

Projections indicate that over the next three years, the global social media user base is expected to reach approximately 4 billion individuals, which is roughly one-third of the world's total population. Among those who have access to the internet, this translates to approximately 75% of the online population actively participating in social media platforms. In the Western world, prominent social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram have garnered significant attention from both scholars and business professionals. These platforms facilitate direct interactions with customers, enabling both positive and negative consequences for companies. A crisis can swiftly reach millions of people within a matter of hours, while a satisfied customer can easily recommend a company to their entire network of followers with a single click. However, determining the optimal strategy to navigate this surge in communication possibilities remains a topic of ongoing debate. (Alhassan & Salifu, 2023)

The term "Digital 2.0" commonly refers to the transformation of the internet from a one-way communication system to an interactive medium. This transition necessitated various technological advancements and was reliant on the internet's growing popularity and people's willingness to engage with it. The convergence of these technological and ideological shifts gave rise to the concept of User Generated Content (UGC). UGC encompasses any digital content created and shared by end-users of online services or platforms, distinct from content generated by the service itself. This concept is pivotal for the success of social media, as it empowers users to engage and contribute in ways not possible with traditional media like television or radio. (Kapuge & Edirisinghe, 2022)

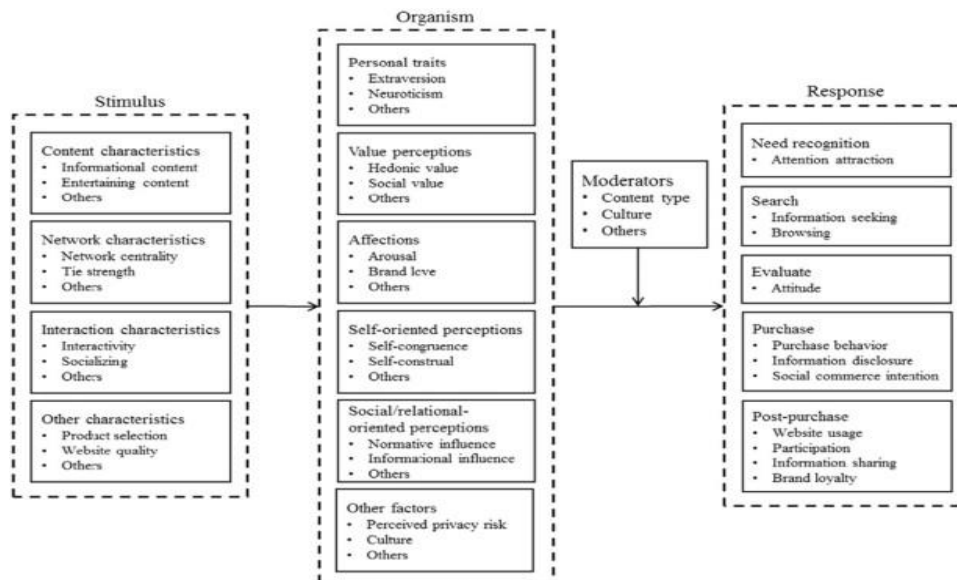
When we combine Digital 2.0 with UGC, we can define social media as a collection of internet-based applications built upon the ideological and technological foundations of Digital 2.0, allowing for the creation and exchange of User Generated Content. Critics argue that attributing the transformation of online consumer interactions solely to social media overlooks earlier manifestations of Digital 2.0, such as Usenet and BBS, albeit on a smaller scale. They contend that the major social media platforms like Facebook and MySpace, along with advances in internet speed and accessibility, expanded the reach of these interactions. (Wang & Park, 2021)

Additionally, proponents assert that consumer behavior was already undergoing a shift in the 20th century, characterized as a departure from traditional value systems and hierarchies, often referred to as post-modernism. During this period, people increasingly identified themselves through their consumption choices, finding a sense of community and security by aligning with those who shared similar preferences. This cultural transformation, often described as consumerism, fostered the formation of brand tribes – groups of individuals who shared a passion for similar products. Therefore, the current cultural landscape can be seen as an outcome of both socio-cultural changes and technological progress, significantly shaping consumer behavior on social media platforms. (Alhabashneh & Al-Shammari, 2021)

### 3.3.2 Consumer Behaviour

The significance of social media in achieving business success has garnered recognition from both industry professionals and scholars over the past several years. As social media platforms have evolved from traditional one-way communication between marketers and consumers to interactive mediums, the potential marketing implications have grown significantly. Beyond granting customers immediate access to engage with a company, social media provides a continuous channel through which companies can reach out to consumers whenever they engage with their social media profiles. This presents a unique opportunity for marketers to connect with both their existing and potential customers at various stages of the purchasing process. Consumers are motivated to interact with a company's social media presence for diverse reasons, such as consuming company-related information, seeking entertainment, engaging with the company and fellow page users, and more. (Mangold & Faulds, 2019)

Figure 7 - Stimulus-Organism-Response Model



Reference - Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016

A comprehensive literature review was conducted, which gathered and synthesized relevant studies on consumer behavior on social media. This review resulted in the development of a conceptual framework inspired by the stimulus-organism-response theory. The modified framework for understanding consumer behavior on social media is depicted in the accompanying figure. The decision was made to incorporate all five stages of the consumer decision-making process within the response phase of this framework. This decision is apt because social media provides constant access to customers, regardless of time constraints, making it possible to engage with them at any stage of the decision-making process. These five stages encompass need recognition, information search, evaluation, purchase, and post-purchase activities. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020)

During the initial exploration phase, research has highlighted the significance of information accessibility and sentiment in influencing customers. Moreover, consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal persuasion and their status as opinion leaders have been demonstrated to notably impact their information-seeking behavior. In the assessment phase, existing studies propose that various dimensions of value perception, including hedonic, social, and utilitarian aspects, are likely to shape consumers' evaluations on social networking platforms. (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2022)

This implies that consumers tend to form favourable assessments when they can discern the positive attributes of social commerce. Numerous investigations address the purchasing stage, and some findings indicate that influencing factors encompass content quality, network dynamics, and interaction levels. Organism-related factors encompass personal characteristics, value perceptions, and emotions, self-centred and socially-oriented viewpoints. Response-related factors include activities such as browsing, information search, attitude formation, information sharing, participation, and digital usage. Factors leading up to the purchase phase may include hedonic and utilitarian value, perceived ease of use, and trust. (Peter & Olson, 2020)

In the post-purchase stage, there is overlap with the purchasing phase. The informational content, hedonic appeal, social relevance, utilitarian value, normative influence, trust, and consumer engagement are the most extensively investigated factors during this phase. This specific dissertation primarily focuses on understanding how cultural variances influence consumers' interactions with social media content. The culture plays a moderating role in shaping consumer behavior on social media, yet there is a scarcity of literature that explores cultural distinctions in the context of social media. (Gupta, 2020)

### **3.3.3 Consumer Engagement**

The precise definition of engagement remains a subject of ongoing debate, despite its widespread acknowledgment as a vital aspect of contemporary marketing. Numerous advertising organizations recognized the absence of a comprehensive definition for engagement and embarked on the task of crafting an intentionally broad one: the act of stimulating a potential customer with a brand concept that is augmented by its surrounding context. While this definition casts a wide net, it falls short of providing a complete clarification of the concept. (Thurau et al., 2020)

A more elucidating definition of consumer brand engagement is as follows: It encompasses a consumer's favourably balanced cognitive, emotional, and behavioural activities concerning or connected to primary consumer-brand interactions. This definition underscores the significance of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural activities when a consumer engages with a brand. Such a conceptualization of engagement shares common ground with the domain of relationship marketing, where constructs like brand love and brand commitment are identified as crucial predictors of success. (Brodie et al., 2021)

Social media naturally serves as a facilitator for heightened brand interactivity among consumers, making it substantially more accessible to engage with brands than in the pre-social media era. This study primarily focuses on the behavioural aspect, specifically the frequency of a consumer's actions in response to a brand's original posts. Sprout Social, a prominent digital marketing entity, defines Facebook engagement as follows: the tally of interactions individuals undertake with a company's posts, such as likes, comments, or shares. (Mangold & Faulds, 2021)

Consumer brand identification is commonly defined as the psychological state in which a consumer perceives, feels, and values their connection to a brand. In a recent research article, investigators expanded the concept of consumer identification to encompass both their identification with other users of the brand's page and their identification with the Facebook brand page itself, examining the effects of these identifications on supporters of German football clubs. The study revealed that consumer identification with other users of the brand page plays a pivotal role in fostering individual loyalty to the brand page and a willingness to recommend it. (Kim & Ko, 2020)

Therefore, despite Facebook brand pages not constituting formal communities, consumers still place a positive value on their identification with fellow users. Furthermore, identification with the brand itself and the brand's Facebook page significantly drives loyalty to the page and intentions to engage in word-of-mouth promotion. The loyalty to the brand page may subsequently translate into heightened loyalty to the brand itself and greater intentions to engage in word-of-mouth promotion for the brand, underscoring the importance of maintaining active and engaging Facebook brand pages. (Mangold & Faulds, 2021)

Research findings indicate that following a brand's Facebook updates correlates positively with consumers' perceptions of a product or brand, their brand loyalty, and their intent to make purchases. Additionally, a recent study suggests that nearly three-quarters of consumers rely on social media platforms to inform their purchase decisions, and half of these consumers are inclined to make a purchase after sharing a product or brand on social media. (Chaffey & Smith, 2021)

### 3.3.4 Facebook Platform

To comprehend the inner workings of Facebook, it is beneficial to delve into some of its operational mechanisms. One noteworthy feature is referred to as "global pages," which enables the company to maintain a single page that represents all countries. Consequently, the total page likes encompass individuals from across the globe who have expressed an affinity for the company page. Users are automatically redirected to content tailored to their specific geographic location. Alternatively, companies can opt to create distinct Facebook pages for each country. (Zhang & Yu, 2020)

The drawback of not employing global pages is that users may not engage with the page intended for their country, resulting in less relevant content for them. Approximately 60% of the world's top 100 brands utilize the global pages feature. This adoption makes analysing engagement levels more challenging since the use of global pages obscures the precise number of page likes from each country. Consequently, distinguishing one country's level of engagement from another becomes intricate as the variation may primarily result from differing numbers of page likes. An exemplar of a company that maintains separate pages is Volvo; for instance, if you are in Portugal, you would need to search for "Volvo Brazil" to locate the pertinent page for your country. (Smith & Jones, 2021)

Conversely, an illustration of a company employing the global pages feature is PepsiCo. When accessing the PepsiCo Facebook page from Norway, users are automatically directed to a distinct Facebook page. Another facet worth exploring is the array of options available for engaging with a post. The primary choices include "like," "comment," and "share." Facebook has also introduced various variations of the "like" button, which users can employ individually and not simultaneously. These variations encompass "love," "wow," "funny," "angry," and "sad." (Li & Wang, 2022)

The introduction of these alternative reactions has broadened the scope for assessing user sentiment towards a post. Furthermore, these emoticon responses positively influence the Facebook algorithm. Consequently, when more users utilize these emoticon responses instead of merely liking a post, the post gains enhanced visibility in users' feeds. Notably, in their inaugural year, these emoticon responses garnered billions of uses. When a user comments on a post, they also have the option to tag someone, triggering a notification for the tagged individual. (Yang & Zhang, 2023)



In contrast, when a post is shared, it becomes a part of the user's Facebook timeline, making it easily accessible to those visiting their profile. Additionally, it appears in the feeds of the user's friends as they scroll through Facebook. This increased visibility ensures that friends can identify the shared post and view any accompanying message, although providing a message is optional. Scholars have categorized likes, comments, and shares as forms of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) because these functions empower users to evaluate products and services. (Ansi, 2021)

Liking a post is seen as an act of expressing interest or positivity toward the message. Notably, following recent changes on Facebook, a simple "like" on a post is no longer visible to your friends in their feeds. It's worth noting that liking demands the least effort, as it requires just one click. Commenting involves a more substantial commitment, including the act of typing a message, potentially tagging a specific friend, and having the comment displayed on all friends' feeds for a brief period during their Facebook scrolling. (Mangold & Faulds, 2019)

Sharing entails the highest level of commitment, as it prominently features on friends' feeds and appears on one's personal profile. In the study, we examined the world's top brands to gauge their levels of engagement on Facebook. Among them, the Corona page for Brazil stood out with the highest level of engagement, encompassing likes, shares, and comments. The sectors of fast food, industrial and manufacturing, and alcohol emerged as the top three in terms of engagement. (Sharma & Singh, 2018)

### **3.3.5 Electronic Word-of-Mouth**

The concept of word of mouth is not limited to the realm of social media marketing or online environments. Instead, this term was first coined in the 1960s by J. Arndt, who articulated it as follows: it involves oral, person-to-person communication between a recipient and a communicator whom the recipient perceives as non-commercial, with the subject being a brand, product, or service. Word-of-Mouth (WOM) carries significant influence because consumers are constantly inundated with marketing messages, leading to a desensitization to these messages. Non-commercial messages shared by friends tend to be more receptive to individuals. (Arndt, 2017)

Furthermore, the recipient tends to place trust in the sender due to the established friendship and the non-commercial nature of the message. Word-of-Mouth is believed to impact both future and actual purchasing behavior for new customers, as well as foster loyalty among existing customers. Particularly, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) on the internet has been acknowledged as highly effective in influencing purchasing decisions and enhancing brand equity. In contrast to traditional WOM, eWOM is not confined to personal relationships but can occur between relative strangers. Additionally, while traditional WOM occurs in private conversations, eWOM is visible on public platforms and has a longer lifespan, as it remains accessible to anyone until it is removed. (Cheung & Thadani, 2022)

It is valuable to differentiate between eWOM with varying levels of familiarity. In a social setting, such as Facebook, people are likely to be familiar with one another, and the eWOM recipient will typically know the eWOM sender, as seen when someone shares a post from a brand page with their Facebook friends. On the opposite end of the spectrum are review platforms like TripAdvisor, where individuals can read reviews from complete strangers to make informed decisions about visiting a place. It is suggested that the effectiveness of eWOM is not solely related to the strength of the tie between the recipient and sender but may also be more successful when there is no prior acquaintance between them, and is least effective when they know each other only vaguely. (Gwinner et al., 2020)

This creates a U-shaped pattern, with eWOM being most effective at both ends of the familiarity spectrum. Researchers have also discovered that emotional appeals, whether positive or negative, stimulate greater eWOM activity on social media. Terms such as viral marketing and buzz marketing are often used interchangeably with eWOM, though they have slight differences. Viral marketing, coined by Juvertson and Draper in 1997, describes the practice of companies disseminating advertising messages through Hotmail's free email service. They defined it as network-enhanced word-of-mouth, where "viral" alludes to the digital contagion that spreads from person to person. (Juvertson & Draper, 2017)

Viral marketing differs from eWOM in that it typically involves the transmission of company-generated content person-to-person, while eWOM frequently includes product or service recommendations by the sender. In this sense, viral marketing is the transmission of company content, and eWOM is the addition of customer-generated content, such as reviews or recommendations. Buzz marketing is also commonly confused with eWOM or viral marketing. Buzz marketing occurs when a company actively strives to generate word-of-mouth activity for a product or service. The key distinction from viral marketing is that the company does not solely rely on its own content but actively seeks to encourage word-of-mouth through strategies such as sending items to bloggers for review. Moreover, buzz marketing is a planned phenomenon orchestrated by the company, while eWOM can occur organically without any corporate planning. (Keller & Lehmann, 2022)

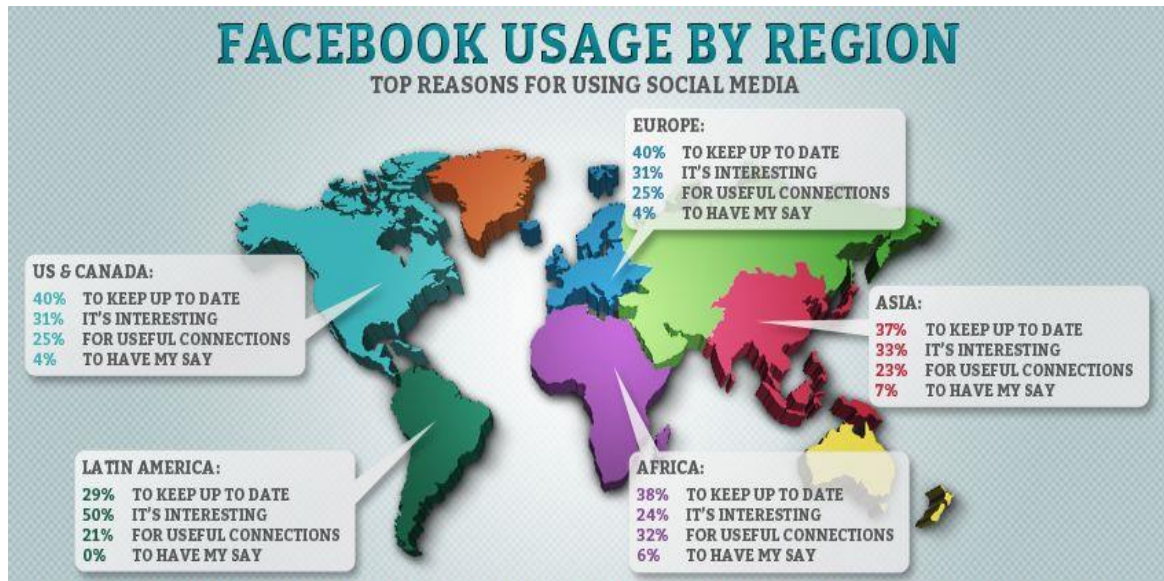
### 3.3.6 Cultural Aspects

Culture plays a significant role in shaping individuals' interactions with social media. For instance, the extent of one's Facebook friends list varies across different countries, such as Japan, China, Mexico, the United States, and Brazil. This variance is attributed to the influence of cultural dimensions, both long-term and short-term. Moreover, research has shown that social media browsing holds greater importance for French and Italian users compared to their American counterparts. Conversely, French users place less emphasis on images and status updates than their American counterparts. This contrast can be attributed to the fact that individualistic cultures tend to prioritize personal utility, while collectivistic societies place a higher value on the exchange of ideas and opinions. (Wang & Zhang, 2021)

The individualistic cultures are not solely self-centred; individuals from such cultures often invest significant effort in nurturing personal relationships, even though these connections may not be as immediately integral to their identities as in collectivistic cultures. Research indicates that individuals from collectivistic cultures tend to use Facebook as a tool for making purchasing decisions. Consequently, it is advisable for marketers to leverage social media more effectively when targeting these countries. The accompanying figure illustrates the positioning of countries in terms of their social media usage, while the subsequent figure introduces the long-term and short-term dimensions, shedding light on various consumer behavior patterns associated with these dimensions. (Chen, 2023)

Individuals hailing from cultures with strong collectivist values and a high power distance orientation often exhibit a greater tendency to share their opinions and ideas. As explored in the preceding chapter, such individuals frequently base their purchasing decisions on trust in the company and the opinions of others. Conversely, those from individualistic cultures tend to be more proactive in seeking impersonal information sources on the internet, making decisions grounded in factual evidence. (Hofstede & Minkov, 2020)

Figure 8 - Facebook Usage

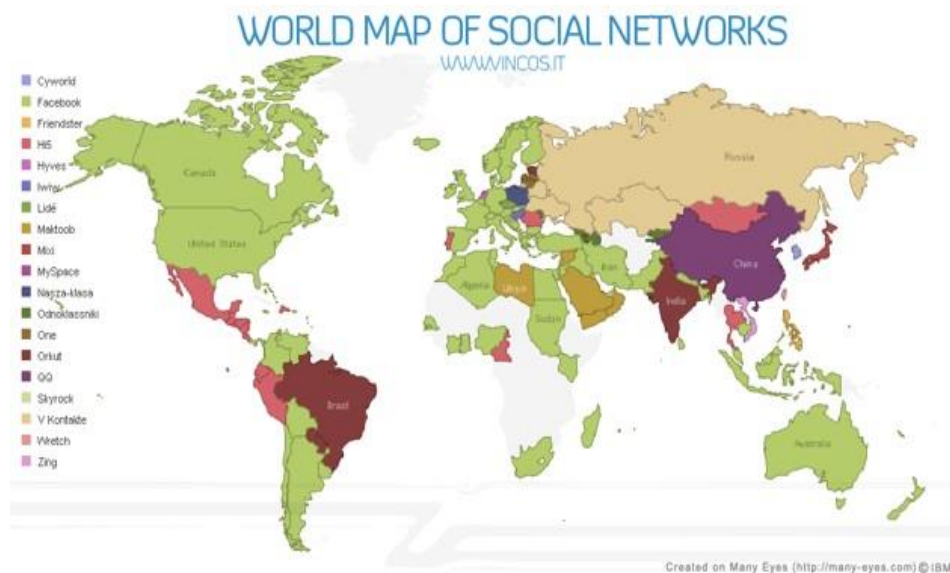


Reference - Bridgestock, L. (2021)

While individuals from individualistic backgrounds also engage in electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), their motivation stems from the quest for specific information, whereas collectivists engage in eWOM as a means to shape their opinions through the insights of others. Notably, a study revealed that Chinese consumers exhibit a higher reliance on online word-of-mouth activities through social media, such as expressing their opinions, seeking advice, and sharing information, compared to their American counterparts. It is also suggested that countries with low power distance tend to be more inclined to interact with brands on social media platforms, despite countries with high power distance spending more time on these platforms. (Li & Chou, 2022)

This preference might lead individuals from low power distance cultures to leave more comments on a company's Facebook post rather than simply sharing or liking it. In another recent study, both commonalities and distinctions emerged in consumer motivations for engaging with brands on social networking sites between China and the United States. In both countries, the primary focus was on seeking entertainment and information. However, Chinese users displayed a greater inclination to interact with brands and were motivated by the prospect of connecting with like-minded peers, while American users were predominantly driven by economic incentives, such as acquiring coupons. (Zhang & Wang, 2021)

Figure 9 - Cultural Differences



*Reference - Vincos Article, 2023*

## 4. Practical Part

First some descriptive statistics about the data will be given, after that statistical analyses will be reported to indicate whether the differences between the countries are significant and have explanatory power.

### 4.1 Descriptive Analysis

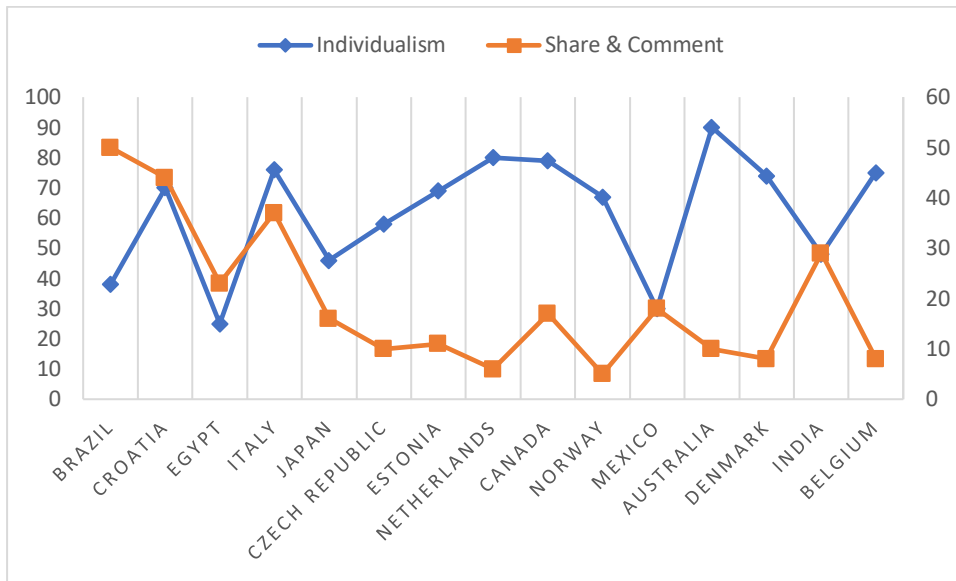
The descriptive findings will now be presented graphically. The initial hypothesis suggests an inverse correlation between the shares and comments metric and power distance, while a positive correlation is anticipated with individualism. The figure illustrates the relationship between the shares and comments metric and individualism.

Table 4 - Individualism - Share & Comment Measurement

Country	Individualism	Share & Comment
Brazil	38	50
Croatia	70	44
Egypt	25	23
Italy	76	37
Japan	46	16
Czech Republic	58	10
Estonia	69	11
Netherlands	80	6
Canada	79	17
Norway	67	5
Mexico	30	18
Australia	90	10
Denmark	74	8
India	48	29
Belgium	75	8

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

Graph 1 - Individualism - Share & Comment Measurement



*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

The figure reveals a distinct trend where an increase in individualism score corresponds to a decrease in the shares and comments metric. Notably, India stands out as an outlier, possessing the second-highest individualism score but also exhibiting a high shares and comments metric. Furthermore, it appears that countries with lower individualism scores tend to have higher shares and comments metrics, with the exception of Egypt, which exhibits a more moderate score. The subsequent figure explores the same metric, this time in conjunction with power distance.

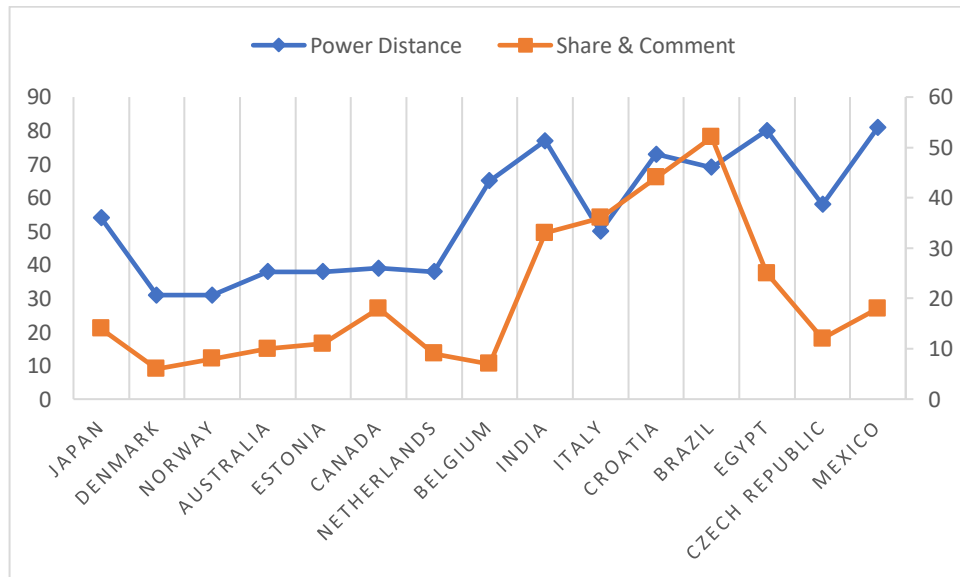


Table 5 - Power Distance - Share & Comment Measurement

Country	Power Distance	Share & Comment
Japan	54	14
Denmark	31	6
Norway	31	8
Australia	38	10
Estonia	38	11
Canada	39	18
Netherlands	38	9
Belgium	65	7
India	77	33
Italy	50	36
Croatia	73	44
Brazil	69	52
Egypt	80	25
Czech Republic	58	12
Mexico	81	18

Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results

Graph 2 - Power Distance - Share & Comment Measurement



Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results

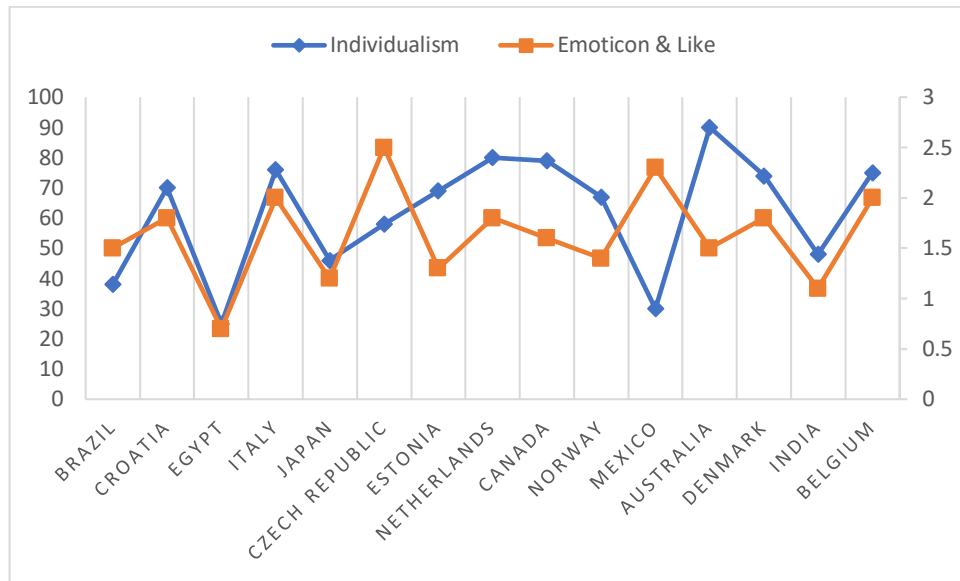
The expected pattern of a positive relationship between power distance and the shares and comments metric appears to hold, albeit with some notable outliers, particularly the Czech Republic and Mexico. These two countries boast the highest power distance scores but exhibit moderate scores on the metric. The second hypothesis proposes a positive relationship between the variable emoticon responses and likes and individualism and uncertainty avoidance. The following figures explicitly present these results.

Table 6 - Individualism - Emoticon & Like Measurement

<b>Country</b>	<b>Individualism</b>	<b>Emoticon &amp; Like</b>
Brazil	38	1.5
Croatia	70	1.8
Egypt	25	0.7
Italy	76	2
Japan	46	1.2
Czech Republic	58	2.5
Estonia	69	1.3
Netherlands	80	1.8
Canada	79	1.6
Norway	67	1.4
Mexico	30	2.3
Australia	90	1.5
Denmark	74	1.8
India	48	1.1
Belgium	75	2

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

Graph 3 - Individualism - Emoticon & Like Measurement



Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results

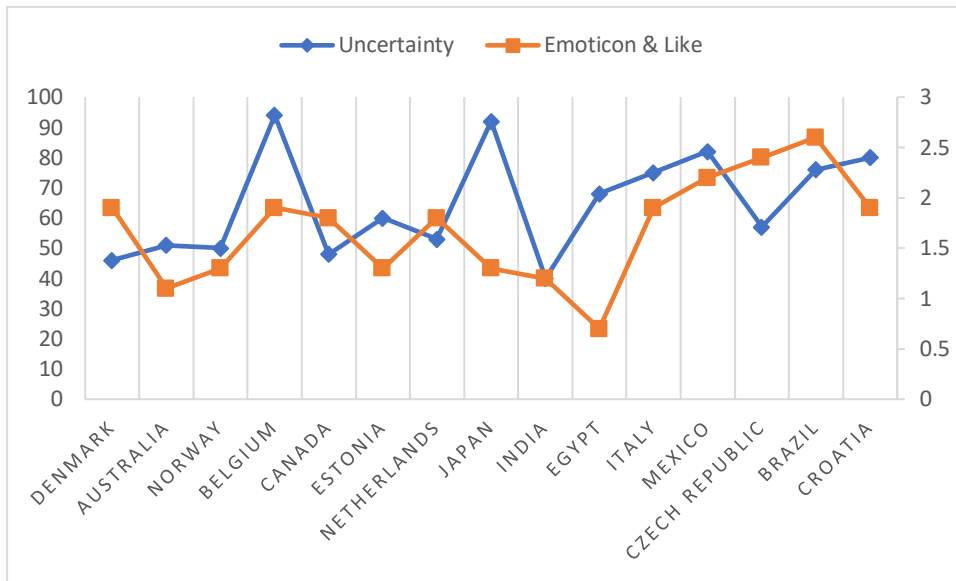
No discernible relationship is evident with the individualism dimension. The graph showcases substantial variation between countries, lacking a discernible upward or downward trend.

Table 7 - Uncertainty Avoidance - Emoticon & Likes Measurement

Country	Uncertainty	Emoticon & Like
Denmark	46	1.9
Australia	51	1.1
Norway	50	1.3
Belgium	94	1.9
Canada	48	1.8
Estonia	60	1.3
Netherlands	53	1.8
Japan	92	1.3
India	40	1.2
Egypt	68	0.7
Italy	75	1.9
Mexico	82	2.2
Czech Republic	57	2.4
Brazil	76	2.6
Croatia	80	1.9

Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results

Graph 4 - Uncertainty Avoidance - Emoticon & Likes Measurement



*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

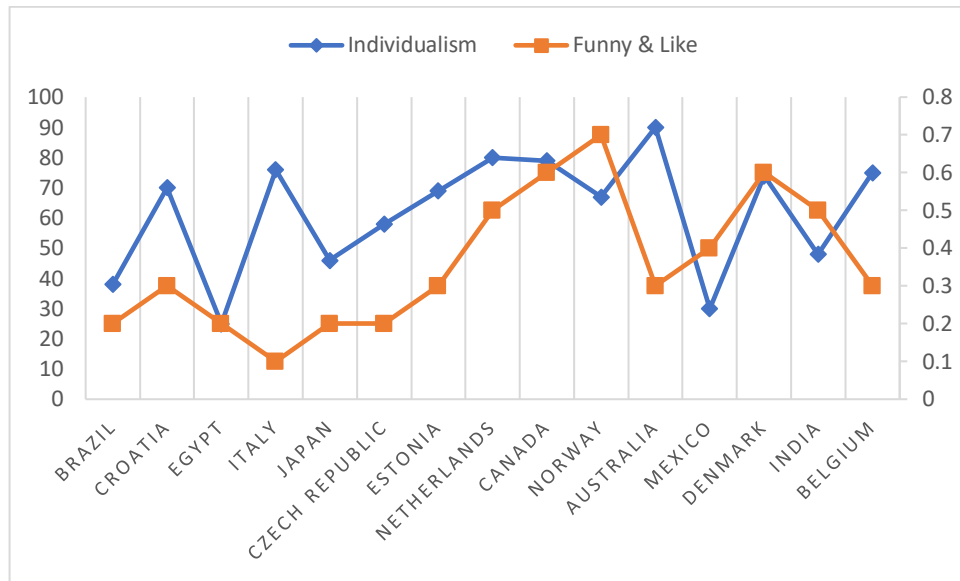
Similarly, uncertainty avoidance does not appear to strongly correlate with the metric, although a slight upward trend is observable. The forthcoming figures depict the relationship between the funny and likes metric and individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance, respectively.

Table 8 - Individualism - Funny & Likes Measurement

Country	Individualism	Funny & Like
Brazil	38	0.2
Croatia	70	0.3
Egypt	25	0.2
Italy	76	0.1
Japan	46	0.2
Czech Republic	58	0.2
Estonia	69	0.3
Netherlands	80	0.5
Canada	79	0.6
Norway	67	0.7
Australia	90	0.3
Mexico	30	0.4
Denmark	74	0.6
India	48	0.5
Belgium	75	0.3

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

Graph 5 - Individualism - Funny & Likes Measurement



*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

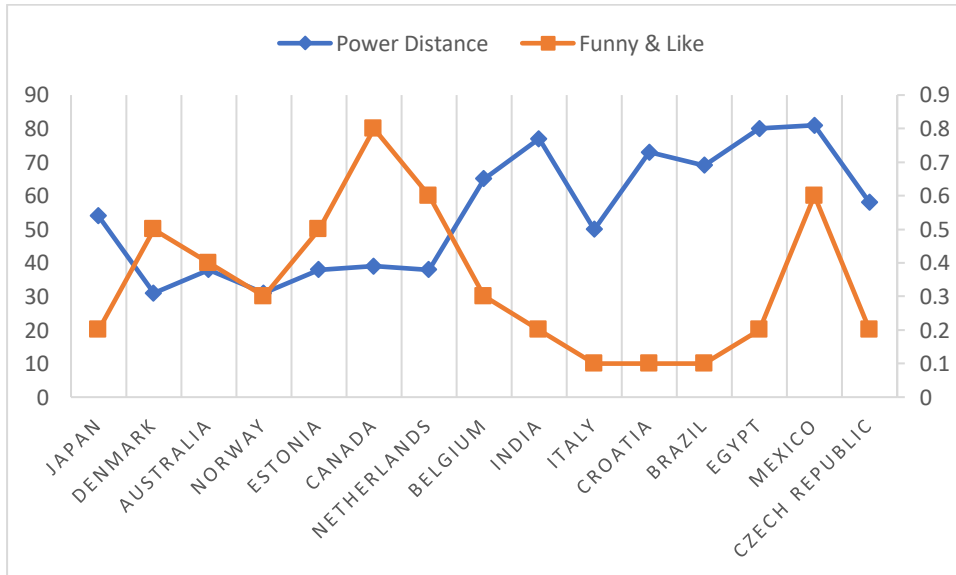
A higher individualism score appears to be associated with a higher funny and likes metric, with a few exceptions. For instance, the metric significantly drops for the two most individualistic countries, and there is a dip in the line for Denmark and Norway. Nevertheless, an overall upward trend is noticeable, particularly on the left side of the graph, where the more collectivistic countries, up to Canada, witness a steady increase in the funny and likes metric as they become more individualistic.

Table 9 - Power Distance - Funny & Like Measurement

Country	Power Distance	Funny & Like
Japan	54	0.2
Denmark	31	0.5
Australia	38	0.4
Norway	31	0.3
Estonia	38	0.5
Canada	39	0.8
Netherlands	38	0.6
Belgium	65	0.3
India	77	0.2
Italy	50	0.1
Croatia	73	0.1
Brazil	69	0.1
Egypt	80	0.2
Mexico	81	0.6
Czech Republic	58	0.2

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

Graph 6 - Power Distance - Funny & Like Measurement



*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

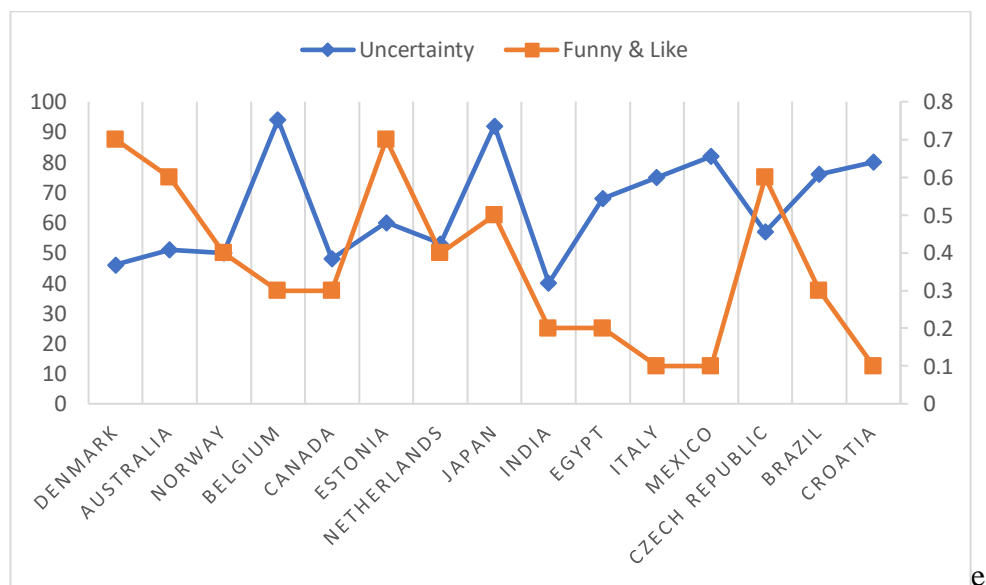
Power distance seems to exert a negative influence on the funny and likes metric, yet Mexico and Japan, the country with the second-highest and lowest power distance scores, respectively, emerge as strong outliers. Mexico exhibits a high funny and likes metric, while Japan's score is relatively low.

Table 10 - Uncertainty Avoidance - Funny & Like Measurement

Country	Uncertainty	Funny & Like
Denmark	46	0.7
Australia	51	0.6
Norway	50	0.4
Belgium	94	0.3
Canada	48	0.3
Estonia	60	0.7
Netherlands	53	0.4
Japan	92	0.5
India	40	0.2
Egypt	68	0.2
Italy	75	0.1
Mexico	82	0.1
Czech Republic	57	0.6
Brazil	76	0.3
Croatia	80	0.1

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

Graph 7 - Uncertainty Avoidance - Funny & Like Measurement



*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

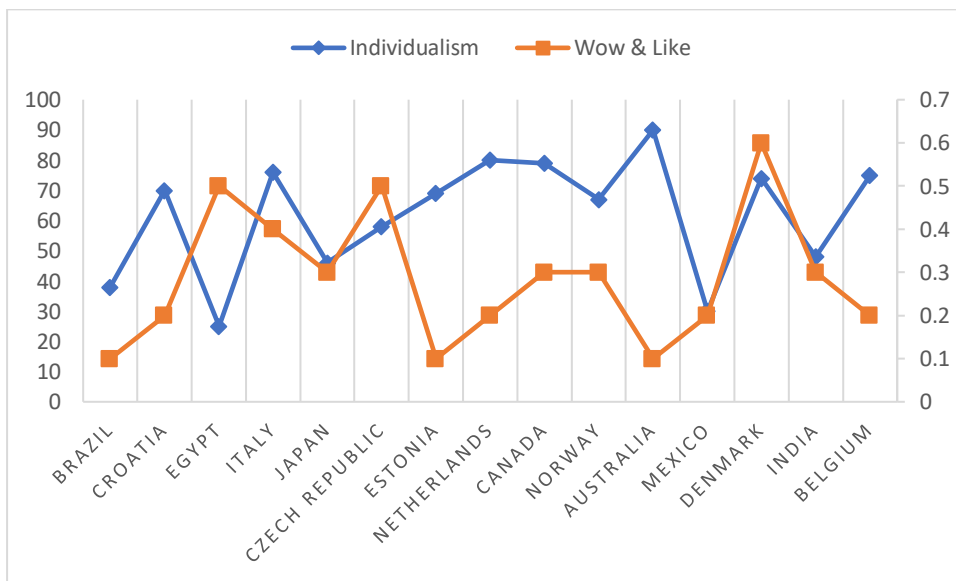
Lastly, uncertainty avoidance shows a somewhat similar pattern to power distance, with Mexico, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway serving as notable outliers. A higher score on the funny and like metric would strengthen the relationship. The figure demonstrates the relationship between individualism and the wow and likes metric.

Table 11 - Individualism - Wow & Like Measurement

Country	Individualism	Wow & Like
Brazil	38	0.1
Croatia	70	0.2
Egypt	25	0.5
Italy	76	0.4
Japan	46	0.3
Czech Republic	58	0.5
Estonia	69	0.1
Netherlands	80	0.2
Canada	79	0.3
Norway	67	0.3
Australia	90	0.1
Mexico	30	0.2
Denmark	74	0.6
India	48	0.3
Belgium	75	0.2

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

Graph 8 - Individualism - Wow & Like Measurement



*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*



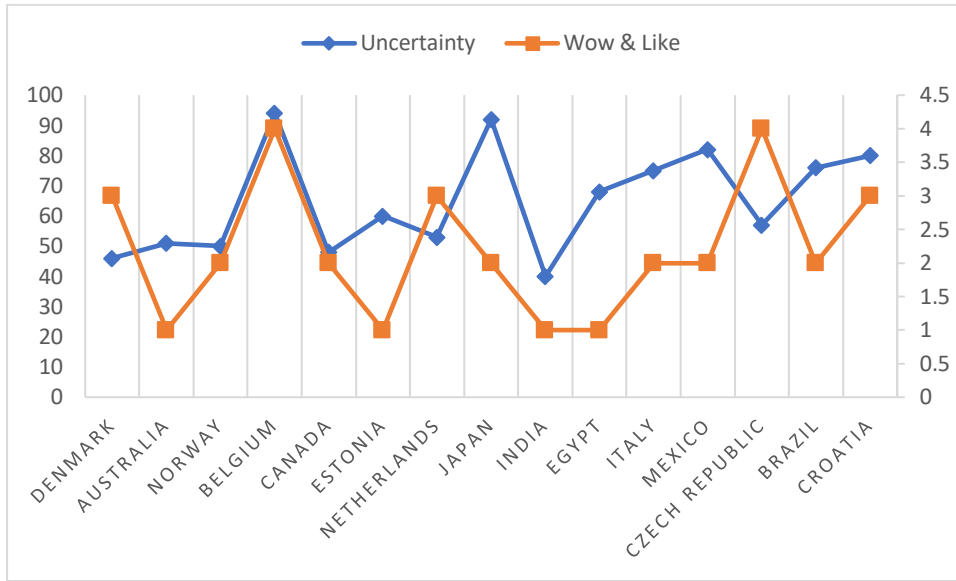
A positive correlation between individualism and the wow and likes metric is apparent, though there are outliers, such as the decline in the most individualistic country, the Netherlands, and the high wow and likes metric in the second-lowest scoring country for individualism, Croatia. All potential combinations were graphed, but the dimensions mentioned above offer the most meaningful insights. The other variables, love and likes, angry and likes, and sad and likes, were also combined with each dimension, and the only noteworthy pattern that emerged was the positive relationship between the love and likes metric and uncertainty avoidance, as depicted in the figure.

Table 12 - Uncertainty Avoidance - Wow & Like Measurement

<b>Country</b>	<b>Uncertainty</b>	<b>Wow &amp; Like</b>
Denmark	46	3
Australia	51	1
Norway	50	2
Belgium	94	4
Canada	48	2
Estonia	60	1
Netherlands	53	3
Japan	92	2
India	40	1
Egypt	68	1
Italy	75	2
Mexico	82	2
Czech Republic	57	4
Brazil	76	2
Croatia	80	3

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

Graph 9 - Uncertainty Avoidance - Wow & Like Measurement



*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

It is evident that as scores on uncertainty avoidance rise, so does the love and likes metric. Egypt stands out as a strong outlier, with the lowest love and likes metric and a high score on the uncertainty avoidance dimension.

The descriptive results visually depict the relationships between the hypothesized dimensions and engagement metrics. When examining the shares and comments metric, it is apparent that individualism is inversely related to it, while power distance shows a positive correlation. Both dimensions exhibit outliers. Regarding the emoticon responses and likes metric, no significant relationship with the hypothesized dimensions is evident.

The funny and likes metric seems to follow the expected pattern but includes some notable outliers. The same holds true for the wow and likes metric. The only additional noteworthy pattern, outside of the hypotheses, is the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and the love and likes metric. As uncertainty avoidance scores increase, so does the love and likes metric. Subsequent statistical tests will provide further insights to determine the significance of these differences.

## 4.2 Hypothesis Analysis

Correlation analysis and linear regressions were employed to assess the degree to which each presumed cultural dimension explained the variations in engagement ratios. The presented regression outcomes represent those that include the presumed cultural dimension, as well as any other dimensions that significantly predict the dependent variable.

### Hypothesis 1

The initial hypothesis suggests that there is a negative relationship between the measurement of shares and comments and individualism, while there is a positive association with power distance. The correlations between the cultural dimensions and the measurement of shares and comments are presented in the table below.

Table 13 - Hypothesis 1 - Correlation Analysis

		<b>IM</b>	<b>PD</b>	<b>UA</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>LO</b>	<b>IR</b>
<b>Shares &amp; Comments</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	-0.860	0.676	0.877	0.300	-0.311	0.569
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	-0.033	-0.007	-0.033	0.369	0.348	0.039

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

Significant associations were observed with individualism (-0.860,  $p=0.001$ ), power distance (0.676,  $p=0.021$ ), and uncertainty avoidance (0.877,  $p=0.001$ ). The table provides the regression findings.

Table 14 - Hypothesis 1 - Regression Analysis

	<b>Model A</b>	<b>Model B</b>	<b>Model C</b>
<b>Constant</b>	69.650	-1.098	-13.009
	-12.001	-9.681	-8.81015
<b>ID</b>	-0.784		
	0.193		
<b>PD</b>		0.531	
		-0.202	
<b>UA</b>			0.507
			-0.118
<b>R Square</b>	0.644	0.398	0.670

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

With individualism as a predictor, a significant regression equation was identified, yielding an R-squared value of 0.644. The anticipated measurement of shares and comments was found to be 69.650. For each one-unit increase on the individualism dimension, the shares and comments measurement decreased by -0.784. Similarly, with power distance as a predictor, a significant regression equation was found, resulting in an R-squared value of 0.398. The anticipated measurement of shares and comments was calculated as -1.098 (PD score), with an increase of 0.531 for each one-unit increase on the PD dimension.

The other dimensions were also examined, and another significant regression equation was found with an R-squared value of 0.670 when uncertainty avoidance was used as a predictor. The expected shares and comments measurement was -13.009 (UA score), with an increase of 0.507 for each one-unit increase on the UA dimension. Therefore, the first hypothesis, which suggests a negative relationship with individualism and a positive one with power distance in the shares and comments measurement, is supported. However, it is important to note that uncertainty avoidance is an even stronger predictor than the two initially hypothesized dimensions.

## Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis posits that the measurement of emoticon responses and likes is positively related to individualism and uncertainty avoidance.

Table 15 - Hypothesis 2 - Correlation Analysis

		<b>IM</b>	<b>PD</b>	<b>UA</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>LO</b>	<b>IR</b>
<b>Shares &amp; Comments</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	0.293	0.339	0.231	0.154	0.190	0.281
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	0.518	0.426	0.657	0.853	0.761	0.546

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

As indicated in the correlation table, none of the dimensions exhibit significant correlations with the measurement of emoticon responses and likes. The table presents the regression findings.

Table 16 - Hypothesis 2 - Regression Analysis

	<b>Model A</b>	<b>Model B</b>
<b>Constant</b>	1.446	1.653
	-0.581	-0.443
<b>ID</b>	0.008	
	-0.009	
<b>UA</b>		0.003
		-0.006
<b>R Square</b>	0.059	0.033

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

No significant regression equations were found for either individualism ( $p=0.518$ ) or uncertainty avoidance ( $p=0.657$ ). Likewise, none of the other dimensions proved to be significant predictors of the measurement of emoticon responses and likes. Based on these results, the second hypothesis is not supported.

### Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis suggests that the measurement of funny reactions and likes is positively related to individualism and negatively related to power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Table 8 outlines the correlations.

Table 17 - Hypothesis 3 - Correlation Analysis

		<b>IM</b>	<b>PD</b>	<b>UA</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>LO</b>	<b>IR</b>
<b>Shares &amp; Comments</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	0.700	-0.428	-0.591	-0.026	0.504	-0.071
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	0.018	0.198	0.058	1.076	0.118	0.951

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

Significant correlations were identified with individualism (0.700,  $p=0.018$ ) and uncertainty avoidance (-0.591,  $p=0.058$ ). However, the other dimensions, including power distance ( $p=0.198$ ), did not exhibit significant correlations. The table provides the regression results.

Table 18 - Hypothesis 3 - Regression Analysis

	<b>Model A</b>	<b>Model B</b>	<b>Model C</b>
<b>Constant</b>	-0.143	0.574	
	-0.193	0.150	
<b>ID</b>	0.008		
	-0.003		
<b>PD</b>		-0.005	
		-0.003	
<b>UA</b>			-0.005
			-0.002
<b>R Square</b>	0.427	0.159	0.304

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

When individualism was used as a predictor, a significant regression equation was found with an R-squared value of 0.427. The predicted measurement of funny reactions and likes was -0.143 (ID score), with an increase of 0.008 for each one-unit rise on the ID dimension. Power distance was found to be an insignificant predictor ( $p=0.198$ ). When uncertainty avoidance was employed as a predictor, a significant regression equation was found with an R-squared value of 0.307.

The predicted measurement of funny reactions and likes was 0.695 (UA score), with a decrease of 0.005 for each one-unit increase on the UA dimension. The other dimensions were also tested but were not deemed significant predictors of the measurement of funny reactions and likes. Thus, the third hypothesis is partially confirmed, with individualism positively related and uncertainty avoidance negatively related, while power distance was not found to be a significant predictor.

#### Hypothesis 4

The second hypothesis, suggesting a positive relationship between emoticon responses and likes and individualism and uncertainty avoidance, was not supported, as the correlation table did not reveal any significant associations with these dimensions.

Table 19 - Hypothesis 4 - Correlation Analysis

		<b>IM</b>	<b>PD</b>	<b>UA</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>LO</b>	<b>IR</b>
<b>Shares &amp; Comments</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	0.521	-0.460	-0.358	0.154	0.045	-0.268
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	0.104	0.160	0.298	0.728	1.025	0.463

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

As observed in the correlation table, there is no significant correlation between any of the dimensions and the measurement of emoticon responses and likes. The table presents the outcomes of the regression analysis.

Table 20 - Hypothesis 4 - Regression Analysis

	<b>Model A</b>
<b>Constant</b>	0.078
	0.063
<b>ID</b>	0.002
	0.001
<b>R Square</b>	0.237

*Reference - Based on the primary social media analysis results*

No significant regression equations were identified for either individualism (p=0.483) or uncertainty avoidance (p=0.622), and the other dimensions were also not significant predictors of the measurement of emoticon responses and likes. Therefore, the second hypothesis is rejected based on these findings.

The results of the statistical analyses will determine whether the hypotheses are accepted or rejected. The subsequent discussion will link these findings back to the existing literature and offer insights into their implications.



## 5. Results and Discussion

The results of both the descriptive and statistical analyses have unveiled intriguing concepts for exploration. The data, collected organically from Facebook brand pages, revealed disparities in the way consumers from varying cultural backgrounds interact with brands on social media. These distinctions can be predicted using Hofstede's cultural dimensions. These findings carry both theoretical and practical implications, which will be discussed further.

Primarily, it was observed that the measurement of shares and comments is influenced by factors such as higher power distance and lower individualism, aligning with our initial hypotheses. In other words, as the score for power distance increases, individuals are more inclined to share rather than comment, whereas the reverse is true for the individualism dimension.

Additionally, uncertainty avoidance emerged as a strong predictor, indicating that as countries score higher on this dimension, there is a corresponding increase in the measurement of shares and comments. This could be attributed to the observation that countries in our sample with high uncertainty avoidance tend to score lower on individualism and higher on power distance. Another explanation might be that people from high uncertainty avoidance countries seek to share company communications to garner feedback from their peers before making decisions.

The theoretical implications suggest that despite the influence of social media in fostering cultural convergence, cultural dimensions remain valuable in predicting behavior on this platform. Specifically, these dimensions can be used to predict a country's propensity to share a post rather than comment on it. Collectivists, who identify with a group, prefer sharing content with their entire circle of Facebook friends, while individualists, not naturally part of a group, are more inclined to build and maintain friendships through tagging specific individuals in posts. Moreover, high power distance is associated with people using social media and Word-of-Mouth to shape their opinions. Sharing content facilitates this process by providing new information to one's friends while receiving feedback.

Another reason for people from low power distance countries commenting more may stem from perceiving the company as an equal rather than a superior entity. The concept of power distance extends to how companies are perceived and communicated with, resulting in greater hesitancy to comment in countries with higher power distance. Further research, perhaps in the form of surveys, can help explore the reasons behind these differences.

These findings also have practical implications. Shared posts gain greater prominence on the timelines of friends and are displayed on the profile of the person who shared them. In contrast, comments are visible for a shorter time on friends' feeds, with tagged individuals receiving notifications. Viral marketing campaigns that thrive on continuous sharing may work best in collectivistic and high-power-distance countries. Asking people to tag their friends may be more effective in individualistic and low-power-distance countries.

The second hypothesis suggested a positive relationship between emoticon responses and individualism and uncertainty avoidance. However, the results showed that these dimensions do not explain variance in emoticon responses and likes. Other dimensions also proved unfit to predict differences in this measurement. This implies that the use of total emoticon responses on company posts is not culture-related. Nevertheless, differences were observed in the use of specific emoticon responses.

Hypothesis three proposed a positive relationship between the use of the funny emoticon and individualism and a negative relationship with power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Hypothesis four posited a positive relationship between the use of the wow emoticon and individualism. While these findings were partly supported, the relationship between individualism and the use of the wow emoticon was not significant. It was observed that individualism was the best predictor of the wow emoticon's use. Further research with diverse samples is needed to verify these findings across more countries and companies.

Humor was found to be a prevalent advertising style in countries high in individualism, low in power distance, and low in uncertainty avoidance. This study partially supports the notion that these countries are more receptive to humor in Facebook posts, as reflected by their use of the funny emoticon response. Additionally, countries high in individualism seem to be more open to expressing amazement and surprise, though the findings regarding the wow emoticon were not significant.

Lastly, the love and likes measurement was not directly associated with cultural dimensions but showed some connection to uncertainty avoidance in the descriptive graphs. Although the findings were not significant, it is possible that countries high in uncertainty avoidance might express more love for brand posts due to their preference for frequent social interactions with brands and a tendency to anthropomorphize them. More research is required to explore the meaning of these emoticon responses and their connection to consumer motivations.

In conclusion, this study's main findings suggest that cultural dimensions continue to be predictive in marketing, even on new media like social platforms. Companies should tailor their marketing strategies, employing more viral campaigns in countries with high power distance and low individualism, while encouraging people to tag their friends in the opposite contexts. Emoticon sentiments, particularly humor, might be more effective in countries high in individualism and low in uncertainty avoidance. Further research is needed to delve into the significance of emoticon responses in consumer engagement.

## 6. Conclusion

This thesis has delineated distinctions between various cultures and their impact on consumer behavior on Facebook. The findings are particularly noteworthy, especially in terms of how cultural dimensions can explain consumers' preferences for sharing or commenting on posts. These findings have important implications for managers seeking to optimize their social media strategies in diverse countries. Viral marketing campaigns may yield better results in countries characterized by high power distance and low individualism, while posts encouraging people to tag their friends may be more effective in countries with contrasting cultural attributes.

Notably, a significant difference was observed in emoticon responses, where the use of funny emoticons was positively associated with individualism and negatively with uncertainty avoidance. This dissertation, based on organic data collection, convincingly demonstrates that cultural differences persist even in a relatively new medium like social media, which is often assumed to homogenize cultures. Additionally, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which some consider outdated, still offer explanatory power for certain behaviors. However, it's worth noting that some hypotheses were not confirmed, and there were variables that did not exhibit significant differences between countries.

Since this study, to the best of the author's knowledge, represents the first attempt to analyze cross-cultural differences using organically gathered data from Facebook, there are numerous promising avenues for future research and opportunities to address the limitations of this study. Firstly, expanding the sample to encompass more countries and posts, ideally utilizing automated extraction tools, would help validate these findings on a larger scale and across different continents. Furthermore, incorporating local companies into the study could provide additional insights into cultural variations in social media behavior.

Additionally, while this research focused solely on the Facebook platform, it would be beneficial to extend the analysis to other social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter. These platforms may offer fewer metrics, but it would be intriguing to explore whether similar behavioral patterns emerge there. Another potential area of study could involve assessing the influence of culturally congruent content on the generation of likes, comments, and shares. However, this would require a content analysis of advertising materials and involve multiple researchers to ensure inter-researcher reliability, a dimension that this study, conducted by a single researcher, could not address.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1 - Country Population & Facebook Users

Country	Population	Facebook Users	Percentage
Japan	125,825,772	53,967,700	42.90%
Norway	5,421,241	2,803,400	51.90%
Estonia	1,330,068	640,800	48.20%
Mexico	129,163,276	102,500,000	79.40%
Netherlands	17,777,000	13,485,900	75.90%
Croatia	4,047,200	3,059,400	75.60%
India	1,416,875,238	448,100,000	31.60%
Belgium	11,559,426	7,020,100	60.60%
Denmark	5,851,794	4,683,200	80.00%
Czech Republic	10,708,981	6,996,400	65.30%
Brazil	215,355,991	165,000,000	76.60%
Italy	60,317,158	35,020,100	58.00%
Australia	25,687,041	16,002,010	62.30%
Canada	38,512,024	24,049,400	62.40%
Egypt	106,435,710	52,900,000	49.80%

*Reference - Kemp, S. (2023)*

### Appendix 2 - Hofstede Dimension Scores

Country	PD	IM	MS	UA	LO	IR
Japan	54	46	91	92	88	42
Norway	31	67	54	50	42	69
Estonia	38	69	61	60	47	48
Mexico	81	30	29	82	29	69
Netherlands	38	80	53	53	46	58
Croatia	73	70	39	80	51	53
India	77	48	62	40	61	26
Belgium	65	75	94	94	79	54
Denmark	31	74	57	46	43	71
Czech Republic	58	58	46	57	49	47
Brazil	69	38	49	76	48	59
Italy	50	76	61	75	61	56
Australia	38	90	71	51	44	71
Canada	39	79	51	48	48	68
Egypt	80	25	25	68	25	28

*Reference - Hofstede Country Comparison, 2023*