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# The impact of social media in Cross-cultural Marketing and Sales

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## **Abstract**

**Title:** The Impact of social media in Cross-Cultural Sales and Marketing

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In an era where digital platforms bridge the distances between global markets, understanding the degree of cross-cultural communication becomes paramount for businesses leveraging social media. This thesis explores the potency and challenges of integrating social media marketing within diverse cultural contexts. It examines how cultural factors influence consumer engagement and the effectiveness of marketing strategies across different social media platforms, with a particular focus on visual content platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

Through a mixed-methods approach, combining consumer and business surveys with a critical literature review, this study delves into the current practices and perceptions of cross-cultural marketing. It highlights the Fenty as a benchmark for inclusivity and the importance of authenticity in storytelling. The research identifies a gap in small and medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs) ability to engage in cross-cultural marketing compared to larger corporations with more resources.

The findings suggest that businesses must conduct cultural sensitivity audits, embrace diversity within their teams, and engage with local communities to create resonant and culturally rich content. The thesis concludes with strategic recommendations for businesses to enhance their cross-cultural marketing efforts and calls for ongoing research to adapt to the rapidly evolving digital marketing landscape.

**Keywords:** Cross-Cultural Marketing, social media, Consumer Engagement, Cultural Sensitivity, Digital Platforms, SMEs, Inclusivity, Authentic Storytelling.



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## **Glossary**

### **Cultural Paradoxes**

Situations where cultural practices or beliefs seem to be in contradiction.

### **CRM (Customer Relationship Management)**

Strategies and technologies used by companies to manage and analyse customer interactions and data.

### **DMP (Data Management Platform)**

A platform for collecting and managing data, mainly for digital marketing purposes.

### **SEO (Search Engine Optimization)**

The practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to a website through organic search engine results.

### **Translation and Localization**

The process of adapting a product or content to a specific market or audience, not just linguistically but also culturally.

### **Cultural Subtleties**

The nuanced aspects of culture that may not be immediately obvious but are crucial for effective communication and marketing.

### **Cultural Cues**

Subtle signals that are indicative of cultural norms and values, important for communication and interaction.

### **Consumer Psyche**

The psychological makeup of consumers that influences their buying behaviours and preferences.



## 1. Introduction

In the evolving landscape of our globalized world, the convergence of diverse cultures and the rise of digital platforms has reshaped the way businesses interact with their audience. Social media, with its dominance, stands at the epicenter of this transformation. It has revolutionized communication, granting companies an audience that spans continents across the world. Yet, with this vast amount of reach, there emerges a challenge, navigating the delicate subject of cross-cultural communication. This thesis delves into the marriage of social media marketing with cross-cultural contexts, shedding light on its potency and the potential disadvantages it holds.

The advancement of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram has brought in a golden era of marketing. Even the smallest enterprises today can pitch their products to corners of the world they once considered unreachable. However, the broader the audience, the greater the diversity they represent, and here then lies the challenge. Each cultural group, with its set of beliefs, practices, and values, interacts with content differently. Dahl (2014) emphasized the magnitude of these cultural underpinnings, especially when analyzing the nuances of global advertising campaigns.

Central to my investigation is a question of paramount importance, does a one-size-fits-all approach to social media marketing, which flourishes in one cultural backdrop, guarantee success in another? Or do businesses, amidst the blossoming diversity, need a chameleon-like adaptability, ensuring their campaigns are both globally appealing and locally resonant? The weight of this inquiry is not just academic, it holds profound real-world implications for enterprises dreaming of global success.

Historical narratives provide context. Over the decades, more businesses have faltered on international terrains, not because of a bad product, but due to cultural oversights in their outreach campaigns. In contrast, those enterprises that have astutely tailored their strategies, respecting and adapting to cultural mores, have seen their brand flourish and gain vast amounts of success.

This thesis ventures into the delicate world of social media marketing within varied cultural landscapes. Our guiding beacons through this academic paper are three pivotal research questions:

How does cross-cultural communication shape the efficacy of social media marketing?  
What pivotal cultural elements should businesses prioritize when sculpting their social media marketing strategies?

Which strategies hold promise for businesses striving to elevate their cross-cultural communication on social media platforms?

To unravel these questions, our research adopts a layered approach. A foundation is laid through an exhaustive literature review, evaluating the vast amount of existing studies and dissecting both successful and not so successful social media campaigns from diverse cultural arenas. Dahl's (2014) meta-analysis stands as a cornerstone, encapsulating broad cultural dynamics in advertising. However, as any seasoned consultant would say, a retrospective gaze isn't enough. Which is why, this thesis supplements the historical narrative with a qualitative study, capturing the pulse of the current multicultural consumer and gain insights from the stakeholders who maneuver the levers of social media marketing.

In its essence, this thesis aspires to be more than an academic endeavor. It envisions being a compass for businesses sailing the often-stormy seas of cross-cultural social

media marketing. The goal is clear, by the end, I wish to offer tangible strategies, ensuring companies don't just broadcast to global audiences but meaningfully engage with them. Such engagement promises deeper brand loyalty and a robust bottom line. As the digital epoch continues its march forward, the insights and recommendations housed in this thesis will be an invaluable arsenal for businesses looking for global resonance in a dynamic market environment.

## **2 Clear statement of research issue**

### **Clear Statement of Research Issue**

In the modern world, our lives are more connected than ever, largely thanks to digital platforms. This reality underscores the importance of social media marketing for businesses looking to expand their reach globally. While this interconnectedness opens doors to new markets, it also introduces challenges, particularly when engaging with diverse cultures. The central research issues this thesis addresses are the effectiveness of social media marketing across different cultural environments.

As the world grows smaller in the face of digital advancements, we find ourselves navigating a complex array of cultural expressions. For businesses, this means that it's crucial to develop communication strategies that aren't just impactful but are also mindful of cultural sensitivities. Here lies the challenge with social media. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram offer incredible opportunities to reach vast audiences. However, they require a careful approach to ensure that marketing messages connect with people of various backgrounds without causing unintended offense.

The power of social media to amplify a brand's presence globally is well understood. Yet, there's a lingering question, can a marketing strategy that works well in one cultural setting be just as successful in another? This question is at the core of our research. It highlights the necessity for businesses to design their marketing strategies with a global mindset, ensuring they're appealing across cultures and adaptable to different social norms and expectations.

In the realm of digital marketing, there's a growing recognition of the potential held by social media platforms as ambassadors for businesses to engage with a global audience. However, despite the broad acknowledgment of social media's influence, there's a noticeable gap in specific areas of study. While numerous analyses have skimmed the surface of social media marketing tactics, there's a stark absence of in-depth research into how different cultures intersect and interact within these digital environments. This lack of detailed understanding isn't merely an academic oversight; it presents a practical hurdle. Without these insights, businesses might not only fail to fully leverage the advantages of these platforms but also inadvertently commit cultural faux pas, potentially alienating the very audiences they seek to attract.

The intended research navigates this uncharted territory using a comprehensive approach. It proposes an in-depth review and synthesis of existing academic literature,

critically examining historical data, and case studies to understand what has succeeded or failed in previous campaigns. This retrospective view is only one side of the coin, though. To gather a more nuanced, real-time understanding, the study will also reach directly into the heart of diverse consumer bases. Through surveys, focus groups, or interactive sessions, it will seek to comprehend the contemporary multicultural consumer's psyche, preferences, and pain points in the context of social media marketing.

The beauty of this approach lies in its fusion of theoretical hindsight with the immediate need for consumer sentiment. By integrating historical lessons with current trends and direct audience feedback, the research aims to construct a comprehensive guide for businesses. This guide won't just be a set of best practices, it's envisioned as a navigational aid through the complex, often sensitive landscape of cultural variances and expectations within global online platforms.

Ultimately, this thesis strives to serve a purpose beyond academic contribution. It stands as a crucial appeal to businesses worldwide, pushing them to rethink and re-strategize their approach to international markets via social media. It emphasizes the need for these entities to not only translate their marketing efforts into different languages but to speak the cultural language of their diverse audience. This involves a respectful, well-informed understanding of their traditions, social norms, and communication styles. The end goal is an era of social media marketing that is universally competent, achieving global reach while maintaining a deep, respectful cultural relevance with its audience. This balance, though delicate, is essential for the sustainable global growth of brands in the digital age.

## **2.1. The research questions that this thesis seeks to address include:**

- 1. How does cross-cultural communication affect the effectiveness of social media marketing?**
- 2. What are the key cultural factors that businesses need to consider when designing social media marketing campaigns?**
- 3. What strategies can businesses use to improve their cross-cultural communication in social media marketing?**

These questions are meticulously crafted to investigate the intersection of social media marketing and cultural nuances. They not only seek to uncover the challenges businesses face but also aspire to highlight potential pathways towards more effective and culturally sensitive marketing strategies.

### **3 Literature review**

#### **3.1 How does cross-cultural communication affect the effectiveness of social media marketing?**

Cross-cultural communication has long been recognized as an essential dimension of effective marketing. With the rise of social media as a dominant platform for global business outreach, understanding its nuances has become even more crucial. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (1980) suggests that societies differ across several cultural dimensions, such as individualism versus collectivism or power distance. These cultural implications can shape the way people perceive and react to marketing messages. For instance, a study by Kim and Mueller (2001) posited that advertisements emphasizing individual achievements and freedom might resonate more with Western audiences due to their individualistic nature, whereas East Asian societies, which lean more towards collectivism, might be more receptive to ads highlighting community and family values.

Moreover, Zhang et al. (2015) found that cultural mismatches, where marketing messages were not aligned with local cultural norms, could lead to decreased engagement rates and even backlash against brands on social platforms. Such findings underscore the importance of understanding cultural frameworks and adjusting marketing messages to align with them.

#### **3.2 What are the key cultural factors that businesses need to consider when designing a social media marketing campaign?**

When designing marketing campaigns for a global audience, businesses must be considerate of several cultural factors that can influence their campaign's effectiveness. Language is the first and most obvious factor. But as Dahl (2014) suggests, it's not just about translation, it's about cultural adaptation. Marketing content needs to be localized, ensuring that it aligns with the cultural, societal, and even historical context of the target audience.

Apart from language, other factors like customs, values, beliefs, and societal norms play a pivotal role. For instance, Singh and Baack (2004) highlight how visual elements, color choices, and even specific symbols can have different connotations across cultures. A seemingly innocuous symbol in one culture might be offensive or misunderstood in another.

Furthermore, social dynamics and hierarchies, as highlighted by Mooij (2010), can also influence how a message is perceived. In cultures with high power distance, for example, messages from authoritative figures or celebrities might carry more weight than in cultures where egalitarianism is the norm.

### **3.3 What strategies can businesses use to improve their cross-cultural communication is social media marketing?**

To navigate the intricate web of cross-cultural communication effectively, businesses can adopt several strategic approaches. Firstly, as pointed out by Sharma (2012), businesses can benefit immensely from in-depth market research tailored to their target audience's cultural context. Such research doesn't just provide data; it offers a cultural lens through which businesses can interpret that data.

Engaging with local influencers and cultural experts, as Zhang and Vos (2015) suggest, is another strategy gaining traction. These individuals, owing to their rootedness in a particular culture, can provide insights that are often overlooked by external agencies or professionals. They act as cultural bridges, ensuring that the brand's message retains its core while being presented in a locally relatable manner.

Lastly, in our digital age, the importance of feedback cannot be overstated. Platforms like social media allow businesses to get immediate reactions to their campaigns. By actively monitoring and being responsive to this feedback, businesses can quickly adapt and fine-tune their strategies, as recommended by Chua and Banerjee (2013).

## **4 Consumer and Business research**

### **4.1 Survey 1 Consumer Questionnaire**

#### Survey 1 Consumer Questionnaire

I have conducted two thorough surveys with this subject in cross cultural social media marketing from two points of view. One for the consumer and one for companies. Below I shall analyze and share my findings from both surveys, starting with the consumer survey. The findings provide insightful data into consumer behavior, preferences, and sensitivities, especially in the context of cross-cultural social media marketing. This report delves into these aspects, correlating them with the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies employed by businesses today. I will also provide a detailed analysis as well as recommendations in the last section of the report.

The questions for the consumers were as follows:

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Primary language spoken
4. Which social media do you use the most?
5. Cultural awareness on social media. Have you ever seen an ad on social media that was culturally insensitive to you?
6. have you ever purchased a product or service based on a social media advertisement?
7. What would make a social media advertisement more appealing to you?
8. Any specific brands/advertisements that you believe are doing a great job at cross-cultural marketing?

#### Demographics Overview:

The predominant age group of the respondents is between 18-30 years (91.7%), with a balanced gender distribution (53.2% female, 46.8% male). The majority language spoken is Finnish (72.3%), highlighting the cultural context within which the survey responses are most relevant.

#### Social Media Preferences:

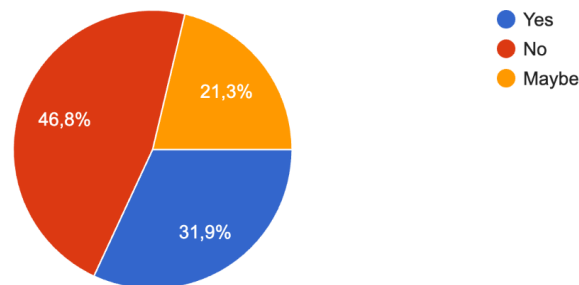
A significant majority of respondents prefer Instagram (57.4%), followed by TikTok (29.8%). This preference for visually centric platforms suggests that advertisements on these platforms could potentially have higher engagement, provided the content is aesthetically appealing and resonates with the cultural ethos of this demographic.

#### Cultural Sensitivity in Advertising:

Nearly one third of the participants (31.9%) acknowledged encountering culturally insensitive advertisements. This is a critical finding, underscoring the importance of cultural competence in marketing strategies. Failing to navigate the cultural nuances can lead to brand alienation or reputational damage due to perceived insensitivity. I reached out to one of the research participants for an example. And he mentioned that once he saw a Caucasian male advertising a very African hair product. I as an African myself would feel very uncomfortable seeing an ad like that. The product in itself would immediately be overlooked due to it being extremely unauthentic. The ad and product would be remembered in a negative light as shown in the research. This highlights the importance of this thesis which further indicates the importance of cross-cultural marketing.

Cultural awareness on social media. Have you ever seen an ad on social media that was culturally insensitive to you?

47 vastausta



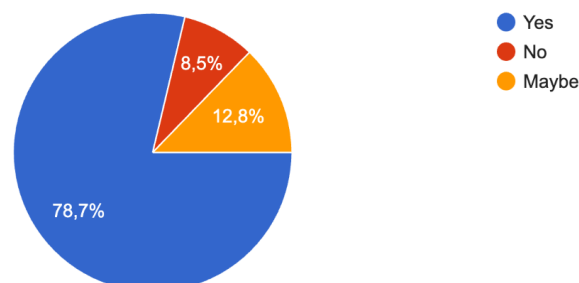
**Image 1.1**

Consumer Behavior:

An overwhelming 78.7% affirmed that they have made purchases influenced by social media advertising. This statistic confirms that social media platforms drive consumer behavior, emphasizing the need for optimized advertisement strategies that can tap into the cultural core of the target audience for maximum impact.

have you ever purchased a product or service based on a social media advertisement?

47 vastausta



**Image 1.2**

#### Advertisement Appeal:

Respondents favor advertisements accompanied by appealing music and visuals, with a preference for quality storytelling and transparency in pricing. These elements contribute to a narrative that consumers can relate to, possibly serving as a reflection of their aspirations, lifestyle, or values.

#### Cross-Cultural Marketing Champions:

Brands like Fenty Beauty have been recognized for their effective cross-cultural marketing. Such brands typically embrace diversity and inclusivity, significantly resonating with multicultural audiences. They are not only culturally sensitive but also celebrate differences, setting a benchmark for others to emulate.

### **4.2 Detailed Analysis:**

#### Cultural Competence in Content Creation:

The data suggests a paradigm shift from traditional marketing to content that tells a story and resonates on a cultural level. Businesses need to invest in understanding the cultural landscapes of their target audience. This doesn't only apply to avoiding content that could be deemed insensitive; it's about crafting a narrative that acknowledges and celebrates cultural diversity. Incorporating local languages, for instance, could foster a more inclusive brand image.

#### Visual and Auditory Appeal:

The preference for Instagram and TikTok, platforms known for short, visually appealing content, combined with the call for good music and aesthetics, points to the need for high-quality, sensory-rich advertisements. Today's consumer interacts more positively with content that holds the attention of their senses and creates an emotional response. This requires investment in high-quality production standards and creative talent that can construct culturally distinctive sensory experiences.

### Authenticity in Storytelling:

The mention of “quality storytelling” suggests that consumers are looking for authenticity in marketing. This storytelling needs to be relatable and genuine, allowing the consumer to see a reflection of their own cultural identity, aspirations, or values. It’s an opportunity for brands to build trust and establish deeper connections with their audience.

### The Fenty effect:

Fenty Beauty’s repeated mention confirms that embracing cultural diversity transcends any marketing strategy. Fenty has set itself apart by broadening the representation in its marketing materials and product range, appealing to multiple demographics. It shows that successful cross-cultural marketing is rooted in inclusivity and representation across all facets of the business.

## 4.3 Recommendations

**Cultural Sensitivity Audit.** Companies should conduct thorough audits of their marketing content to prevent cultural insensitivity, which can alienate the target audience. This involves comprehensive research and, potentially, collaboration with cultural consultants.

**Consumer-Centric Content.** Businesses need to tap into the aesthetics and narratives that appeal to their target demographic, creating content that’s both visually appealing and emotionally resonant.

**Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives.** Embracing internal diversity and inclusion can enhance external marketing strategies. Companies with diverse teams can generate more authentic, culturally rich content, fostering a more inclusive brand image.

**Community Engagement.** Engaging with the community isn’t just about consumer research; it’s about creating ongoing dialogues with audiences to foster brand loyalty. Community management strategies, particularly on preferred platforms like Instagram and TikTok, are vital.

The survey results underscore the need for businesses to adopt a more interesting, culturally sensitive approach to social media marketing, prioritizing authenticity, aesthetic appeal, and emotional resonance in their goals. The brands that champion cultural inclusivity and diversity in their strategies are more likely to thrive in the multicultural marketplace, reflected by the positive acknowledgment by consumers in such surveys.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

The literature underscores the significance of understanding and addressing cross-cultural nuances in social media marketing. By assimilating the insights from various studies and experts, businesses can foster genuine connections with global audiences, ensuring their marketing messages are not only seen but also deeply resonated with. And in the opposite direction, if you forget to do your research in cross cultural communication you will inevitably fail in expanding your business as further highlighted above.

#### 4.5 Business case: Leveraging cultural diversity in marketing- insights from Fenty Beauty

##### Executive Summary

The business imperative for diversity and inclusion transcends social responsibility, becoming a cornerstone for competitive differentiation in the global marketplace. Fenty Beauty, a leader in the beauty industry founded by Rihanna, has redefined the standards for inclusivity, creating a seismic shift in consumer expectations and brand engagement. This business case outlines a strategy to emulate Fenty Beauty's success by embedding Diversity and inclusion into the DNA of marketing efforts, which results in driving brand loyalty, market share, and revenue growth in a diverse consumer landscape. *Image 1.3 below showcases the diversity of Fenty Beauty*



Image 1.3

## Background

The demographic composition of consumers is evolving rapidly, with traditional majority groups becoming more diverse. This shift indicates the necessity of a marketing scheme that is reflective of the global image of consumers. Fenty Beauty has been at the forefront of this transformation, not only recognizing the importance of inclusivity but also capitalizing on it as a fundamental business strategy. By offering an unprecedented range of foundation shades and prioritizing diversity in its campaigns, Fenty Beauty has not only captured market share but also engendered a loyal following (McKinnon, 2023).

## Objective

The goal is to craft and implement a comprehensive marketing strategy that aligns with the ethics of inclusivity and authenticity prioritized by Fenty Beauty. This strategy aims to not only address the gaps in the market but also to forge a brand identity that resonates with the values and identities of a diverse customer base. By doing so, the brand seeks to enhance its relevance and appeal across various demographic segments, ultimately driving sustainable business growth and establishing itself as a leader in Diversity and inclusion within its industry.

## Strategy

- **Inclusive Product Range:** Expand product lines to cater to a diverse customer base, as demonstrated by Fenty Beauty's wide range of foundation shades
- **Authentic Representation:** Ensure marketing campaigns feature individuals of all sizes, skin tones, ages, and genders, reflecting the brand's commitment to representation for all

## Action Plan

- **Product Development:** Launch new products or expand existing lines to include options suitable for a broader demographic.
- **Marketing Campaigns:** Create campaigns that showcase the diversity of the consumer base in an authentic manner.
- **Community Engagement:** Create a community around the brand by engaging with consumers on social media and other platforms.

#### Expected Outcomes:

- Increased brand affinity and loyalty among diverse consumer groups.
- Enhanced brand image as a leader in diversity and inclusion.
- Growth in market share by appealing to underrepresented demographics.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Track engagement and sales metrics to measure the impact of D&I initiatives.
- Solicit and incorporate customer feedback to refine the approach.

#### Conclusion

Fenty Beauty's strategic embrace of diversity and inclusion has not only set a new industry benchmark but has also proven to be a lucrative business model. This business case advocates for a similar integration of these principles into marketing strategies, positing that such an approach is not only a trend but a reflection of the evolving consumer landscape. By adopting a Fenty-inspired ethics, brands can unlock new market segments, foster deeper customer loyalty, and build a reputation as progressive, socially conscious entities. The anticipated outcome is a brand that is not only culturally attuned but also commercially vibrant, resonating with a global audience that values representation and authenticity. In the pursuit of these objectives, the brand commits to continuous learning and adaptation, ensuring that its diversity and inclusion initiatives remain as dynamic and diverse as the customers it serves.

#### **4.6 Dolce & Gabbana's Shanghai Campaign misstep**

On the flipside to Fenty beauty, there are plenty of examples of unsuccessful marketing campaigns. In 2018 Dolce & Gabbana planned a major fashion event in Shanghai, China, titled "The Great Show." To generate views and clicks. The brand released a series of promotional videos on social media platforms, including Weibo, featuring a Chinese model attempting to eat traditional Italian foods such as pizza, spaghetti, and cannoli with chopsticks. (Image 1.4 shows a screenshot of the ad) The videos were intended to be playful and humorous, showcasing the model's difficulty with the Western cuisine while a male narrator posed condescending questions in Mandarin (Qin, 2018).

The campaign quickly ignited a firestorm of criticism on social media, with the Chinese population and international observers alike condemning the videos as culturally insensitive and patronizing. The backlash was swift and severe, with accusations of perpetuating stereotypes and mocking Chinese culture. The controversy escalated when screenshots of derogatory messages, allegedly from Stefano Gabbana's personal Instagram account, began circulating online. The messages included defensive and insulting comments about China and Chinese consumers (Kansara, 2018).

The uproar led to prominent Chinese e-commerce sites removing Dolce & Gabbana products from their platforms, and many Chinese celebrities publicly withdrew from The Great Show, leading to its cancellation. The brand issued an apology, stating that their accounts had been hacked, but the damage was done. The incident not only resulted in immediate financial losses but also tarnished the brand's reputation in one of the world's largest luxury markets (Sherman, 2018).

This case exemplifies the critical importance of cultural intelligence in global marketing campaigns. It serves as a cautionary example of how cultural insensitivity can lead to brand crises and even bankruptcy, especially when amplified by the reach and speed of social media.



1.4 Actual screenshot of the failed campaign

## 4.7 Survey 2 Business questionnaire

Below is the second survey. The second survey was directed towards businesses and business owners. A counterpart to the previous survey. Here we go more In-depth from their point of view. I will share the results in the same manner with a detailed analysis on each question.

Question 1:

Industry?

The diversity of industries represented in the survey is notable. Businesses span various sectors, including investing, film, beauty, hospitality, furniture design, IT, and finance.

Analysis:

This diversity highlights that cross-cultural marketing is relevant across a wide range of industries. It underscores the significance of understanding cultural differences in marketing strategies. Different industries have distinct cultural aspects that can significantly impact consumer behavior and preferences. For instance, beauty and hospitality industries often rely on aesthetics and customer experience, making cultural sensitivity crucial in their marketing. In contrast, the IT and finance sectors may have unique requirements and communication styles specific to their target audiences. Acknowledging these differences is essential for crafting effective cross-cultural marketing campaigns tailored to each industry's needs.

Question 2:

Target demographic?

The majority of businesses (11 out of 26) target other businesses (B2B), while 10 focus on women, and 5 on men. Some also mentioned individuals interested in investing but lacking motivation, grit, or time.

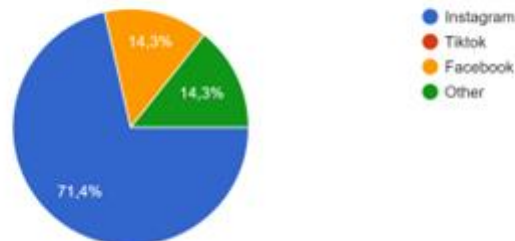
Analysis:

Understanding the target demographic is a cornerstone of effective marketing. The mix of B2B and gender-specific targeting suggests that businesses recognize the importance of aligning their strategies with their audience's cultural backgrounds and preferences. B2B marketing often involves catering to the cultural dynamics of decision-makers within other businesses, which can vary significantly. Gender-specific targeting indicates an acknowledgment of distinct consumer behaviors, expectations, and preferences among men and women. This diversity underscores the need for different approaches that consider the cultural context of each target group, reinforcing the importance of cross-cultural marketing.

Question 3:

Social media strategy: Which social media does your company use the most?

Social media strategy: Which social media does your company use the most?



### 1.5 Image

71.4% of businesses use Instagram the most, while 14.3% prefer Facebook, and 14.3% selected "Other."

Analysis:

The prevalence of Instagram as the primary social media platform underscores its popularity for visual content, making it an effective tool for cross-cultural marketing. Visual content can transcend language barriers, making it suitable for engaging diverse audiences. The presence of "Other" platforms such as TikTok highlights the importance of considering multiple channels to reach varied cultural groups. Since TikTok is also under review in most countries due to its alleged security concerns, some people may not have access to it, so using other channels may be more efficient for the goals of the company. Different cultures may favor specific social media platforms, and businesses must adapt their strategies accordingly. The choice of platforms should align with the cultural preferences of the target audience, ensuring that marketing efforts resonate effectively.

Question 4:

How do you typically gather cultural insights for your target market?

Responses include:

33.3% use surveys.

16.7% rely on Twitter and consumer behavior reports.

16.7% utilize business mentors and networks in accelerator programs.

16.7% focus on inclusivity in product design.

16.7% do not gather cultural insights.

Analysis:

The diverse methods used to gather cultural insights highlight the importance of research and understanding the cultural context. Surveys are a commonly employed tool, allowing businesses to directly collect data from their target audience. Relying on Twitter and consumer behavior reports indicates a focus on digital platforms and market research. Utilizing business mentors and networks demonstrates the value of external perspectives and industry connections in gaining cultural insights. The emphasis on inclusivity in product design showcases a proactive approach to cross-cultural marketing by creating products that cater to diverse skin tones and types. The 16.7% who do not gather cultural insights may benefit from adopting more comprehensive research practices to ensure their marketing strategies resonate effectively with culturally diverse audiences or their customers find them instead.

#### Question 5:

Do you collaborate with local influencers or experts when designing a campaign for a particular cultural group?

Do you collaborate with local influencers or experts when designing a campaign for a particular cultural group?

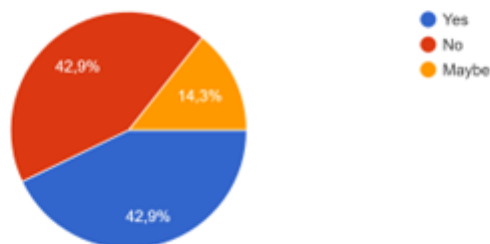


Image 1.6

42.9% collaborate with local influencers or experts, while the same percentage does not, and 14.3% are uncertain.

### Analysis:

Collaborating with local influencers or experts can significantly enhance the authenticity and effectiveness of cross-cultural marketing campaigns. The almost equal split between those who do and do not collaborate suggests varying approaches to leveraging local insights. Those who engage local influencers likely recognize the value of insider knowledge and cultural authenticity in resonating with target audiences. The uncertainty among some respondents may reflect the complexity of influencer collaborations, which require careful consideration of alignment with cultural values and relevance to the campaign.

### Question 6:

Are there any tools, resources, or strategies you wish you had access to that would make cross-cultural marketing easier?

Responses include:

- A desire for software or programs to assist with cross-cultural marketing.
- A need for more multicultural staff and models.
- Interest in automation and ways to engage with investors.
- A request for more data on European Blockchain enthusiasts' consumer behavior.

### Detailed Analysis:

The responses underscore the challenges in cross-cultural marketing and the desire for tools and resources to facilitate this process. The request for software or programs highlights the need for technological solutions that can streamline cross-cultural marketing efforts, potentially by providing cultural insights or assisting in campaign localization. The desire for more multicultural staff and models reflects the importance of diversity in marketing teams to ensure cultural sensitivity and authenticity in campaigns. Automation and investor engagement tools suggest the importance of efficiency and financial support in cross-cultural marketing endeavors. Finally, the request for more data on consumer behavior highlights the significance of informed decision-making and the need for comprehensive data sources to understand and target specific cultural groups more effectively.

## 4.8 Conclusion

In summary, the businesses surveyed operate in diverse industries, targeting a mix of demographics. They predominantly use Instagram for social media marketing and employ various methods to gather cultural insights. Collaboration with local influencers or experts varies, highlighting differing approaches to leveraging local insights. The desire for tools and resources to simplify cross-cultural marketing efforts is clear. These findings emphasize the need for businesses to be culturally sensitive and adaptable in their marketing strategies to effectively reach and engage their diverse target audiences. The variety of industries and demographics represented in the survey highlights the universality of cross-cultural marketing principles and the importance of tailoring strategies to specific cultural contexts.

## 5 Identification of a specific research problem

### Identification of Specific Research Problem

In today's digital age, social media marketing is an area of significant interest for businesses, more so when targeting multicultural audiences. Although ample research is available detailing the complexities of addressing such diverse groups, there's an essential facet that still begs closer examination. The core challenge isn't just acknowledging the importance of cultural variations within the sphere of social media marketing, but more pertinently, identifying and adopting actionable methods that can navigate these cultural nuances for optimal communication.

Surveying the landscape of existing literature, it becomes apparent that numerous scholars have probed the role of social media in interfacing with multicultural audiences. These studies have unveiled the prospective advantages and potential disadvantages of social media when operating within a rich tapestry of global cultures. However, what seems to be somewhat overlooked is a concentrated investigation into the connection between cross-cultural communication and the dynamics of social media. For businesses looking for a competitive edge in today's global marketplace, decoding this relationship is essential.

Let's consider the cultural practices in Japan, a nation that greatly values harmony, respect, and etiquette. For example, the act of directly saying 'no' is often avoided to maintain social harmony. A company aiming to market its products on Japanese social media platforms must grasp such nuanced cultural cues. Posting direct comparative advertisements highlighting a competitor's shortcomings, a practice common in Western nations, might backfire in Japan. Instead, indirect messaging that subtly showcases a product's strengths can be more effective. This real-world scenario underscores the necessity for businesses to deeply understand cultural subtleties and embed them in their marketing strategies.

Furthermore, the topic of cultural intelligence deserves special mention. Although this concept has been referenced in discussions about multicultural communication, its application in the context of social media marketing remains underexplored. Cultural intelligence, with its potential to boost communication with multicultural audiences,

offers a goldmine of opportunities. However, existing literature hasn't sufficiently addressed how businesses can harness this form of intelligence, especially when engaging with various cultural groups on social media platforms.

This sets the stage for the research at hand. While it acknowledges and integrates findings from existing studies, it aims to venture into uncharted territories. The goal? To pinpoint and elucidate specific strategies that could transform a business's approach to multicultural social media marketing. However, the vision for this research isn't confined to just strategy identification. It seeks to go beyond, providing a detailed blueprint on how these strategies can be tailored, adjusted, and enhanced to mesh seamlessly with diverse cultural mindsets. The ultimate ambition is to equip businesses with the tools and know-how to not just reach, but authentically engage and resonate with varied audiences.

In the ensuing segments, this study will take a magnified look at each research question. It will strive to strike a balance between theoretical insights and their tangible, real-world applications. The overarching objective is to furnish businesses with a comprehensive guide as they traverse the intricate domain of multicultural social media marketing. This exploration, enriched by examples and case studies, is poised to be both enlightening and actionable. It invites readers and industry stakeholders to dive deep, understanding how a profound grasp of cultural facets can substantially augment the efficacy of social media marketing campaigns.

## **6 Critical Appraisal**

### **6.1 Hofstede, G. (1980) Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values.**

De Mooij (2010) invites us to contemplate the global context of marketing and advertising, urging us to understand and navigate the cultural differences that shape consumer behavior. This insight resonates with our pursuit of an integrated approach to customer engagement, acknowledging the diverse cultural landscapes within which marketing and sales strategies operate.

Hofstede's study stands as a pioneering resource in identifying and comparing cultural variations in workplace values worldwide. However, it's not without its controversies and criticisms.

#### Detailed analysis

A central concern arises from Hofstede's methodology, where he based his findings on data exclusively from IBM employees. This approach has faced criticism for potentially painting a distorted picture, overly influenced by white Western corporate culture and possibly not reflective of broader societal norms in various countries. Critics argue that relying on perspectives within a single, notably Caucasian Western-oriented corporate environment limits the scope and applicability of the findings.

Additionally, there's a significant debate about the oversimplification of cultural traits. Hofstede's model categorizes cultures into defined dimensions, yet critics emphasize that cultures are more nuanced and less binary than the model implies. Real-world cultural expressions often are a mix of elements from multiple dimensions, challenging the notion of clear-cut categories. This aspect suggests that while the model can serve

as a preliminary roadmap for understanding cultural differences, it may not capture the authenticity of a full depth and complexity of global cultural diversity.

### **6.2 Hall, E.T. (1976) Beyond culture.**

Hall's concept of high-context and low-context cultures has been instrumental in deciphering communication styles worldwide. But it's not without its limitations.

One primary critique is the model's somewhat oversimplified approach, categorizing cultures into one of two brackets. This binary view can miss the subtleties and complexities within each culture, especially in an era where cultures are continually influenced and altered by global trends, technological progress, and intercultural interactions.

Critics argue that the clear-cut distinctions that Hall proposes don't hold as firmly in our modern, interconnected world. Cultural norms and communication styles are not static, they evolve. A society might shift from high-context communication to more direct, low-context ways due to various factors, including technological innovation, social change, or global business practices.

### **6.3 Kim, A.J. and Ko, E. (2012).**

Kim and Ko's study dives into how luxury brands leverage social media marketing, bringing forth concrete data that businesses in this niche find essential. However, it's vital to recognize this research's boundaries.

Their work zooms in on high-end fashion brands, which means the revelations and advice contained may not fully apply to brands outside this luxury space or those in the middle market sector. It's a bit like having a key that only fits a certain type of lock. Additionally, the digital world isn't the same as it was in 2012. Social media trends, algorithms, and consumer behaviors have all shifted, suggesting that some findings in the study might be past their 'sell-by' date.

I see the worth in Kim and Ko's insights for luxury brands. Still, I would stress the importance of pairing this knowledge with fresh research and insights that consider the broader market. It's about taking the lessons learned and figuring out how they fit into today's diverse and ever-evolving digital marketing landscape.

### **6.4 De Mooij, M. (2010) Global marketing and advertising: Understanding cultural paradoxes.**

De Mooij's work is interesting. Offering a deep dive into the complex world of cultural contradictions in global marketing. While it's a goldmine of theories and real-life examples, it doesn't hand you a ready-made solution on a silver platter.

The book opens a window to understanding the intricate challenges businesses face when they step into international arenas. It's like a light being shone on the hidden crevices of cultural complexities. However, while it's great at pointing out these cultural potholes, it doesn't always give you a shovel to fill them in.

In some instances, the book stretches itself wide, touching on a spectrum of issues, which means not every area is explored in detail. Imagine trying to cover an entire buffet in one go; naturally, you might miss out on savoring each dish fully.

From a consultancy angle, I appreciate De Mooij's insights as they help in diagnosing the problems. But, in the business world, diagnosis without prescription isn't enough. So, while I'd recommend soaking in the knowledge this book offers, I'd also advise seeking additional resources or strategies focused on practical solutions. It's one thing to know where the landmines are, but another to navigate them safely.

### **6.5 Okazaki, S. and Mueller, B. (2007).**

Okazaki and Mueller dive deep into the evolution of cross-cultural advertising, providing a historical roadmap that's priceless for enthusiasts and professionals in the field. They lean a lot on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which is like using a tried-and-tested recipe. But here's the thing, while the article is interesting, it's not without its critics.

Their study is a bit like a time capsule, capturing the essence of what went on in cross-cultural advertising at the time. But the advertising world spins on a fast axis, and what was 'in' yesterday could be 'out' today. Methods, platforms, what the audience digs — all this changes at breakneck speed.

For readers and researchers, it's important to use Okazaki and Mueller's analysis as a foundational reference but also to recognize the necessity for ongoing learning. This involves seeking out current studies, embracing various perspectives, and acknowledging that consumer preferences and societal norms shift over time. Therefore, while this paper is an informative starting point, it should be part of a broader, more contemporary collection of resources to grasp the current state of cross-cultural advertising fully. As it is here in my thesis.

### **6.6 Schroeder, J.E. (2019) The cultural codes of branding.**

Schroeder's study gives us a peek behind the curtain of big brands like Coca-Cola and McDonald's, showing us how they use cultural hints in their branding to connect with people worldwide. This research is like a hands-on guide because it uses real-life examples from these huge companies. The spotlight is mostly on these big players, and that can make smaller companies feel a bit left out.

These super brands have resources upon resources to throw around. They can afford to dig deep into different cultures and come up with fancy, wide-reaching marketing campaigns. On the other side, smaller businesses such as SMEs don't have that kind of money or the manpower to pull off such big moves.

For example, a global company might have the means to create a marketing campaign that speaks to people in many different countries, considering all their unique cultural quirks. However, an SME might find this really tough. They don't have the deep pockets to fund such a broad campaign or to do the kind of detailed research big companies can.

So, while Schroeder's research is super helpful and full of great ideas, it's like trying to use a one-size-fits-all approach where it doesn't always fit. SMEs must be more creative in figuring out how to take these strategies and scale them down, making them more practical for their size and budget. They have to think about what's doable for them and tweak these big-brand strategies to match what they can handle.

## 6.7 Dahl, S. (2014).

Dahl's study is comprehensive, gathering information from various sources on how culture impacts advertising. This approach helps provide a broad understanding of the subject. However, there are some limitations to consider.

First, the nature of a meta-analysis means it relies on existing research. If the original studies are outdated or flawed, this affects the reliability of Dahl's conclusions. Advertising trends change quickly, and new strategies emerge, especially with the rise of digital platforms. This fast-paced evolution makes it challenging to keep research findings up to date.

Second, while the study offers a wide-ranging view, it doesn't dive deeply into specific cases. It provides an overview, rather than detailed analysis, which companies often need for their unique situations.

For anyone using Dahl's research, it's important to complement it with up-to-date information and perhaps more detailed investigations relevant to your specific needs. While it serves as a useful starting point and guide, the rapid changes in the advertising world require a more current and detailed approach for practical application.

## 7 Answering research question

### 7.1 How does cross-cultural communication affect the effectiveness of social media marketing?

Cross-cultural communication has emerged as a pivotal factor shaping the success trajectory of social media marketing endeavors. In the age of digital globalization, where businesses have the potential to reach audiences spanning diverse cultural backgrounds, understanding and navigating the nuances of varied cultural landscapes becomes indispensable.

#### The Central Premise of Cross-cultural Impact

The essence of digital marketing in today's interconnected world hinges upon its ability to resonate with a global audience. Social media, with its pervasive reach, offers an unparalleled platform for brands to interact with audiences from different cultural realms. At the heart of this interaction lies the pivotal role of cross-cultural communication. It serves as the linchpin, determining whether a marketing campaign will be embraced, rejected, or worse, misunderstood by its target audience.

#### Significance of Cross-cultural Sensitivity

When businesses acknowledge and integrate cross-cultural nuances in their marketing strategies, they tap into a reservoir of benefits. They align their messaging with the expectations, values, and sentiments of a diverse audience group, ensuring that the content resonates and elicits the desired response. This alignment is not just a matter of courtesy or political correctness; it is a strategic move. It underscores a brand's commitment to understanding its audience, enhancing brand perception, trust, and loyalty.

### The Power of Research-backed Strategies

Numerous studies in the realm of digital marketing underline the correlation between culturally sensitive strategies and marketing efficacy. For instance, research has demonstrated that campaigns tailored to the linguistic and cultural preferences of a specific demographic achieve higher engagement rates, conversions, and overall ROI than generic, one-size-fits-all campaigns. This is a testament to the potency of a culturally nuanced approach, which, when executed with precision, can lead to significantly enhanced marketing outcomes.

### The Rewards of Cultural awareness

When brands immerse themselves in the cultural milieu of their target audience, the rewards are manifold. Apart from the obvious benefits like increased engagement and conversions, there are intangible gains like enhanced brand reputation, increased customer loyalty, and word-of-mouth recommendations. Brands that exhibit cultural intelligence position themselves as relatable, respectful, and relevant in the eyes of their audience, leading to long-term positive affiliations.

### Potential difficulties of Cultural Oversights

Conversely, the ramifications of overlooking cultural intricacies can be detrimental for brands. A single culturally insensitive post can spiral into a PR nightmare, tarnishing a brand's image, and alienating a significant portion of its audience. Beyond just causing offense, there's the risk of miscommunication. Messages, when viewed through a different cultural lens, can sometimes take on unintended meanings, leading to confusion or misinterpretation. Such missteps not only detract from a campaign's primary objectives but can also have long-lasting negative repercussions on a brand's reputation.

The intricate dance between cross-cultural communication and social media marketing is one that modern businesses cannot afford to overlook. In the bid to capture the attention and loyalty of a global audience, understanding and embracing cultural nuances is not just a recommended strategy, it's a crucial imperative. In the vast digital playground of social media, where competition is fierce, and audience attention spans are fleeting, a brand's commitment to cultural sensitivity can be its most potent differentiator.

## **7.2 What are the key cultural factors that businesses need to consider when designing social media marketing campaigns?**

The complex realm of social media marketing is underpinned by a tapestry of cultural factors that businesses must navigate. As the digital space becomes increasingly global, these cultural nuances play a pivotal role in determining the trajectory of a brand's messaging and its ultimate impact. Navigating this intricate matrix necessitates a deep understanding of certain foundational cultural elements. This discussion endeavors to distill these elements, elucidating their significance in crafting resonant and effective social media campaigns.

Foremost among the cultural considerations are

**Language**, far more than a mere tool of communication, language is a reflection of cultural identity, history, and shared experiences. While it's the obvious starting point,

mere translation of content isn't sufficient. The essence, tone, and colloquial nuances must be retained to genuinely connect with a specific demographic. Brands need to ensure their messages are linguistically accurate and contextually apt to resonate authentically.

**Customs**, these are deeply ingrained practices and traditions unique to each culture. Whether it's the celebration of a particular festival, specific rituals, or day-to-day practices, acknowledging and respecting these customs can provide businesses with a touchpoint that genuinely resonates with the target audience.

**Beliefs**, Religious, philosophical, and even political beliefs shape people's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. A message at odds with these core beliefs can alienate or even offend, making it vital for businesses to approach this area with sensitivity and understanding.

**Values**, every culture holds certain values dear, which could range from concepts like family, honor, individualism, or community spirit. Aligning marketing messages with these intrinsic values can foster deeper connections and engender trust.

**Norms**, these are the unspoken rules of a society, guiding social behavior. They can dictate everything from dress codes to communication styles. Understanding and adhering to these norms ensures that marketing campaigns are perceived as respectful and considerate.

### The Practical Implications of Cultural Attunement

Understanding these cultural dimensions is just the starting point. Their true significance comes to the fore when we consider the tangible implications of their application in social media marketing campaigns.

For instance, businesses that overlook the importance of local customs might find their campaigns falling flat or even facing backlash. A simple example might be promoting meat products during a period of religious fasting or vegetarian observance in certain cultures. Such oversights not only indicate a lack of cultural understanding but can lead to brand reputational damage.

Similarly, language nuances, if ignored, can result in messages being lost in translation or even being misinterpreted, leading to unintended consequences. A slogan that sounds catchy in English might come off as offensive or nonsensical when directly translated into another language.

### Concluding Thoughts

In an era where global outreach is just a click away, the challenge for businesses lies not just in reaching vast audiences, but in genuinely connecting with them. Culturally attuned social media marketing campaigns, anchored in a profound understanding of the aforementioned factors, offer businesses the tools to craft messages that resonate, build bridges, and foster lasting relationships with diverse audiences.

Ultimately, the interplay of language, customs, beliefs, values, and norms is at the heart of any effective social media marketing strategy. By prioritizing these cultural dimensions, businesses can elevate their campaigns from mere outreach efforts to genuine dialogues, fostering mutual respect and understanding in an interconnected digital world.

### **7.3 What strategies can businesses use to improve their cross-cultural communication in social media marketing?**

In an increasingly globalized world, cross-cultural communication is an essential component for businesses striving for success in their social media marketing campaigns. Several strategies stand out as particularly effective in ensuring that a brand's message resonates with diverse audiences, while also preventing potential misunderstandings that could inadvertently harm a brand's reputation.

#### **Importance of Research**

The bedrock of any successful cross-cultural marketing strategy is a deep and comprehensive understanding of the target audience's cultural landscape. Businesses should consider investing in market research to gather essential insights about their audience's preferences, beliefs, and behaviors. This could involve a myriad of approaches such as analyzing demographic data to detect patterns and trends, conducting surveys to gauge sentiment and perception, or even monitoring social media conversations to get a feel for the popular discourse. Such proactive research not only ensures that businesses don't operate based on mere assumptions but also enables them to craft messages that are genuinely impactful and resonate with their audience's cultural ethos.

#### **Collaboration with Local Experts**

While research provides the necessary data and insights, the nuances of culture often require a more hands-on, intuitive approach. Here's where local experts and influencers come into play. Collaborating with individuals who have a firm grasp of local customs, traditions, and sentiments can be invaluable. These experts, owing to their lived experiences and credibility within a community, can offer insights that may not be readily apparent through quantitative research alone. For instance, they might provide context about local festivals, idioms, or even recent events that could be leveraged in a campaign. Businesses can partner with these local figures not just for insights but also for endorsements, making their marketing efforts more relatable and authentic.

#### **Translation and Localization**

While it might seem obvious, the distinction between translation and localization is crucial. Simply translating content may ensure linguistic accuracy, but localization ensures that the content fits the cultural and emotional context of the audience. For instance, a direct translation of a slogan might be linguistically correct but could lack the punch or appeal of the original. Localization goes beyond mere language – it adapts content to fit the local cultural norms, values, and preferences. This could mean changing visuals, altering slogans, or even reimagining an entire campaign to make it more culturally appropriate. Businesses should, therefore, consider enlisting professional localization services that specialize in adapting content for specific cultural contexts, ensuring that their marketing messages aren't just understood, but also felt.

### Proactive Approach

One of the underlying themes in these strategies is the importance of a proactive approach. Instead of waiting for feedback or reacting to potential missteps, businesses that anticipate and address cultural nuances from the outset position themselves as culturally sensitive and forward-thinking. This not only fosters goodwill among target audiences but can also lead to a more engaged and loyal customer base.

### Concluding Thoughts

In the dynamic realm of social media marketing, where messages can spread rapidly and perceptions can be molded quickly, a keen understanding of cross-cultural communication is indispensable. By incorporating research, collaborating with local experts, emphasizing localization, and adopting a proactive stance, businesses can ensure their social media marketing campaigns are both effective and respectful of their diverse audiences.

## 8 Conclusion

In the complicated scene of today's global marketplace, the reach of cross-cultural communication and social media marketing is prominent more tightly than ever before. Writing this delving into the subtle realm of digital platforms, the insights received from this comprehensive thesis not only highlights the path for businesses seeking to navigate the complex landscape of international markets but also serve as a beacon for culturally sensitive marketing strategies.

Customs and beliefs shape the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours of consumers. A message at odds with these core beliefs can not only alienate but also offend the audience, leading to a detrimental impact on the brand's image. The thesis provides a clear example of this with the cultural practices in Japan, where harmony, respect, and etiquette are valued highly. Directly saying 'no' or posting comparative advertisements might backfire, a stark contrast to Western practices where such directness is common. This highlights the necessity for businesses to deeply understand cultural subtleties and embed them in their marketing strategies.

The thesis also critically examines Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions and Hall's high-context and low-context cultures, providing a preliminary roadmap for understanding cultural differences. However, it acknowledges the limitations of these models, noting that they may not capture the full depth and complexity of global cultural diversity. The digital world is not static, it evolves, and with-it cultural norms and communication

styles shift. This evolution is necessary for a dynamic approach to cross-cultural marketing, one that is flexible and responsive to the changing landscape.

In the realm of social media, the thesis suggests that platforms act as ambassadors for businesses to engage with a global audience. The research navigates this uncharted territory, proposing an in-depth review and combination of existing literature, historical data, and case studies, complemented by direct audience feedback to construct a comprehensive guide for businesses. Moreover, the distinction between translation and localization is highlighted as vital. Localization involves adapting content to reflect the cultural nuances of the target market, going beyond mere translation to ensure relevance and resonance with the audience's cultural ethics.

In conclusion, the thesis stands as a testament to the importance of cultural intelligence in the digital age. It is a call for businesses to not only recognize but embrace the diversity of the global consumer base. I recommend that businesses take a holistic approach to cross-cultural marketing, one that integrates the theoretical frameworks of Hofstede and Hall with practical, real-world applications. They must engage in continuous learning and adaptation, leveraging the power of social media while avoiding the pitfalls of cultural insensitivity. The future of marketing is undeniably global, and the businesses that will thrive are those that understand the cultural currents that move their international audiences. They will be the ones that not only speak the language of their consumers but do so with a cultural fluency that fosters trust, respect, and ultimately, brand loyalty. This thesis does not just contribute to academic discourse but stands as a crucial guide for businesses worldwide, urging them to rethink and re-strategize their approach to international markets via social media, emphasizing the need for a universally competent marketing era that achieves global reach while maintaining a profound connection with every individual culture it touches.

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