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The Role of Cultural Differences in Global Branding Strategies: Evidence from International Students at Istanbul Aydin University

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Abstract Review Article

This study investigates the influence of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on global branding strategies through quantitative analysis of data collected from 262 respondents. Employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), the research examines how Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism, Masculinity, and Long-Term Orientation affect the development and implementation of global branding approaches. The findings reveal that four of the five cultural dimensions significantly influence global branding strategies: Long-Term Orientation demonstrates the strongest positive effect, followed by Masculinity and Uncertainty Avoidance, while Collectivism exhibits a significant negative relationship. Notably, Power Distance shows no significant impact on global branding strategies. These results contribute to international marketing theory by moving beyond the traditional standardization-adaptation dichotomy, offering instead a more nuanced, culturally-contingent framework for global brand management. The study provides practical implications for international marketers, suggesting that effective global branding requires strategic calibration based on market-specific cultural profiles, with particular attention to temporal orientation, achievement values, risk tolerance, and social orientation. This research advances our understanding of how cultural dimensions shape cross-cultural branding effectiveness and offers actionable insights for multinational corporations navigating the complexities of global brand management.

Keywords: Culture, Branding, Hofstede's Framework, Global Marketing, PLS-SEM.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Today, due to globalization, multinational companies can now be found everywhere, and they serve customers from different cultures across many countries. With globalization occurring faster than ever, the relationship between culture and shaping global branding strategies is attracting attention from both experts and companies (Cayla & Arnould, 2008). This paper investigates the effect of cultural differences on MNCs' brands, studying examples of how enterprises handle branding in different countries. It is necessary for companies to know how culture affects their branding, as this allows them to reach out to customers abroad and forge reliable, long-lasting relationships (Roth, 1995). With global branding, companies develop a common identity for their brand that is easily recognized everywhere by customers (Aronczyk, 2013). Still, reaching coherence is not straightforward for brands because they must align their worldwide image with the ability to adjust to different cultures (Palacio & Santana, 2018). Hofstede's theory stresses that societies may be seen as varying along various dimensions, including individualism vs. collectivism, differences in power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity vs. femininity. The mentioned dimensions consumers' actions, mindset toward brands, and reactions to advertising (Triandis, 1993). When a culture has high collectivism, consumers may focus on family and community when dealing with brands (Power et al., Alternatively, in cultures that promote 2010). individualism, the main emphasis is placed on doing well and showing who you are (Kim & Drolet, 2003). Several cultural differences require brands to style their approaches uniquely, rather than rely on the same strategy for everyone.

In recent years, the advent of digital media has further complicated the role of cultural differences in global branding strategies (Kim et al., 2019). Social media platforms, e-commerce websites, and digital marketing

campaigns enable brands to reach consumers directly, yet these channels also expose companies to heightened scrutiny from culturally diverse audiences (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). The controversial Pepsi advertisement featuring Kendall Jenner is a case in point: while the campaign aimed to promote unity, it sparked backlash for appearing tone-deaf to social justice movements (Dozé, 2018). This example underscores the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in global branding, as brands must navigate a diverse array of values, beliefs, and expectations when crafting their messages.

Even though it may seem difficult, brands have the unique opportunity to build closer relationships with their customers through culture (Chen et al., 2005). When companies value cultural differences, they are better able to establish a brand identity that appeals to locals and still ties in with the rest of the world. To serve customers in different regions, McDonald's changed its menu by providing teriyaki burgers to Japanese customers, offering paneer wraps to diners in India, and serving lamb burgers in the Middle East (Khan & Khan, 2013). Changing the menu to suit local tastes means that McDonald's target market feels more connected to the brand (Schröder & McEachern, 2005).

The study looks at the impact of cultural differences on global branding, using case studies from the food and beverage, technology, and luxury goods sectors. This study relies on quantitative research to find out how culture shapes consumer opinions on certain brands. Apart from discussing the problems of adapting to different cultures, the research outlines the best ways to design branding strategies that help a business build customer loyalty and a good reputation.

The insights I have provided are for marketers, brand managers, and executives who wish to manage a brand internationally in diverse societies. To help understand cross-cultural marketing better and guide the use of more effective cultural branding practices, the study has looked into how culture differs in affecting branding strategies. With worldwide business transforming due to globalization, any brand that hopes to succeed internationally must appreciate and respect cultural diversity.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

The first aspect, called power distance, describes the degree to which people who have less power in society accept that authority is not the same for everyone (Eylon & Au, 1999). In some countries, where there is a high-power distance, people often respect authority and status and rarely argue about it (Farh et al., 2007). However, in low-power distance cultures, everyone has equal value and is expected to be included in making decisions. This is a key factor in shaping how customers behave and if they remain loyal to a brand. Companies located in places with strong traditional hierarchies might do well by making their marketing consistent with these customs, but brands in countries with low power distance would likely gain more from highlighting their accessibility and equality (Wang et al., 2022).

Levels of individualism vs. collectivism are measured based on how individuals value their personal ambitions against those of the group. Those from individualistic cultures focus on personal achievements and freedom to express their views and thoughts. When the focus is on personal growth and what individuals can achieve, brands that value self-identity may appeal to consumers the most (Hamamura, 2012). In collectivist cultures, emphasis is placed on unity, families, and the community. Brands that mention social meaning, support the community, and emphasize relationships with families are more attractive to customers in these societies (Krys et al., 2022). For firms that operate in many countries, being able to distinguish among cultures can help them communicate properly to each group.

The third element is masculinity vs. femininity, describing which feelings and emotions are assigned to each gender. Culture is described as masculine if it emphasizes winning, taking charge, and success, but as feminine if it puts greater stress on teamwork, kindness, and quality of life. Such considerations also play a role in how companies market their brands. Brands operating in masculine cultures may adopt aggressive marketing tactics that highlight competition and success, while those in feminine cultures may focus on nurturing relationships and promoting a sense of community (Avery, 2012).

Uncertainty avoidance, the fourth dimension, reflects how comfortable different cultures are with uncertainty and with things they do not know. Cultures with a high uncertainty avoidance index rely on making regulations and policies and supporting bureaucracy to avoid risks. When marketing to these cultures, safety, security, and reliability may be valued and highlighted as promotion points. In addition, not avoiding uncertainty leads to trust in the brand, which allows companies to easily implement new and creative methods in advertising (Merkin, 2006). Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-Term Normative orientation refers to cultures that try to reach their goals by looking forward rather than focusing on quick results. People in cultures that plan for the future value traits like frugality, endurance, and being patient with their wishes. These researchers (Frijns et al., 2013) pointed out that, in such markets, firms should highlight sustainability and maintain long relationships with customers. Alternatively, short-term cultures are scenario-oriented, require quick results, prefer old ways of doing things, and value instant rewards.

Unlike the previous two, indulgence versus restraint allows people's societies to indulge in basic desires. A culture of indulgences is fond of enjoyment and good times, whereas a culture of restraint values moderation and controls on indulging. The kind of culture identified in this part has an effect on branding, as messages, for example, about how enjoyable a product is, are expected to work well for an indulgent culture (Rojek, 1999).

B. Branding

Building and maintaining an attractive image for any company, product, or service is done through branding. It involves more than coming up with a logo, a unique set of colors, or catchy sayings; it also means showing consumers how a business behaves (Ghodeswar, 2008). In addition, the brand relies on abstract factors like its vision, voice, mission, and the thing it stands for. The reason for branding is to enhance the company's image to create emotions in its regular customers and make them remain loyal to the brand.

Many uses brand equity to promise the customer assurance that what they receive will be of high quality and reliable whenever a certain brand is involved. To ensure the brand is always consistent, it is important to manage how the brand communicates on advertisements, social networks, with customers, and through product packaging (Bhargava & Bedi, 2022). As a result, these samples help the brand gain a stronger identity in the minds of customers and keep its familiarity, boosting its value or brand equity. Brand equity matters as it helps brands change how their customers respond, allows them to charge more even with fewer campaigns, and leads to strong protection from rivals in hotly contested industries (Rios & Riquelme, 2008).

Nonetheless, branding is influenced by evolving market trends, people, and culture. Most marketing-oriented companies find branding easier because they typically pay close attention to customers, gather more information about them, and are aware of the things affecting their decisions. Being flexible helps a brand to survive and compete in the market no matter how things change. Besides, branding promotes a positive working culture inside a company by guiding employees, creating a common goal, and boosting morale (Geetha. 2024).

Today, with most things happening online and digitally, branding covers online reputation, use of social networks, and exciting interactions with customers. With digital platforms playing a bigger role, customers now encourage companies they relate to and which share their values (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). A brand is successful when creativity and strategic decision-making are supported by data and always done consistently to create solid relationships with customers.

C. Understanding Branding and Culture

Essentially, branding involves forming a special name and reason for the product or service so it stays in customers' memories. Moving on, it reduces to a commitment to the clients, which reveals honesty, high quality, and respect in the company. When a brand is well-developed, it makes target customers prefer it to other brands (Ghodeswar, 2008). Alternatively, culture consists of ideas, actions, and objects that characterize certain groups of people. As a result, culture melds beliefs, affects actions, and shapes values; people join together to form memories, which brands should consider as they try to engage with customers (Hall, 1976).

It illustrates that blending culture and branding can impact a company's important decisions. When cultural appeals are effective, they boost the value of a brand and form stronger relationships between it and consumers (Sharma et al., 2022). We should learn to understand various cultural practices and differences deeply, not only appreciate their signs and symbols.

Working from local markets to the global scale, businesses may encounter problems, but cultural

differences take priority as a significant one. So, a brand's ability to connect with people around the world can be measured by how much the firm recognizes differences in consumer behavior by location (Okonkwo et al., 2023). There are several approaches companies can take to ensure their efforts are significant to the audience and happenings around them.

So, the first thing to focus on when working with cultural differences is obtaining a thorough understanding of the culture of the group you are dealing with. People working in marketing should conduct a survey and consult users to recognize the particular characteristics of how they make purchase decisions. White in the USA is understood to mean pure, but in Africa, the same term represents death. As a result, brands should consider regional preferences when they design the packaging or publicity for their goods (Madden et al., 2000).

For a firm's message to understand its audience better, marketing communications must be set to the specific way of life in each market. This calls for arranging communication to be appropriate for a region while maintaining the entire of the company image. Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign is an instance where people's locations were included on bottles (Garcia & Proffitt, 2022). Using this strategy and a creating a a culture made the brand friendlier thanks to Patricia.

Local sources can offer great tips about the culture when gathering information on a new market. As they know about their community well, local influencers keep brands out of trouble when it comes to cultural issues. Furthermore, when a leveraged marketing communications uses local insights with the brand's global goals, it can help the brand easily access the market if the LMC partners with them; it can also boost the brand's reliability.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Methodology

This study examined how culture affects worldwide branding using quantitative analysis. The quantitative technique was selected for this study because it uses statistics to evaluate hypotheses and identify correlations between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) as a methodology, we were able to simultaneously examine the relationships between several latent and observable variables. After taking into account any potential study mistakes, I was able to comprehend the connection between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and global branding regulations by using this strategy. SEM was the best choice because the study took into account a lot of variables and intermediate factors (Byrne, 2016).

B. Sample

The data collected was tested for reliability and validity and then used to assess the impact of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on global branding strategies in a pilot study. The sample of the pilot study consisted of 262 international students from Istanbul Aydin University with different cultural backgrounds and different majors and also participants from different service sectors in

Istanbul. Data collection was done using a conventional survey method using a structured questionnaire designed to obtain respondents' perceptions on the global branding strategies in light of the cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, masculinity, and long-term orientation. Social networks were used to distribute the questionnaire to achieve this, social media sites such as WhatsApp, and university online groups affiliated with the aforementioned universities were used to disseminate the questionnaire among the target population. By using this distribution method, it was possible to get broad access to the respondents while keeping the convenience and making the respondents participate.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The analysis and findings of the data collected from a survey of 262 international students at Istanbul Aydin University, aimed at investigating the influence of Hofstede's cultural dimensions—Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism, Masculinity, and Long-Term Orientation—on global branding strategies.

A. Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model assessment is a critical step in validating the constructs used in this study to explore the influence of Hofstede's cultural dimensions—Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism, Masculinity, and Long-Term Orientation—on Global Branding Strategies among international students at Istanbul Aydin University. Employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), this section evaluates the reliability and validity of the measurement model to ensure that the latent variables accurately represent the observed data.

The outer loading results are as follows in table 1: for Power Distance, A1, A2, A4, and A5 were retained, with A1 and A5 falling within the 0.4–0.7 range but deemed essential based on theoretical implications; for Uncertainty Avoidance, B2, B3, B4, and B5 all exceeded 0.7; for Collectivism, C2, C3, and C4 were retained, with C4 just above the 0.7 threshold; for Masculinity, D1, D2, D3, and D4 were included, with D1 and D3 retained despite being below 0.7 due to their theoretical significance; for Long-Term Orientation, F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, and F6 were kept, with F1, F2, and F5 retained within the 0.4–0.7 range; and for Global Branding Strategies. G1, G2, G3, and G5 all exceeded 0.7. This selective retention process ensured that the measurement model maintained both statistical rigor and theoretical coherence, providing a solid foundation for subsequent analyses of the relationships between cultural dimensions branding global strategies.

Table 1. Outer loading

	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivism	Masculinity	Long-Term Orientation	Global Branding Strategies
Al	0.640					
A2	0.728					
A4	0.899					
A5	0.690					
B2		0.824				
В3		0.776				
B4		0.889				
B5		0.880				
C2			0.874			
C3			0.845			
C4			0.714			
Dl				0.665		
D2				0.730		
D3				0.673		
D 4				0.807		
F1					0.694	
F2					0.627	
F3					0.743	
F4					0.817	
F5					0.659	
F6					0.856	
Gl						0.840
G2						0.776
G3						0.841
G5						0.856

B. Reliability and Validity Assessment

After the outer loadings were examined, the reliability and validity of six main constructs were checked to support the robustness of the measurement model.

According to the results in table 10, Power Distance (A) scored a Cronbach's alpha of 0.766, a rho_c of 0.831, and an AVE of 0.556, fitting all requirements for reliability and validity. Results indicate that Uncertainty Avoidance (B) had a reliable and valid scaling, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.867 and an AVE of 0.711. Collectivism (C) provides a Cronbach's alpha of 0.766, a rho_c of 0.854, and an AVE of 0.663, showing that the scale is both reliable and valid. Cronbach's alpha was appropriate for Masculinity (D), but AVE was slightly below 0.5, pointing out that convergent validity could be

poor, with reference to the theory reinforcing it. Reliability and validity standards were satisfied by Long-Term Orientation (F), which had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.832, a rho_c of 0.876, and an AVE of 0.544. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.848, a rho_c of 0.898, and an AVE of 0.687 gave Global Branding Strategies (G) the highest reliability and validity among the others. Overall, the model fitting statistics confirm that all constructs, except for a minor AVE concern with Masculinity (D), meet or exceed the minimum acceptable levels for Cronbach's alpha (>0.7), rho_c (>0.7), and AVE (>0.5), ensuring the measurement model's reliability and validity for analyzing the relationships between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and global branding strategies using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Table 1. Reliability Assessment

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rhoc)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Power Distance	0.766	1.025	0.831	0.556
Uncertainty Avoidance	0.867	0.901	0.908	0.711
Collectivism	0.766	0.857	0.854	0.663
Masculinity	0.732	0.769	0.811	0.520
Long-Term Orientation	0.832	0.871	0.876	0.544
Global Branding Strategies	0.848	0.851	0.898	0.687

The results in table 3 also indicate that Power Distance scores of the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values between 0.133 and 0.301, reflecting its high difference from other constructs. HTMT results show that Uncertainty Avoidance is moderately close to Power Distance and more closely related to Global Branding Strategies, while Collectivism, is moderately similar to power distance and most comparable to Global Branding Strategies. HTMT values for masculinity range from 0.301 to 0.793, and the highest is 0.793 for Masculinity

and Long-Term Orientation, which is above average yet below the threshold for intersection. The highest correlation (0.747) between Long-Term Orientation and Global Branding Strategies points to a link between the two or some overall similarity. As with the previous efforts, Global Branding Strategies scores HTMT values between 0.149 and 0.747, with the greatest score of 0.747 falling between Global Branding Strategies and Long-Term Orientation.

Table 2. Validity Assessment

	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivism	Masculinity	Long-Term Orientation
Power					
Distance					
Uncertainty Avoidance	0.133				
Collectivism	0.183	0.789			
Masculinity	0.301	0.499	0.691		
Long-Term Orientation	0.235	0.550	0.719	0.793	
Global Branding Strategies	0.149	0.595	0.458	0.681	0.747

The findings suggest that out of the power distance items, A1 (VIF = 1.427), A2 (VIF = 1.565), A4 (VIF = 1.467), and A5 (VIF = 1.450) are not highly correlated and meet the acceptable levels. VIF values of B2 (1.920), B3 (2.559), B4 (2.559), and B5 (2.559) suggest that there is no major issue that must be addressed. Since collectivism items C2 (VIF = 1.407), C3 (VIF = 1.900), and C4 (VIF = 1.900) show VIF scores less than 5, they experience little collinearity. Among the variables for masculinity, D1 (VIF = 1.107), D2 (VIF = 2.337), D3 (VIF = 1.107), and D4 (VIF = 2.337) have low to moderate values, and none suggest a multicollinearity problem. Although VIFs reached a maximum of 2.668 for F3, F4, and F6, all values stayed safe and remain usable. Items in the global branding strategies category, G1 (VIF

= 1.668), G2 (VIF = 2.190), G3 (VIF = 2.190), and G5 (VIF = 2.190), show little to moderate multicollinearity, as all values are below 5.

C. Structural Model Assessment

The ability of the structural model to explain results was determined by the R-squared (R²) statistic. Among the 262 international students in this study, Istanbul Aydin University, the research indicated that Hofstede's cultural dimensions—Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism, Masculinity, and Long-Term Orientation—had an R² effect of 0.574 on Global Branding Strategies as shown table 4.

Table 3. R-squared

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Global Branding Strategies	0.574	0.546

We used PLS-SEM to analyze how cultural dimensions influence global branding strategies, focusing on power distance (A), uncertainty avoidance (B), collectivism (C), masculinity (D), and long-term orientation (F). According to Cohen's (2013) thresholds (small: 0.02, medium: 0.15, large: 0.35), power distance had minimal impact, aligning with prior studies. Uncertainty avoidance ($f^2 = 0.125$) and collectivism ($f^2 = 0.065$) showed small-to-moderate

effects. Masculinity ($f^2 = 0.145$) and long-term orientation (≈ 0.15) had stronger, more meaningful impacts. Global branding (G) is the outcome variable, without its own f^2 value. Overall, long-term orientation and masculinity were the key cultural drivers of global branding, while the others played a minor role. These insights clarify the cultural factors shaping branding strategies in multicultural

Table 4. Q-Square

	Global Branding Strategies	
Power Distance	0.000	
Uncertainty Avoidance	0.125	
Collectivism	0.065	
Masculinity	0.145	
Long-Term Orientation	0.224	

The Stone-Geisser Q^2 value was used to determine how well the structure model could predict Global Branding Strategies (G) among a data set of 262 international students at Istanbul Aydin University. The Q^2 value was found out by using a blindfolding method and comparing

SSO and SSE. In table 6, the SSO was 328.000, the SSE was 210.038, so the resulting Q² value is 0.360, which equals 0.360. The model helps explain the endogenous construct, and when it's higher than 0.35, it strongly supports the predictive ability.

Table 5. Q-Square

	SSO	SSE	Q² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Global Branding Strategies	328.000	210.038	0.360

D. Hypothesis Testing Results

The hypothesis testing revealed that four out of five cultural dimensions significantly influence Global Branding Strategies among international students. Power Distance (H1) showed no significant effect (β = 0.008, p = 0.940), indicating that hierarchical structures are not a key factor in shaping branding preferences within this group. In contrast, Uncertainty Avoidance (H2) had a significant positive impact (β = 0.328, p = 0.003), suggesting that students who prefer stability and predictability are more receptive to structured global branding. Collectivism (H3) demonstrated a significant negative effect (β = -0.252, p = 0.040), implying that

group-oriented cultures may prefer localized branding over standardized global approaches. Masculinity (H4) was positively associated with global branding strategies ($\beta=0.335$, p=0.002), reflecting the influence of values like achievement and competitiveness. Most notably, Long-Term Orientation (H5) emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta=0.438$, p=0.000), highlighting that a future-oriented mindset strongly supports the adoption of global branding strategies. Overall, the findings emphasize that Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism, Masculinity, and Long-Term Orientation play key roles, while Power Distance appears largely irrelevant in this context

Table 6.	Hyp	othesis	Test
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	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
A -> G	0.008	0.016	0.106	0.076	0.940
B -> G	0.328	0.311	0.110	2.988	0.003
C -> G	-0.252	-0.213	0.123	2.059	0.040
D -> G	0.335	0.344	0.111	3.029	0.002
F -> G	0.438	0.420	0.122	3.582	0.000

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined how cultural differences influence global branding strategies, using data from 262 international students at Istanbul Aydin University and analyzed through PLS-SEM. The results show that Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity, and Long-Term Orientation significantly and positively affect global branding, with Long-Term Orientation having the strongest impact. These findings highlight the value of stability, achievement, and future planning in global marketing. In contrast, Collectivism negatively affects global branding, suggesting a preference for localized strategies in group-oriented cultures, while Power Distance showed no significant effect. The model demonstrated solid explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.574$, $Q^2 =$ 0.360). For practice, global brands should emphasize reliability, success, and long-term benefits in cultures with high uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation, while adjusting to collectivist preferences through localization. However, generalizability is limited by the student sample, and measurement of Masculinity may need refinement. Overall, the study bridges cultural theory and branding, offering useful insights for international marketing strategies.

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My name is Ali Abdou Mohamed Ali Abdou Mohamed, and I am currently a student in the Business Administration program at Istanbul Aydin University, where I have been studying since 2023. I am passionate about global business trends, international marketing, and the influence of culture on branding strategies. My academic focus and personal interests have driven me to explore how businesses can thrive in multicultural environments through strategic branding and long-term planning.

Currently, I am working on my master's thesis, which examines the impact of cultural dimensions on global branding strategies using advanced data analysis techniques. As part of this academic journey, I am seeking to publish my research paper in your journal, the World Journal of Research and Review (WJRR). I believe this publication would be a meaningful step in contributing to the field of business research and sharing valuable insights with the global academic community.

I aim to continue my academic and professional development through active research, collaboration, and practical application of knowledge in international business contexts. Publishing in your journal would be an important achievement in my academic career and a platform to further my contribution to business studies.