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– Un análisis crítico de los conceptos de marketing internacional

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Resumen

Esta tesis de licenciatura aborda la cuestión de investigación de si los conceptos de marketing internacional conducen a la convergencia cultural, en particular, en qué condiciones el marketing influye en la cultura y cuándo no. Para ello, se definen y delimitan los términos técnicos relevantes para la pregunta de investigación, se analiza la conexión entre la globalización, el mercado mundial y la McDonaldización, que se apoyan en el marketing internacional, y su influencia en las culturas. Además, esta tesis se centra en las estrategias de marketing internacional teniendo en cuenta las diferencias culturales, la influencia del marketing en los medios sociales y la importancia de los medios sociales para la cultura y el marketing.

Palabras clave

International marketing concepts, Culture, Cultural Convergence, Mold-theory, Mirror-theory, Globalization

1. INTRODUCTION

Everywhere you go, you will find the same. "It's actually quite difficult to think of a country where it's not available." (The Coca-Cola Company, n.d.). You can buy Coca-Cola in over 200 countries. People have the feeling that the differences between the diverse cultures and thus the different traditions are being lost more and more. Due to globalization, it seems like the entire world is standardizing and aligning. This thesis investigates whether international marketing, the values presented in advertising and the consumption of international products lead to cultural convergence.

Being able to assess the influence of international marketing on culture is relevant for companies to become aware of their own responsibility and to develop future marketing concepts for the foreign market. But democratic lawmakers can also benefit from the knowledge of the power of marketing's influence on culture and use this to popularize healthy lifestyles and thus ensure a mentally and physically healthier population in the long term. In addition, they could restrict potentially harmful marketing campaigns through appropriate laws that respect the right to freedom of expression and independent reporting, using this knowledge.

In terms of marketing and cultural alignment, there are two rival approaches. Adherents of mirror theory defend the view that marketing merely reflects culture. Adherents of the mold theory believe that marketing has a great social impact and influences the culture of consumers. Although there are case studies for both approaches that support each of them, these two approaches are usually considered mutually exclusive.

This bachelor thesis deals with the research question of whether international marketing concepts lead to cultural convergence, in particular, under which conditions marketing influences culture and when not. To this end, technical terms relevant to the research question are defined and delineated, the connection between globalization, the world market and McDonaldization, which are supported by international marketing, and their influence on cultures are discussed. Furthermore, international marketing strategies considering cultural differences, the influence of marketing on social media and the importance of social media for culture and marketing are the subject of this thesis.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the influence of marketing on culture and to establish new hypotheses about the conditions under which international marketing can lead to

cultural convergence. For the formulation of these hypotheses, the qualitative method of comparative case study with two cases is applied. As a qualitative method, the comparative case study method is particularly suitable, as it offers an insight into complex interactions and relationships of several factors with its holistic description of the two contrasting cases, which quantitative studies cannot offer.

This work is divided into seven chapters. In chapter two, relevant terms such as culture, cultural assimilation and international marketing concepts are defined. In addition, the basics of globalization, the world market and especially McDonaldization are presented. In the third chapter, underlying theories on the influence of marketing on culture are explained. Chapter four then deals with marketing in an international context, taking into account cultural differences. It also explains the role of social media in international marketing. Based on the theory, four hypotheses on cultural assimilation as a result of international marketing are formulated in chapter five. Afterwards, the qualitative investigation is conducted by means of comparative case study, whereby both cases are described in detail and combined with theories from the previous chapters. The first case study supports the mirror theory, and the second study supports the mold theory in the context of international marketing. Subsequently, the two cases are compared with regards to the criteria year of publication, regions considered, target group(s) considered, standard of living of the target group(s), advertised products, cultural ties of the advertised products, marketing measures and effect of marketing on society. The results are then compiled in the discussion and supported by other studies. In chapter six, the results are summarized and the initial hypotheses get modified against the background of the results. Finally, in chapter seven the work is critically reflected on and possible sources of error are revealed.

2. TERMINOLOGY AND FUNDAMENTALS

2.1 Definition of Culture

Culture can be defined in many different ways. The definition of culture according to Geert Hofstede is used in this paper. According to Hofstede, culture is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one group or category from members of another. Hofstede explained in his definition that the "mind" stands for thinking, feeling and acting, which have an impact on beliefs, attitudes and competencies (cf. Hofstede, 2001, p. 9). This

definition also implies the statements from Kluckhohn's definition of culture from 1951. Kluckhohn defined culture as a pattern of ways of thinking, feelings and reactions, which are mainly appropriated and passed on through symbols. These symbols represent the achievements of this group, including their objectification in the form of artifacts. The core of culture, however, is formed by traditions. These are historically derived and selected ideas, in particular the associated values (cf. Hofstede, 2001, p. 9).

According to Hofstede, culture is made up of the values that form the core of the culture and the rituals or traditions, heroes and symbols derived from them. Rituals are collective activities that are considered indispensable within a culture, even though they are not required for achieving a desired result. These activities are only practiced for the sake of performing this activity. Greeting protocols can be used here as an example. Heroes are living or deceased, fictional or real people who have characteristics that are considered desirable and highly regarded in the culture. They serve as role models for the members of the culture. An example of this is Astérix from the French comic series of the same name for France. Symbols are words, gestures, images and objects that carry a complex meaning that is only recognized as such by members of that culture. Examples of symbols are hairstyles, such as dreadlocks. However, symbols are more changeable than the other components of culture. New symbols evolve quickly, and old symbols disappear. Furthermore, symbols of one culture are often copied by other cultures. Hofstede has therefore placed symbols at the extreme and most superficial level in relation to the other components of culture, values, rituals, and heroes (cf. Hofstede, 2001, p. 10).

Hofstede used empirical studies to identify six cultural dimensions that influence behavior and therefore also purchasing behavior. The first dimension is called power distance. It describes the extent to which a society accepts that power is unequally distributed. The second dimension is uncertainty avoidance, which describes the extent to which a society feels "threatened" by uncertain situations and therefore tries to avoid uncertainties. This is done through formal rules or protocols. Individualism forms the third dimension and stands in contrast to collectivism. It stands for the extent to which individual initiative and self-sufficiency are emphasized in a society. Masculinity, as the opposite of femininity in a society, forms the fourth dimension. This dimension stands for the extent to which dominant masculine and materialistic values are emphasized over feminine, harmony-conscious values. Long-term orientation, as opposed to short-term orientation, is the fifth dimension and

indicates the extent to which long-term planning is prioritized in a society. Finally, the sixth dimension, the dimension of enjoyment, as opposed to restraint, indicates the extent to which it is considered normal in a society to live out one's needs freely (cf. Hofstede, 2001, p. 8ff.).

2.2   Definition and Scope of Cultural Convergence

In the context of this work, convergence is used in the sense of its synonyms approximation, adaptation, and fusion (cf. Brockhaus, n.d.). In this work, cultural assimilation is used as an umbrella term for phenomena in which the distance and differences between two or more cultures are reduced or in which the cultures converge.

Cultural convergence is described in various established models. Holton described cultural convergence with his homogenization hypothesis. This states that the cultures of the world are standardizing according to the Wester-American model, which results in cultural conformity. Holton's polarization hypothesis argues, in contrast, that cultures are diverging and their distance is increasing. Since, according to Hofstede, "symbols" of a culture are a component of the culture and this thesis uses convergence in the sense of approximation, Holton's hybridization hypothesis also falls under cultural convergence. This hypothesis argues that cultures incorporate elements of other cultures into their own. This results in hybrid or syncretic forms of cultures (cf. Holton, 2000, p. 141 ff.).

In 2008, Ralston proposed a different typology for describing global cultural change. The central concept here is crossvergence. He identified three types of crossvergence. „Conformal cross-vergence" refers to the fact that differences in values at the individual level between cultural groups, including societies, diminish over time. The concept of "static crossvergence" states that values may change but group differences remain the same and "divergent crossvergence" states that value differences increase over time (cf. Kaasa & Minkov, 2020). The first two concepts fall under cultural convergence in the context of this study.

2.3   Definition of International Marketing Concepts

A marketing concept encompasses all market-related activities of a company or a section of a company and the coordination of these activities. It is a basic strategic concept that is oriented towards the competitive strategy of a company in a target market and must be

coordinated with other functional areas. These other areas include, for example, research and development, procurement, production and financing (cf. Kirchgeorg, 2018).

In international marketing concepts, the selection of a suitable target market precedes the development of this strategic outline. In this context, the marketing concept describes how the company approaches the target country market. It should be noted that the marketing concept in the target market may differ from the existing concepts and it must first be determined to what extent the existing concepts can be transferred to the foreign market. When developing an international marketing concept, a large number of factors are taken into account, as a marketing concept can only be effective if it is also adapted to the respective market situation (cf. Schwarz-Musch, 2020, p. 111 ff.).

These factors include, for example

- the competitive situation of the company in the foreign market,
- whether the same target groups can be addressed as in the home market,
- the extent to which the target groups' purchasing motives are similar and
- whether the same purchasing arguments apply as in the home market.

The development of an international marketing concept takes place in phases. The first phase is the analysis of the company's initial situation in the micro and macro environment. Subsequently, the qualitative and quantitative marketing objectives for the target market are formulated. Based on this, the marketing strategy is developed. This includes the basic competitive strategy, differentiation or cost leadership, the selection of target groups by means of segmentation and targeting, and positioning by means of the unique selling proposition and positioning statement (cf. Schwarz-Musch, 2020, p. 111 ff.).

2.4 Globalization, the World Market and McDonaldization

Blue jeans, expansion and McDonalds. As early as 2000, sociologists and political scientists were already addressing the consequences of globalization in their academic works. "We are clearly living in an era of rapid social change in which capital, technology, people, ideas and information are moving relentlessly across the inherited map of political and cultural boundaries." (Holton, 2000, p.141) wrote sociology professor Robert Holton of Flinders University of South Australia in 2000. Globalization has evolved from a topic of debate to a contemporary phenomenon of modern times. Globalization is defined as a worldwide diffusion of

practices, expansion of relationships across continents, organization of social life on a global scale, and the growth of a globally shared consciousness (cf. Lechner, 2004, p.453). This international and intercultural exchange, which is implied in this definition, paves the way towards a world market in which the same products can be sold in foreign markets in addition to the domestic market. This points to a tendency of globalization towards homogenization and standardization. As a result, a dilemma arises between the sense of national identity and the fascination with diversity and expansionist tendencies (cf. Dumbravă, 2016, p.96). Sociologist Roland Robertson addressed the questions of whether globalization leads to homogenization, heterogenization or a mixture of both, what relationships exist between global and local, and what drives the globalization process. He defined three main drivers of globalization: capitalism, Americanization, and McDonaldization (cf. Dumbravă, 2016, p.96).

As early as the 18th century, Karl Marx noted that capitalism goes hand in hand with expansionism. According to Karl Marx, this was due to the capitalist mode of production. Money as capital would be invested in the expectation that it would multiply and flow back as increased capital. The capital of the capitalist (owner of the production facilities and machines) would be used to acquire the raw materials and the labor that processes the commodity into a commodity with increased value. The end product is sold on at the increased value and the profit or surplus value, as Marx called it, is retained and accumulated by the capitalist. The constant urge to intensify and expand accumulation and obtain surplus value motivates the search for cheaper sources of raw materials and further sales markets for their own products (cf. Möller & Wolf, 2020, p. 72 ff.).

The promotion of the American economy, American social life and its cultural patterns around the world is a typical example of modern expansion. Together with the stated will to spread and defend democratic values, the USA has acquired a considerable amount of soft power (cf. Dumbravă, 2016, p.97 f., Hüttmann, n.d.). George Ritzer offers several reasons for the global expansion of the American model. These include the marketing of American media such as Hollywood films or popular music, as well as the marketing of American sports, NFL football and NBA basketball, abroad, and the international marketing of American goods such as Coca-Cola, blue jeans and computer operating systems. However, USA's diplomatic engagement in Europe, Asia and South America and the training of global elites in the military, politics and science also contribute to America's soft power. Particularly in former communist countries, where the reality of life is different from that presented and

sometimes romanticized in the American media, the fascination with the new caused everything that was foreign to be automatically seen as superior. This applied to both traditions and products, which worked to the disadvantage of domestic products, as the foreign ones were more likely to be accepted by the population (cf. Dumbravă, 2016, p.97 f., Hüttmann, n.d.). Accordingly, the commercialization of American life led to the consumption of American products and the expansion of American lifestyles.

McDonaldization is a phenomenon that was first named by the American sociologist George Ritzer. McDonaldization not only applies to fast food, but also to other sectors such as supermarkets, the textile industry, the tourism and entertainment industry and credit cards. Fast food has a rather metaphorical meaning in McDonaldization. Therefore, the burger can easily be replaced by products such as Coca-Cola, Levi-Strauss jeans or Hollywood blockbusters. The metaphor stands for buying based on three values: predictability, uniformity and high profitability. The theory of McDonaldization is based on the theories of the German economist Max Weber. He believed that rationalization was an essential feature of modern Western society, which functioned like a bureaucracy. Weber defined rationalization as the search for optimal solutions, considering the lack of resources.

George Ritzer described four dimensions of McDonaldization: efficiency, calculability, predictability and control (cf. Bögenhold & Naz, 2018, p.108f.). Efficiency means finding the optimal method to accomplish a certain task with limited resources. Efficiency is sought to satisfy diverse needs such as cost savings or profit. McDonald's offers consumers an efficient and quick solution to satisfy their hunger, as they can get an entire low-cost meal in the shortest possible time and save the time needed to buy the ingredients and prepare the meal (cf. Bögenhold & Naz, 2018, p.107).

Calculability simplifies the rational search for solutions for customers. Calculability is based on McDonald's basic assumption that bigger is better. This view places quantity above quality. Consumers make a rational decision, whereby time, money, quantity and quality flow into this decision and are set in relation to each other. This results in a synthesis of different decision-making options (cf. Bögenhold & Naz, 2018, p.107).

With regards to predictability. People prefer situations with a low level of uncertainty and high reliability. McDonald's is a safe choice because a visit to McDonald's involves little uncertainty. McDonald's is characterized by its coherent and uniform image, which requires

discipline, order, systematization, formalization, routine, consistency and a methodical approach to maintain. The basic concept and the basic offer are uniform at McDonald's despite local adaptation. In addition, the same food is remarkably similar in taste across all restaurants (cf. Bögenhold & Naz, 2018, p.108).

Control is the company's effort to exercise and maintain control over employees and consumers. A limited selection, as well as the standardized atmosphere of a store and other equipment allow customers to behave in a controlled manner. Employees are controlled by working through set routines and performing repetitive activities. These standard routines and repetitive activities also minimize the variation and deviation of the goods or services offered worldwide, which reinforces the other dimensions of McDonaldization (cf. Bögenhold & Naz, 2018, p.108).

3. UNDERLYING THEORIES

3.1   Theories on the Influence of Globalization and Culture

There are numerous studies that attempt to explain the impact of globalization on consumer culture. Holton's three theories, homogenization theory, polarization theory and hybridization theory, have become established in research on cultural convergence. The 2019 study "How globalization affects consumers: Insights from 30 years of CCT globalization research" summarized 75 renowned studies from the last 30 years that examined the impact of globalization on consumers of distinct cultures. In terms of convergence of consumer culture, globalization is explored as a social process in which the geographical constraints on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware of them (cf. Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019, p. 2). According to Lechner, this implies not only a reduction in distances between cultures, but also the emergence of a global consciousness. For the theoretical framework, three main theories have been identified that have shaped the last 30 years of consumer culture research in relation to globalization: the homogenization theory, the glocalization theory and the deterritorialization theory (cf. Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019, p. 4 ff.).

In particular, **homogenization theories** dominated globalization and consumer culture studies in the 1980s. The view of homogenization theory is that globalization leads to a cultural and economic alignment in which globally available goods, media, ideas and institutions

overrun and displace local cultures. Homogenization theory developed from studies that regarded globalization and world capitalism as synonymous (cf. Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019, p. 4).

World capitalism would establish market and production networks that, over time, would integrate the people of the entire world into their logic and their unique global structure (cf. Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019, p. 4 ff.). The homogenization theory is based on a division of nations into hierarchies of power. These hierarchies were often referred to as "center" and "periphery", whereby the nations of Western Europe, North America and Japan would belong to the so-called center and, in contrast, nations that had previously been colonized would belong to the so-called periphery (cf. Robertson, 2016; Wallerstein, 2000, as cited in Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019, p. 7). The spread of the free market, privatization, deregulation and limited social support, which began in the late 1980s, is a key force of homogenization. However, the globalization of business practices and infrastructures of global brands are also conducive to globalization (cf. Antonio, 2016; Friedman, 2000, 2005, as cited in Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019, p. 7).

Homogenization is based on three assumptions. The first states that national borders also represent borders between cultures in the broadest sense, since culture is characterized by national and ethnic values, language, and politics. Second, the theory assumes that individual consumers of the periphery lack agency while trying to aspire the goods and culture of the center. Third, the theory assumes that the hierarchies of nations are largely equal to the division of nations from West to East. This must be countered by modern economic developments that challenge this view of power on the world market, such as the growing importance of China on the world market. These discrepancies gave rise to further theories (cf. Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019, p. 7).

Adherents of the **glocalization theory** doubt this division of countries into two categories and emphasize the dynamic nature of the nation as a result of globalization. Rather than viewing local and global as two mutually exclusive orientations, local and global are seen as interdependent, influencing and shaping each other. From this perspective, globalization is conceptualized as the tailoring and marketing of products and services on a global or near-global level, of increasingly differentiated local and selected markets (cf. Ger and Belk, 1996; Robertson, 1995; Wilk, 1995, as cited in Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019, p. 7). Adherents

of the glocalization theory emphasize how localization processes increase sociocultural diversity. At the core of theory lies the concept of cultural creolization, according to which the cultures of the periphery absorb the influx of meanings and symbols from the center and transform them in order to make them their own to a significant extent. Three underlying assumptions for glocalization theory are identified: Glocalization research questions the assumption of a "pure" clearly definable culture and explains that national borders only partially represent cultural borders. This view makes it possible, for example, to distinguish between cultural elements that are territorial, such as local cuisine, and those that are universal and homogenized. Second, similar to homogenization, glocalization research relies on center-periphery distinctions. For glocalization theorists, however, these distinctions do not follow an East-West dichotomy. The center is more complex and relational. Defining the center takes into account not only differences between levels of development, but also north and south, presence or absence in global markets, or urban and rural arrangements. Lastly, unlike homogenization theory, glocalization theory considers peripheral consumers to be active actors in the transformation and appropriation of global brands and products, rather than passive witnesses without creative power (cf. Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019, p. 7 f.).

Deterritorialization theory is influenced by post-industrial and postmodern dynamics that gradually exchanged nation states, national sovereignty, and centralized globalization with a world in which people, organizations, information, and objects are part of a dynamic global system. In contrast to the previous theories, this theory assumes a decentralized process of integration between countries into a global system, which occurs independently of hierarchical relationships between them. According to the deterritorialization theory, globalization results in a decentralized global market, where production is distributed across the world and consumer goods are influenced and inspired not only by hierarchically superior cultures, but by a wide range of cultures and their respective values. This theory is based on two assumptions. The first assumption is that culture is detached from physical places and is accordingly deterritorialized. Second, in this theory, the focus shifts from nation states to the globe by theorizing highly networked global cities such as New York, London, and Tokyo as hubs for global production and finance, and as places for coordinating the global economy. This perspective implies the existence of individuals who do not share nationality, native language, ethnic origin, and country of establishment, yet share the same lifestyle, values, and

consumer interests. This would lead, for example, to deterritorialized identities and global nomads (cf. Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019, p. 7 ff.).

3.2   Theories on the Connection between Consumption and Culture

3.2.1 Marketing as a Mirror of Culture

The study of marketing in relation to culture can be approached in two ways. The first, from a business perspective, is concerned with making advertising as effective as possible. This perspective is responsible for the majority of publications on consumer behavior and marketing guides and works that attempt to explain the complex world of consumer preferences. From this perspective, advertising aims to appeal to people of different cultures by reflecting their culture in marketing. In contrast, scholars who are critical of marketing argue from a consumer perspective that advertising influences its audience and can lead to psychological, social, and cultural change (cf. Wolff & Biernatzki, 1994, p. 5). This section presents the first perspective and the following section, "Marketing as an Influence on Culture", examines the second perspective.

The fundamental objective of marketing is to present the product to potential customers and effectively ensure its memorability (cf. Bögenhold & Naz, 2024, p.59). To achieve this in foreign markets, companies customarily adapt their advertising to the cultural context of the target country. Psychological studies have demonstrated that individuals often establish emotional connections, which is why advertising employs symbolism and wordplay to resonate with people's emotional nature. The emotional appeal of advertising is derived from cultural patterns, particularly the correspondence between symbols and cultural or religious symbols, which fosters heightened association (cf. Bögenhold & Naz, 2024, p.60).The viewer is presented with the opportunity to associate the advertisement with their subjective experiences, influenced by their socio-cultural milieu. This association can elicit impulses that lead to specific actions (cf. Brudzińska, 2019, p. 8). The employment of cultural symbolism in advertising aims to influence the viewer's behavior, in this case, prompting them to purchase the advertised product.

The Mirror-Theory proposes that marketing systems are designed to absorb, transform, and reproduce elements from the target group's culture. An illustrative example of this phenomenon can be found in a 2017 study that examined the cultural values reflected in

advertisements for skincare products in Taiwan and the Philippines. The study revealed significant differences in the values conveyed through the slogans of these advertisements. Specifically, the advertisements in the Philippines, a more Westernized nation, exhibited a preference for values associated with Western culture, such as strength, achievement, and hedonism. Conversely, advertisements in Taiwan, a nation with stronger cultural ties to traditional values, conveyed slogans that emphasized conformity, tradition, and security (cf. Chih-Ping Chen et al., 2017, p. 142). According to the mirror arguments, the meanings of images and ideas are instilled in the products and services offered, and the products and services offered are instilled in images and ideas. Advertising then returns the modified meanings to the world, prepared to offer the advertised goods and services (cf. Wolff & Biernatzki, 1994, p. 9).

It should be noted, however, that the repeated statements in advertising can reinforce and even create cultural beliefs and values (cf. Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004, p. 410). Andrew Wernick described a critical view on the arguments postulated by the Mirror-Theory in 1992. He noted that advertising is always positive and goods are always presented as a precursor to happiness. Although marketing uses cultural symbols and values, it does not reflect them, as it filters out everything antagonistic and depressing and normalizes consumption. This results in a one-dimensional image that is shown to viewers. According to Wernick, advertising only reflects an image of culture that is simplified to the positive aspects. In addition, viewers become accustomed to a certain image of normality due to repeated impressions from advertising (cf. Wolff & Biernatzki, 1994, p. 9). Nevertheless, consumer reactions to the product offerings and marketing strategies of multinational companies often differ considerably between national cultures. There are numerous studies that examine how consumers from different cultures perceive imported products, including entertainment products, such as films, differently (cf. Song et al., 2018, p. 384). These include, for example, the studies "The roles of cultural elements in international retailing of cultural products: an application to the motion picture industry" from 2015 and "non-local or local brands? A multi-level investigation into confidence in brand origin identification and its strategic implications" from 2010 (cf. Moon & Song, 2015, p. 167 f.; Zhou et al., 2010, p. 215). Therefore, it is a well-documented fact that consumers demonstrate a preference for products that align with their cultural identity. This phenomenon is referred to as the cultural congruence effect. Most studies on the congruence effect concentrate on the cultural proximity between the

country of production of the product and the country of the consumer. However, the cultural impact of products originating from the same home country on consumers in a particular foreign country is not uniform (cf. Song et al., 2018, p. 384 f.).

3.2.2 Marketing as a Mold for Culture

Advertising's influence on society is a contentious issue among scholars. Opponents of the mirror theory claim that advertising has a much greater impact on society. They assert that if advertising serves as a reflection of a society's values, it is, at the very least, a significantly distorted one. This is due to the fact that advertising fosters systems of social differentiation and reinterprets ideologies to establish a superiority of product relationships. According to this perspective, advertising does not merely respond to prevailing social trends; rather, it actively contributes to their creation (cf. Florin et al., 2021, p. 113 f.). In this vein, advertising critics have delineated and denounced advertisements for fostering "false" needs, promoting materialism, eternal dissatisfaction, and fear (c.f. Fowles, 1996, p. 62, as cited in Bögenhold & Naz, 2018, p. 57).

The perspective of advertising as an institutional entity constitutes a foundational component within the domains of political economy, communication studies, and cultural studies. Media institutions are regarded as playing a pivotal role in shaping the images and discourses through which individuals construct their perception of the world. Critics such as Richard W. Pollay express concerns that advertising has evolved into a form of social guidance, particularly in the context of the declining influence of traditional American institutions. Advertising is regarded by these critics as a force that exerts cultural dominance over society (cf. Florin et al. 2021, p. 113ff.). This prompts the question of whether viewers utilize media to compare themselves and learn through advertising what is socially accepted and appropriate. The study "Eating behaviors and attitudes following prolonged exposure to television among ethnic Fijian adolescent girls" suggests that this is true, at least, for girls in puberty. The present study examined the impact of the introduction of television sets on the eating behavior of adolescent girls in Nadroga, a province in Fiji that had no access to western media until 1995. Traditional beauty standards in Fiji favored robust bodies and incentivized large appetites, which is why there was no social pressure to be slim in Fiji until then, which is associated with disordered eating behavior in industrialized countries. The study lasted three years. The beginning of the study coincided with Nadroga's access to television, which

occurred in 1995, and it concluded in 1998. The average age and BMI of the 1995 and 1998 samples exhibited negligible differences. To assess eating behavior, the participants in both groups were requested to complete a modified "26-item eating attitude test." This instrument, frequently utilized in diagnostic settings, appraises the risk of developing eating disorders. A test score of 20 was considered high. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the respondents to further explore the survey responses on eating behavior and television habits, when they demonstrated conspicuous patterns (cf. Becker et al., 2002, p. 509 f.).

In 1995, 12.7% of girls exhibited test results higher than 20. By 1998, this figure had increased to 29.2%, representing a statistically significant rise of 16.5 percentage points over three years. In 1998, conspicuous eating behaviors were found to be significantly associated with dieting and self-induced vomiting. The proportion of girls who controlled their weight by means of self-induced vomiting increased from 0% in 1995 to 11.3% in 1998, while binge eating behaviors showed a contrasting trend, declining from 7.9% in 1995 to 4.6% in 1998. The study also established a connection between the consumption of western television content and disturbed eating behavior. For instance, respondents were three times more likely to have a test result greater than 20 if they owned a television at home. The study also revealed a shift in the beauty ideals of the study participants. In 1998, 74% of respondents reported feeling too fat at least sometimes, contrasting with traditional beauty ideals that favor plump bodies. The feeling of being too fat was statistically significantly related to following diets during the study (cf. Becker et al., 2002, p. 510 f.).

This finding suggests a significant correlation between the consumption of culturally foreign media and the subsequent alteration of one's own values, particularly regarding body ideals. However, the study's sample size was found to be quite limited, with a mere 63 participants in 1995 and 65 in 1998. Consistent with these findings, other studies have reported analogous results, including those by Stice & Shaw (1994), Tiggemann & Pickering (1996), and Field et al. (1999). However, a number of studies found that only vulnerable subjects, those with pre-existing eating disorder symptoms or body dissatisfaction, were adversely affected by media consumption (e.g., Hamilton & Waller, 1993). Conversely, the findings of Cusumano & Thompson (1997) reported no clear influence of media consumption on indicators of eating disorders (cf. Becker et al., 2002, p. 511f.).

Regardless of vulnerability, strong correlations could be found between advertising and at least the temporary influence on values. According to Hofstede, values form the core of a culture. The study "Inducing value-congruent behavior through advertising and the moderating role of attitudes toward advertising," authored by Christine Defever, Mario Pandelaere, and Keith Roe, examined how value-laden advertising temporarily changes the prioritization of different values and influences value-based behavior that is not related to the products or services being advertised. Furthermore, the study investigated whether the effect of advertising exposure on the prioritization of values is influenced by attitudes towards advertising in general (cf. Defever et al., 2011, p. 25 ff.).

To accomplish this objective two studies were conducted. In the first study, the test subjects, students with an average age of 20 years, were presented with advertisements that conveyed different values. Their subsequent behavior was observed in a series of smaller experiments. The participants were informed that their involvement was part of a series of independent experiments. Initially, each participant was tasked with evaluating the quality of ten print advertisements. In the group where values of self-determination were represented in the print advertisements, self-direction was expressed in a motivating way. The subjects in this group were exposed to slogans such as "Play your own game" and "Feel free to do what you want." Conversely, the group that was presented with advertisements promoting the value of security encountered slogans such as "Protect the things that matter to you" and "Tradition in security." Participants were then prompted to deliberate and select between scenarios that represented varying courses of action, each aligning with specific values, including self-direction, security, achievement, self-transcendence, and self-enhancement (cf. Defever et al., 2011, p. 29).

In the second study, participants completed a questionnaire regarding their attitudes concerning advertising. Subsequent to this, all participants were asked to rate five print advertisements according to characteristics such as design, quality, and color. In the group where the value of achievement was communicated in the print ads, advertisements were shown with slogans such as "Are you the next top manager?" or "For people with ambitions." In contrast, the other group was exposed to advertisements that communicated benevolence through slogans such as "Are you the next volunteer?" and "Because knowing about the other is the only way to friendship." Following this assessment task, participants engaged in several independent filling tasks (cf. Defever et al., 2011, p. 30).

In both studies, presented strongly significant interconnections between the represented values of the advertisements and the behavior of the participants. In the first research, participants who previously viewed ads that represented self-direction in their content were more likely to choose the options that were consistent with the value of self-direction than participants that previously viewed ads with messages about security. In the same way, in the second study, it was predictable that the participants acted according to the values from the ads shown to them. Subjects who had previously seen slogans related to achievement in the advertisements spent significantly longer trying to solve puzzles. Subjects who were confronted with slogans in the advertisements that appealed to their benevolence were significantly more interested in the opportunity to donate blood. 64% of them have left their name on the contact list for blood donations, compared to only 16.3% of the group who were previously exposed to achievement-related slogans (cf. Defever et al., 2011, p. 29 ff.).

This study shows that advertising has at least a temporary significant impact on people's values and actions. Regardless of whether they are particularly vulnerable or not. This is relevant insofar as common collective values are the core component of a culture (cf. Hofstede, 2001, p. 10). Since advertising can influence values, advertising could also influence cultures over time, with standardized marketing strategies across national borders this would lead to an increasing convergence of values and therefore convergence of cultures.

Regardless of whether one sees advertising as a mirror or as mold of society, it is usually induced with power and omnipresence and has a collective, unambiguous and global effect in its effect on culture and society (cf. Florin et al., 2021, p. 114 f.).

3.3 Theories on the Connection between Consumption and Self-perception

Much of advertising, particularly at a national level, incorporates images that represent certain lifestyles, and their communication objectives often specify a brand image or personality to communicate. The communication often portrays a typical or idealized user whose associated status, prestige and social reactions to the purchase rubs off on the advertised product. Many consumers pay premium prices for eye-catching branded items and wear clothing with logos, slogans and other corporate designs in order to distinguish themselves with the brand and its image (cf. Pollay & Mittal, 1993, p. 102). As posited by Levy in 1959, (cf. Furchheim, 2016, p. 9), consumers purchase products not only for their functionality, but also for their

symbolic meaning. The acquisition of branded clothing is theorized in the extant literature as a means of self-expression or the consolidation of one's identity. Consumers anticipate that their consumption will positively influence their self-perception. The act of acquiring such branded clothing serves as a confirmation of one's style-consciousness, thereby contributing to the process of self-definition. "That we are what we have [...] is perhaps the most basic and powerful fact of consumer behavior." (Belk 1988, p. 139, as cited in Furchheim, 2016, p. 9). Belk and colleagues attribute a significant role to material possessions in the formation of an individual's self-concept. These possessions, as posited by Furchheim should serve to actualize or realize the "ideal self" (Furchheim, 2016, p. 12). However, this is not necessary for a person who is already firm in their personality (cf. Furchheim, 2016, p.34 f.).

The strategy of associative advertising, whereby advertisers incorporate values into their campaigns to create a product image, is based on the knowledge that personal values play a significant role in purchasing decisions. Furthermore, consumers consider how certain products can help them live up to their goals and higher values when faced with a purchase decision. This phenomenon is known as the means-end theory. To illustrate this, one may consider the example of an individual who identifies as environmentally conscious, as this person is likely to purchase a car that aligns with their environmental values, unlike an individual whose primary life goal is to seek enjoyment and personal satisfaction (cf. Defever et al., 2011, p. 25).

An example of consumption that is supposed to bring you closer to the desired or ideal self are perfumes that are published and marketed by celebrities. Celebrities can influence consumers by acting as role models, opinion leaders, and desirable figures. By marketing a perfume, the celebrities' qualities such as beauty, charisma, talent, and success rub off on the product. The buyers can identify with the celebrity when wearing their fragrance. They use it to mimic their style, personality, and lifestyle (cf. FasterCapital, 2024). Similarly, acquiring a celebrity's perfume can signal membership in a particular group. Consumers can use brands, products, and product characteristics, such as organic, to differentiate themselves from others while demonstrating their belonging to a group. According to the theory of social identity, this belonging to a group in turn influences the consumer's self-concept (cf. Ogbeide, 2015, p. 340).

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Consumers make use of mythical and symbolic meanings associated with products, events, and consumer activities to consciously or unconsciously affirm or even construct their own identity. The theoretical basis for this is provided by the theory of the extended self by Russell W. Belk. It helps to understand how consumers use market-generated and created symbolic meaning to create their own self-image. A distinction is made here in two dimensions. The first is the core self, which describes a person's concrete idea of themselves through social interactions and consumer activities. The self is a subjective assessment that can be developed and changed over time, for example through experiences and consumption and consumption habits. Belk defined the self as body parts, internal processes such as attitudes, values, personality traits, ideas, experiences, as well as people, places, and objects that are closely linked to one's perception of oneself. The process of self-expansion, on the other hand, is the process of expanding the self by taking possession. An object, including body parts, objects, pets or friends, is perceived as an extension of oneself if you, as the owner, feel that you can exercise some control over it. The decisive factor here is how strongly this control over the object is perceived. The higher the perceived strength of the owner's control over the object, the more likely it is that it is also perceived as a part of the self (cf. Furchheim, 2016, p. 11).

3.4   Theory of Identity Creation with the Help of Social Media

Social networks are used by the younger generation in particular to reinforce their own identity. This can be seen in trends towards aesthetics that not only include a certain style, but also a certain lifestyle and character traits. For example, the "clean girl" not only has a minimalist and well-groomed look. The "clean girl" is organized and tidy, eats healthy, exercises and is thoroughly disciplined and finds time for an extensive skincare routine (cf. Aesthetics Wiki, 2024).

The formation of identity is a continuous process that is not completed upon reaching adulthood (cf. Erikson, 1973, p. 114 ff.). There are numerous definitions of identity. However, identity can be summarized as the expression of special characteristics of a person that makes the individual distinguishable from other individuals, but at the same time also expresses an assignment of the individual to certain social groups (cf. Buckingham, 2008, as cited in Kneidinger-Müller, 2022, p. 193). These social groups can be cultures for example. In social networks, users aim to express the particular characteristics of their own person, but at the

same time to present themselves with some collective characteristics in order to express a group affiliation as part of their own identity. In 2000, Nicola Döring called this form in which users present themselves in the context of computer-mediated communication "virtual identity" (cf. Kneidinger-Müller, 2022, p. 193).

With his own term for virtual identity, Döring marked a difference to the actual identity, as well as in his **self-masking thesis**, which takes a rather critical perspective. According to his self-masking thesis, virtual identity represents a self-idealizing "pseudo-identity" of the user and serves as a mask (cf. Döring 2000, p. 66, as cited in Kneidinger-Müller, 2022, p. 193). In contrast to this is the **"self-exploration thesis",** which takes a positive view of internet profiles. According to this thesis, Internet profiles are an opportunity for users to test differ-ent facets of their identity and thus get to know their own self better without having to expe-rience the immediate consequences or irritations they would face in real life. This can be particularly beneficial in the context of "gender swapping" in order to get to know one's own gender identity (cf. Döring 2000, p. 66; Musfeld 1999; Lou et al. 2013, as cited in Kneidinger-Müller, 2022, p. 193).

Empirical studies largely confirm the **"extended real-life hypothesis",** which states that the identity construction in online profiles on social networks is usually strongly based on the "real-life" identity of the users. In doing so, the profile fulfils a kind of "self-assurance and self-stabilization function" (Gosling et al., 2007; Back et al., 2010; Misoch, 2005, as cited in Kneidinger-Müller, 2022, p. 193). In general, it can be observed that identity construction for the purpose of idealized personality representation is more likely to be used on platforms that are primarily used for interaction with previously unknown people and less on platforms that are primarily used for interaction with known people (cf. Kneidinger-Müller, 2022, p. 193).

In addition, it was found that people on social media platforms tend to construct diverse and multifaceted online identities. Users make use of a variety of self-portrayal strategies. In doing so, they include aspects of their personal, professional or social lives, suggesting that social media serves as a dynamic space for the formation of complex identities (cf. Sharma et al., 2024, p. 676).

According to the study by Sharma et al. from the year 2024, online identity not only takes place on the Internet, but also influences offline identity. Participants in the study reported

situations in which their portrayal on social media influenced how they were perceived offline by their communities. The boundaries between online and offline are blurring, suggesting a complex interaction between virtual and real experiences (cf. Sharma et al., 2024, p. 677).

In addition to the identity formation of the individual, social media also influences the development and solidification of group identities. The 2014 research by Hampton et al. suggests that online communities and social media provide a platform for users to connect with like-minded people, which contributes to the formation of collective identities based on interests, beliefs, or affiliations (cf. Sharma et al., 2024, p. 675). This can also influence or solidify the collective identity of a culture. Gonzales and Hancock showed in 2011 that cultural and social norms are dynamically shaped by social media platforms. This, in turn, influences the expression of cultural identity. The study by Gonzales and Hancock demonstrated how social media facilitates the dissemination and reinforcement of cultural stereotypes that can be adopted or resisted by individuals. In this way, these platforms contribute to the ongoing negotiation and transformation of cultural identities in the digital age (cf. Sharma et al., 2024, p. 675).

4.   MARKETING IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

4.1   The Role of Social Media

The use of social media for marketing in PR has long since become a matter of course for many organizations (cf. Pleil & Bastian, 2022, p. 103 f.). Studies have found that 97% of marketers use social media to reach their target audiences (cf. Sushma et al., 2023, p.19). For fifteen years now, the importance of social media for organizations has been discussed. From the perspective of PR research, the main role of social media is to shape the relationship between the organization and its stakeholders. As part of the online communication strategy, activities in social media support the ongoing provision of services, the development of intangible success potentials, the positioning in the market and the securing of the trade leeway of the organizations. The choice of the right communication channels is particularly important, because it is typically assumed that communication and marketing goals can best be achieved in the increasingly digital public sphere if the organization is present in the communication channels used by stakeholders. In this way, organizations can take

advantage of the opportunity of a direct relationship with their stakeholders (cf. Pleil & Bastian, 2022, p. 103 f.). Social media allows businesses to connect directly with their customers, providing an opportunity to build relationships and increase customer satisfaction. Building the relationship is achieved by answering customer comments, questions and feedback on social media (cf. Sushma et al., 2023, p.20). This is particularly beneficial considering the fact that customers who interact with the companies or their brands on social media are more likely to become loyal customers and are more likely to make repeat purchases (cf. Sushma et al., 2023, p.19).

In the meantime, social media has become indispensable for the external communication of organizations. According to Moreno et al., a major advantage of social media is the possibility of using social media to bypass traditional media and their gatekeepers, thus being able to connect directly with stakeholders and influence their opinion-forming process (cf. Pleil & Bastian, 2022, p. 104 f.). Thus, social media offers companies the opportunity to broadcast their content to a global audience at low cost, which makes social media attractive to small and large companies alike (cf. Sushma et al., 2023, p.19).

Research has shown that companies' communication on social media is positively related to companies' sales. In this context, Kreutzer emphasizes the role of real-time communication and the emergence of social relationships with stakeholders as well as the possibility of developing opinion leadership, which proves to be useful, for example, for overcoming crises and dealing with publicly discussed controversies (cf. Pleil & Bastian, 2022, p. 104 f.). According to research, the real-time response of companies to questions, complaints and feedback from their customers leads to improved customer loyalty and satisfaction (cf. Sushma et al., 2023, p.20).

Social media can also support product development in the form of open innovation processes such as crowdsourcing or stakeholder dialogues in the context of CSR communication (cf. Pleil & Bastian, 2022, p. 104 f.). An example of an open innovation process is "LEGO IDEAS" from LEGO. This is a website where people can create their own ideas for Lego sets in their free time as part of "Product Ideas" and submit them via LEGO IDEAS. These submitted ideas will be commented on the website by the community and the community will vote for their favorites. The submitted idea with the most votes will then be produced by LEGO and sold in retail stores (cf. LEGO Group, 2024). This feeling of cross-border

community also leads to better customer loyalty. In general, companies with an active presence on social media have more loyal customers (cf. Sushma et al., 2023, p.20).

Social media is also used with the aim of addressing younger target groups specifically or to reach journalists, who display an above average usage of channels such as Twitter in particular (cf. Pleil & Bastian, 2022, p. 105). For targeted marketing, social media platforms provide rich data about user behavior, demographics, and interests of potential customers, which can be used to target specific audiences with tailored messages. This also increases the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. With 74% of consumers using social media to make their purchasing decisions, according to a study by Sprout, social media is a powerful tool for reaching potential customers (cf. Sushma et al., 2023, p.20).

The greatest potential of social media for international marketing lies in its ability to reach a large and diverse international audience, thus significantly increasing brand awareness, customer loyalty and sales (cf. Sushma et al., 2023, p.20). It enables companies to have a uniform and cross-border presence, which entails cost savings due to standardization and recognition value, but also social media marketing also facilitates responding to local specifics, such as customer needs or cultural conditions, in a tailor-made manner with the help of user data (cf. Eixelsberger et al., 2016, p. 24; Sushma et al., 2023, p.20).

Advertisers hope that their own presence on social media or placing advertisements on social media will increase exposure to potential customers and thus increase awareness, which should then lead to new customers (cf. Frankwatching, 2023). The most used social media platforms by companies for marketing purposes in the B2C sector include Meta or formerly Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube (cf. Social Media Examiner, 2023). Social media platforms are financed by advertising. "For FoA [Family of Apps], we generate substantially all of our revenue from selling advertising placements to marketers." (Meta Platforms, Inc., 2024, p. 7), wrote Meta Platforms, Inc., the company behind Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Messenger, in its 2021 annual report (cf. Meta Platforms, Inc., 2024, p. 7). The resulting dependence of social media on companies that buy their advertising placement indicates a certain indirect influence of companies on the content on the platforms. In order to be attractive to advertisers, social media implements guidelines for content that must be followed by users, so that the image of the platforms that emerges from the content is compatible with the brand image of a large number of companies. Thus, they indirectly influence

the content, which, as already explained in Section 3.4, can influence the identity formation of the individual, group identities and stereotypes of the users.

4.2   International Marketing Strategies

4.2.1 Culture-bound Products

Before companies set about designing their marketing mix for a foreign market, they check whether and to what extent concepts can be transferred from one market to another. This depends on a number of factors that not only affect the foreign market itself (e.g. the prevailing cultural, legal or economic conditions), but also the standardization potential of the product or service itself and the characteristics of the company itself (cf. Schwarz-Musch, 2020, p. 127). "A standardization strategy is understood to mean the standardization of marketing activities across countries; a distinction must be made between two directions, which can be pursued individually or together: the standardization of marketing content and the standardization of marketing processes." (Berndt et al. 2016, p. 206, as cited in Schwarz-Musch, 2020, p. 128). The marketing processes comprise the strategic level of marketing, for example marketing planning, and the operational level, for example sales planning. The standardization of marketing content and thus of the marketing strategy and the marketing mix is not an absolute path. A suitable degree of standardization is always sought, which depends on the influencing factors mentioned. It is important to achieve the right degree of standardization, because if marketing is standardized too much, the company runs the risk of not taking advantage of any opportunities that would have arisen by adapting to market conditions. On the other hand, cost advantages cannot be exploited if each market is processed in a completely differentiated manner (cf. Schwarz-Musch, 2020, p. 128 f.).

Characteristics of the company, such as competitive strategy and selected target groups, characteristics of the country market, such as legal framework (general framework) and competitive situation (industry-specific framework), as well as characteristics of the product and the standardization potential of the product have an influence on the optimal degree of standardization (cf. Schwarz-Musch, 2020, p. 129 f.). A distinction often made in the literature to determine the standardization potential of products is that between culture-bound and culture-free products. This distinction follows the basic idea that not all products or purchasing decisions have the same degree of cultural significance (cf. Schwarz-Musch, 2020, p. 132

f.). While the value of many products depends strongly on their function, e.g. washing machines, on their efficiency and capacity, the value of entertainment products, for example, depends strongly on their ability to convey cultural meanings to consumers (cf. Song et al., 2018, p. 387). Another example is food. These are highly culturally influenced products, as different taste preferences, for example in terms of spiciness, require products to be culturally adapted to the market (cf. Schwarz-Musch, 2020, p. 132).

In the case of culture-bound products, products whose development must take the different cultures of the sales markets into account, the product is adapted to the sales market. It is assumed that the evaluation of culturally influenced products by consumers depends on the correct match between the cultural significance of the product and the cultural environment of the market (cf. Song et al., 2018, p. 391). Foreign products are perceived as high-quality products in many cultures. In such cases, standardization would be desirable (cf. Jain, 1989, p.74).

4.2.2 Culture-free Products

Not all country-specific adjustments are for culture. Other factors also mean that a product has to be adjusted in a country-specific way. These factors include, for example, legal regulations or technical standards (cf. Schwarz-Musch, 2020, p. 132f.). Apple can be cited as an example here. In accordance with the EU directive, the company will equip all new iPhone models from the iPhone 15 onwards with USB-C ports for the European market, dispensing with their Lightning connectors for the iPhone. The EU Directive prescribes the standardization of charging cables for all mobile phones, tablets and game consoles by the end of 2024 (cf. Kumpfmüller et al., 2023; Mäurer, 2024). Non-culturally bound or culture-free products are those that are universally used in the same way and do not require cultural adaptation to be sold abroad. For example, manufacturers of production plants or suppliers of car headlights have to take cultural peculiarities of the countries little into account for their product design. Everyday objects, such as laptops and mobile phones, can also be classified as culture-free (cf. Schwarz-Musch, 2020, p. 132).

Products that are more culturally independent offer the advantage of a high standardization potential of marketing content, which brings cost advantages and the possibility of building an internationally uniform brand image. Markets can be approached internationally in an

increasingly uniform manner, which can be traced back to the increasing globalization of markets in terms of consumer behavior, new information and communication technologies, convergence of technical standards, the convergence of economic areas and the globalization of competition. The latter means that companies repeatedly encounter the same competitors abroad. (cf. Kreutzer, 1989; Meffert and Bolz, 1994, as cited in Schwarz-Musch, 2020, p. 128).

The standardizability of elements in the marketing mix is linked to various framework conditions. Product policy depends on the extent to which the sales markets are in line with the technological framework conditions (e.g. technical standards), legal framework conditions (e.g. laws and regulations in the target market) and their culture. The standardizability of communication policy also depends on culture, legal framework conditions (e.g. advertising restrictions or bans on products) and technological framework conditions (e.g. media availability). The pricing policy depends on the economic framework conditions (e.g. purchasing power) and legal framework conditions (e.g. additional costs caused by requirements). Ultimately, distribution policy depends on economic conditions (e.g. availability of distribution channels) (cf. Schwarz-Musch, 2020, p. 136).

5. EMPIRICAL PART: QUALITATIVE STUDY: MIRROR ARGUMENT VS. MOLD ARGUMENT

5.1 Hypotheses derived from Mold Arguments

The theories of cultural convergence as a result of international marketing presented in the previous sections give rise to a number of underlying hypotheses that need to be examined in this section. Supporters of the mold theory and advertising skeptics attribute great persuasive power to marketing, which they use to manipulate consumers and create new needs in consumers (cf. Florin et al., 2021, p. 113 f.; Bögenhold & Naz, 2024, p. 61). This is expressed with the first hypothesis to be further examined:

1) Marketing can awaken false needs in consumers.

The persuasive power of marketing leads to viewers being motivated to purchase and use products from foreign cultures. This can lead to a change in lifestyle and to the adoption of lifestyles that may be atypical of one's own culture. According to Hofstede, this requires

aspects of culture such as traditions to be changed (cf. Hofstede, 2001, p. 9). This gives rise to the following hypothesis:

2) International marketing can lead to the consumption of products from foreign cultures and thus change lifestyles.

They also assume that advertising can influence viewers in such a way that they take the life shown in the advertisement as a role model and emulate it. They use advertising as a kind of social guide. Marketing would not react to and reflect social trends but create them itself. Moreover, marketing cannot be considered a mirror of society, as it creates systems of social differentiation and reworks ideologies (cf. Florin et al., 2021, p. 113 f.). The hypothesis to be examined and modified if applicable is as follows:

3) International marketing and the images shown in marketing can shape society and do not just reflect society.

The capitalist mode of production motivates companies to expand and look for new sales markets for their products (cf. Möller & Wolf, 2020, p. 72 ff.). International marketing is used to promote the sale of products in the new sales market and thus advance globalization in the form of international trade relations (cf. Lechner, 2004, p.453). This implies a tendency of globalization towards homogeneity (cf. Dumbravă, 2016, p.96). This leads to the following hypothesis:

4) International marketing promotes globalization and the associated convergence of cultures.

5.2   Methodology

From the theory outlined in the previous chapters, it is obvious that there are examples that reinforce that marketing either reflects or shapes society, the latter meaning that international marketing would lead to cultural assimilation in the context of globalization. In theory, these two views are treated as mutually exclusive and accordingly there is a lack of research that explores whether and when one or the other theory applies. Due to the short nature of this thesis, it is impossible to elaborate various iterations of case studies. Therefore, the hypotheses were derived directly from the theory as opposed to from a separate set of case studies. Case studies are ideal because of their holistic description of instances of a phenomenon,

providing insight into complex interactions and relationships between different factors that quantitative studies cannot offer. This paper aims to contextualize and modify the hypotheses on cultural assimilation as a result of international marketing by also considering cases that do not support the notion that international marketing shapes the culture of the countries in which it is broadcast.

Two case studies were selected for this purpose. The Coca-Cola Branding in India case study serves as an example of a case in which international marketing reflects the culture of the target market and the Haryana case study serves as an example of a case in which international marketing shapes the culture of the target market. In this comparative case study, both cases are described in detail and then compared with each other. Finally, the results of the comparison are interpreted in order to draw conclusions that explain which factors lead to international marketing shaping the culture and thus lead to cultural assimilation and under which conditions marketing adapts culturally to the target group. This then forms the basis for modifying the hypotheses.

5.3 Case study: Coca-Cola branding in India

The case study "Coca-Cola's Branding Strategies in India" by Kaushik Mukerjee from 2008 deals with Coca-Cola's difficulties in entering the Indian soft drink market, which was previously dominated by local brands. It presents marketing measures that illustrate the strategies Coca-Cola used to establish itself locally symbiotic with Indian culture. It shows how Coca-Cola adapted its marketing to the local culture and reflected the culture in its marketing and thus serves as a case study supporting the mirror-theory, which states that advertising reflects the culture in which it is broadcast (cf. Mukerjee, 2008, p. 34 ff.).

5.3.1 Coca-Cola in the Domestic Market

The caramel-colored syrup of Coca-Cola was invented in 1886 by a pharmacist named John Pemberton in Atlanta, USA, and christened Coca-Cola (Coke) by his partner Frank M. Robinson. Initially, Coca-Cola was sold at a beverage fountain where customers could buy a glass of Coca-Cola for five cents each. The slogan "delicious and refreshing" was used to promote the drink. As early as the 19th century, Coca-Cola's branding strategies included celebrity endorsements by music hall artist Hilda Clark. Some of Coca-Cola's advertising

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campaigns became etched into people's memories, especially in the USA. Coca-Cola's annual Christmas campaign, in which Christmas trucks drove through the streets with the jingle "holidays are coming-holidays are coming", became an integral part of the Christmas season for many customers. The brand was characterized by how well it kept its finger on the pulse of the times. In the 1940s, Coca-Cola used the slogan "Where there's Coke there's hospitality". At that time, when the world was torn apart by unrest after the Second World War, hospitality was a highly respected virtue. Families strived to be seen as hospitable and social. In the 1970s, hippie culture and individualism were in vogue. Coca-Cola's advertising reflected this ideology with the line "I'd like to buy the world a Coke". In the 1990s, the phrase "Always Coca-Cola" was used – possibly as a reflection of the economic recession, when people were striving for stability (cf. Mukerjee, 2008, p. 36 f.).

5.3.2 Coca-Cola in India

Coca-Cola was present in India until the end of the 1970s, when a government decree forced the company to leave the Indian market. However, after economic liberalization in the early 1990s, the brand re-entered the Indian market in 1993. To ensure that they control the Indian market, Coca-Cola bought out local competition in the soft drink market such as Thums Up, Limca, Gold Spot and bottling companies. Coca-Cola also invested over a billion dollars in local eco-friendly production facilities. Several of Coca-Cola's bottling plants have been awarded the Golden Peacock Environment Management Award (cf. Mukerjee, 2008, p. 35 f.). To ensure sufficient production and high availability of its products, Coca-Cola opted for 25 completely owned bottling plants and an additional 24 bottling plants operated by franchisees. For effective distribution, in addition to the 10-ton trucks, cargo tricycles were also used, which can easily navigate through the narrow streets of Indian cities and small towns and even reach rural areas to achieve high penetration (cf. Mukerjee, 2008, p. 35 f.).

At the beginning of the relaunch in the Indian market, Coca-Cola used advertising measures that were more tailored to the Western market. This changed when Coca-Cola realized that their main target group, the Indian youth, respected traditional Indian values even though they wore western clothes and listened to western pop music. In the late 1990s, Coca-Cola began to embrace Indian themes in their marketing to appeal to Indian customers. They created an advertisement that showed an Indian student coming home for the Diwali holidays. The young man shown wore modern western clothes and even wore a stud earring to

emphasize his contemporary style. He touched his grandparents' feet in the ad while the Diwali fireworks blazed in the background. The Indian youth could identify with this image, and it appealed to them. Moreover, Coca-Cola also engaged Hindi film stars and cricketers in their marketing as Coca-Cola realized that the Indian youth adored them (cf. Mukerjee, 2008, p. 35f.).

To appeal to rural India, Coca-Cola used the slogan "Thanda matlab Coca-Cola" (chilled means Coca-Cola) in 2003 to promote the brand's mass appeal in India and to the mass market, including rural areas, small towns and customers in lower-income cities. In India, common people tend to refer to any chilled beverage by the generic name "Thanda", which means chilled. Hence, it was Coca-Cola's intention to anchor itself in the minds of customers with the generic term for chilled drinks. Another step to appeal to the masses in India was to engage the famous Indian actor, Aamir Khan. He played various roles in the Indian commercials for Coca-Cola, representing the different types of Indian customers, such as a Punjabi farmer (cf. Mukerjee, 2008, p. 36 ff.).

Coca-Cola endeavored to establish itself in India as a close friend or acquaintance for the population. The brand achieved this by promoting projects that tackled common problems faced by the people. For example, Coca-Cola has launched rainwater harvesting projects in several rural locations across India. This ensured access to drinking water for the local population (cf. Mukerjee, 2008, p. 39f.).

What is particularly relevant to this case in the context of this study is that Coca-Cola, after realizing that their usual Western marketing was not very well received in India, adapted their advertising to the local culture. Their advertising reflected the local culture of the people they wanted to target. This case shows that cultural congruence of products is important in international marketing (cf. Song et al., 2018, p. 387).

5.3.3 Coca-Cola's Reflection of Indian Culture

They created opportunities for their target audience to build associations with the brand by incorporating traditional customs, such as celebrating Diwali, into their advertising. Coca-Cola thematized the Diwali festival as it evokes positive emotional memories in people, who then associate such positive feelings with the Coca-Cola brand. As described in the chapter "Marketing as a Mirror of Culture", representing content that resonates with traditional,

cultural and religious symbols increases the level of association. People can connect the advertising to their own experiences and are more likely to remember the advertising and the brand (cf. Mukerjee, 2008, p. 35; Bögenhold & Naz, 2024, p.60).

Coca-Cola also established cultural proximity with customers by incorporating various elements of Indian culture into its advertising, according to Hofstede. According to Hofstede, symbols are the outermost component of culture and, according to him, the most superficial part of culture. These are, for example, words that carry a complex meaning that is only recognized as such by members of that culture. Coca-Cola uses the word "Thanda" as a cultural symbol in order to establish proximity to the rural and simple population who typically use this word (cf. Hofstede, 2001, p. 10; Mukerjee, 2008, p. 37 ff.).

Coca-Cola has also penetrated further into culture by incorporating heroes of culture into their advertising in India. They advertised with famous cricketers and actors that the youth looked up to and whose character traits and achievements were deemed desirable by the youth (cf. Hofstede, 2001, p. 10; cf. Mukerjee, 2008, p. 38 ff.). Showing how these role models consumed Coca-Cola encourages their fans to do the same, as these heroes embody culturally desirable virtues, whereupon people emulate them in order to resemble them (cf. Hofstede, 2001, p. 10). By consuming the same products as their idols, people consolidate their identity as someone who exhibits the same virtues for which their idols are revered (cf. Furchheim, 2016, p.12; FasterCapital, 2024).

Coca-Cola penetrates the culture one step further by thematizing rituals derived from the culturally determined values in its advertising. Rituals are practices that are not necessary to achieve a desired outcome but are nevertheless considered essential in the culture. Coca-Cola showed such a ritual in their commercial for the Diwali holiday by showing a young man coming home for the holiday and touching his grandparents' feet in greeting (cf. Mukerjee, 2008, p. 36.). This touching of the feet of older family members, such as parents or grandparents, is a demonstration of respect in India and other Hindu areas. With this act, the younger family member seeks a kind of blessing from their older family members. Respect for elders is an integral part of the Indian value system (cf. Deosthale & Hennon, 2008, p. 295 ff.). Thus, Coca-Cola has also penetrated the core of culture, the collective cultural values, according to Hofstede (cf. Hofstede, 2001, p. 10). Coca-Cola, saw itself in the position of having to reflect Indian culture in its advertising in a simplified way down to the core

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values to motivate people to buy its soft drinks, rather than influencing the culture to converge with Western culture. Instead, Coca-Cola took advantage of the fact that research shows that consumer acceptance of cultural products is higher when the cultural content of the product matches consumers' cultural dispositions and tastes (cf. Song et al., 2018, p. 387). Coca-Cola was not able to westernize the culture in India as suggested by the mold theory. Instead, they reflected Indian culture in their advertising.

5.4   Case Study: Haryana

The case study "Influence of Marketers' Efforts on Rural Consumers and Their Mindset: A Case Study of Haryana" from 2007 deals with the enormous advance of marketing efforts in rural India, resulting from the oversaturation of urban markets and the increasing attractiveness of the rural population as a consumer target group. The case study illustrates the impact marketing has had on the rural mindset towards products, themselves and society in Haryana and serves as a case study in support of the mold theory, which states that advertising shapes and influences the culture in which it is aired (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 28 ff.).

5.4.1 The Rural Region of Haryana

Due to the size of India's rural market, rural regions like Haryana are very attractive to traders. The rural market has grown steadily over the years and is now larger than the urban market. As early as 2004, the rural market accounted for 53% of the Indian market for consumer durables. The purchasing power of the rural population is also greater. The urban regions of India can spend Rs. 49,500 cr on consumer durables, whereas the rural population can spend Rs. 63,500 cr on consumer durables. Another factor contributing to the attractiveness of Indian rural markets is the rising literacy rate. The rising literacy rate contributes to awareness about products on offer and leads to higher demand. As the rural population is equipped with means of seeking information, they seek more knowledge about products, their features and their uses and thus can develop preferences for one product or the other. Rural consumers are now able to understand the communication designed for urban markets, especially in relation to consumer goods of daily use. Due to the communication explosion, the rural population is aware of what is happening in the world and are informed, although many of them are not literate in the true sense of the word. Many clichés about the population of rural areas, such as that they are largely poor, illiterate, gullible and agrarian, no longer

hold true. There are the developed, the developing and the underdeveloped rural areas. The same applies to Haryana. In Haryana, prosperity is emerging with millions of people entering the class of pressure cookers and television owners, and thousands becoming owners of premium tractors and multiple sedans. According to the National Council for Applied Economic Research, Haryana residents are almost twice as likely to be millionaires as Bangalore city dwellers. International companies such as Coca-Cola and Nokia seem to be increasingly interested in penetrating the villages of Haryana with their products. In addition, consumers from rural regions are more loyal than consumers from urban regions, as they have less access to substitutes, especially regarding fast moving goods (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 29 ff.).

5.4.2 Reaching Rural Consumers

Companies are using various strategies to reach rural consumers. Companies offering fast-moving consumer goods have used small sample packs of, for example, shampoo at the price of Re. 1 cr to encourage rural consumers to try their products, which proved to be very effective. These sample packs became the order of the day in rural India and contributed greatly to market penetration, as this strategy addresses the needs of the rural population, who cannot purchase larger product sizes and prefer a low price for products they want to try (cf. www.businessstandard.com 2003, as cited in Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 30).

Many companies take advantage of the fact that events like various festivals, different games and sports competitions in rural India are highly attended, while other sources of entertainment in these areas have a very low attendance rate, to promote their products and brands. Various brands sponsor different events and shows in villages, which is an actually cost-effective way for the companies to advertise using the participatory strategy (cf. Kanjilal et al., 2005, as cited in Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 30).

Advertisements that evoke the feelings of the rural population proved to be particularly effective and could lead to a quantum leap in sales (cf. Thakker and Bhagag, 2000, as cited in Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 30). According to Kanjilal, marketing concepts must adapt to rural perceptions and relate to the values and traditions of the various rural regions in marketing in order to be relevant to the rural population, as purchasing behavior is heavily

dependent on social customs, traditions and beliefs (cf. Kanjilal et al., 2005, as cited in Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 30).

5.4.3 Procedure of the Case Study

The case study is based on primary sources of information and utilized structured questionnaires and unstructured interviews for data collection, which revealed the deeper background where it was deemed necessary. For this purpose, the population included all the villagers of the entire rural region of Haryana. Since it was not possible to interview all the villagers of Haryana, a representative sample was drawn. For the sample, the whole of Haryana was divided into four zones based on the government's administrative division of Haryana. Two districts were randomly selected from each zone, and two blocks were again randomly selected from each district, which were divided into two categories, near and far from the city, with anything less than 20 km being defined as near. Two villages were then randomly selected from each block and 5-10% of households from each village were surveyed. This resulted in 500 respondents collected between March 2003 and August 2005. In the entire survey, 32 villages from 16 blocks of 8 districts were covered. The data was analyzed using simple percentage calculation, ranking methods and calculation of correlation coefficients (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 29f.).

5.4.4 Results of the Case Study

The people of Haryana generally rate **the impact of modern consumer durables on their lives** as positive. 89.7% of respondents agreed that modern consumer durables such as cars, motorcycles and color televisions have made their lives easier. 90.01% of respondents believe that these consumer durables have improved their standard of living. About 79.4% of respondents believed that people have become happier after purchasing these products and consider the purchase important in retrospect. 70% of respondents think that these products have brought them more social status. 65.6% agreed that the products had an impact on efficiency. A whole 72.9% of respondents consider these goods to be a necessity of modern times and 61.7% believe that the products are bought out of necessity. This contrasts with 56.6% of respondents who attribute the purchase of these products to a trend. Nevertheless, only a few (11.6%) feel that buying these products is a waste of money. More than half of

the respondents (56.6%) described the purchase of such products as a dream come true (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 32f.).

In terms **of building aspirations**, marketing has attributed a significant role in building them. The aim of marketing to increase sales of products goes hand in hand with changing traditional values and building new desires for new products and thus also the core of culture according to Hofstede (cf. Hofstede, 2001, p. 10; Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 39f.). The interviewees stated that after consuming advertising, they particularly aim to buy motorcycles, soaps, color TVs, face creams, cell phones, shampoos and cars. It should be noted that the advertising of motorcycles, cars, color TVs, computers and similar focuses on the benefits and use of these products in order to benefit from the rising expectations of consumers (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 39f.).

Marketing has also influenced the attitudes of Haryana's population. 19.8% of respondents admitted that they only became aware of the importance of the advertised products through marketing or that they were not aware of the absence of the advertised products in their lives before consuming marketing. Another 18.5% stated that they were influenced in their purchasing decision by marketing. Participants also stated that buying and enjoying the benefits of these products made them feel part of a larger community. On the negative side, around 5.8% of respondents stated that advertisers create a feeling of inferiority in those who cannot buy these products (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 42 f.).

Body image and self-presentation are the main areas that advertisers are targeting. For example, Hindustan Lever Limited has advertised the skin-lightening cream Fair & Lovely, which is supposed to whiten the skin and thus improve career opportunities. This advertising mixes old ideas with new, as it associates success with pale skin on the one hand and advocates and promotes careers for women on the other. 4.8% of respondents said they had changed their attitudes towards working women and girls attending university as a result of advertising. In relation to their own body image, 5.4% stated that marketing and advertising had made them feel more insecure (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 42 f.).

Consumers in Haryana were also largely positive about the **impact of modern marketing on Haryana society**. 39.4% said that marketing has led to awareness about various products, their usage, brands and the world around them in terms of modern products, new fashion and changing lifestyles in society. About 19.4% said that marketing has also led to a higher

aspiration for products. The people of Haryana wish to own more because of advertising and are willing to put in effort for it. According to 2.8% of respondents, marketing is helping to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas by making the same brands and products available in rural areas now. 4.3% of respondents attribute new openness to thoughts and attitudes to marketing. According to 2.8% of respondents, young people have been negatively influenced by marketing through the promotion of alcohol, cigarettes and tobacco products and similar products (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 42 ff.).

5.4.5 Marketing as a Shaper of Haryana's Culture

Several of the above findings indicate that marketing in Haryana has contributed to the creation of false or at least new needs. Almost 73% said that they considered the new products as a necessity and almost one-fifth of the respondents admitted that they realized the importance or necessity of these products only after exposure to marketing (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 32ff.). An argument often used by advertising critics who reject the mirror arguments is that marketing is a creator of "false" needs (cf. Bögenhold & Naz, 2024, p. 61). Marketing has led to new needs in this case study, but whether these are "false needs" is critical, as the overwhelming majority stated that the products have made their lives easier, increased their standard of living, had an impact on their efficiency, and that these products were purchased out of necessity. Only 11.6% think that these modern products are a waste of money. This suggests that the modern commodities have indeed brought about an improvement, fulfill meaningful tasks, and do not meet false needs but those that were not previously identified as needs by the rural population.

According to the respondents, these new products increase the standard of living and influence efficiency (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 32f.), whereupon it can be assumed that consumers now use the new products to accomplish tasks that were previously difficult and time consuming instead of using traditional methods. In doing so, they would adopt Western-style customs and parts of the modern lifestyle and integrate them into their daily lives. For example, Colgate toothpaste gained popularity as a means of brushing teeth as compared to traditional tooth brushing methods in Haryana (cf. Bhatia, 2000, as cited in Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 30). This integration of elements of foreign cultures, as explained in section one, was formulated by Holton in his hybridization thesis, which reduces the distance between cultures, but is also consistent with the glocalization theory (cf. Holton, 2000, p. 148

f.; Sharifonnasabi et al., 2019, p. 7 f.). This would suggest that marketing for culture-free products influences the cultures of the regions in which it is practiced and reduces the distance between the culture from which the product originates and the culture in which this product is advertised.

39.4% of the respondents said that marketing has created awareness about various products, brands, their usage and also about the world around them in terms of modern products, new fashion and changing lifestyles (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 44). This suggests that advertising acts as a window to the outside world for the people of Haryana or influences their perception of the world outside Haryana. This could have invited them to compare themselves with the images shown in advertisements and see what is depicted in advertisements as an ideal, as the girls from Fiji did as described in section 3.2.2, since many of the interviewees described buying the modern products as a dream come true. Based on this it can be concluded that the modern products are perceived by the people of Haryana as superior to their current methods (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 32). What also suggests is that the people of Haryana have used marketing as a frame of reference. Almost three quarters of the respondents said that the products have given them social status and, conversely, have created a feeling of inferiority among those who cannot acquire these products (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 32ff.). Accordingly, marketing motivated them to adapt to an ideal image that is alien to their culture.

Critics of the mirror arguments also counter that marketing, if it is a mirror of the culture in which it is broadcasted, it is merely a distorted mirror, as they create systems of social differentiation and rework ideologies to establish a superiority of product relationships (cf. Florin et al., 2021, p. 113 f.). In this study, it is also clear that Haryana's traditional culture has been reworked for marketing purposes to promote Fair & Lovely's skin-lightening cream. To sell it, the advertisers took advantage of the fact that the people of Haryana traditionally associate pale skin with success and presented their cream in the context of professional success. However, as the product is aimed at women, a woman with professional success was shown, which is unusual in Haryana (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 42f.). This advertisement was also particularly successful, as Fair & Lovely turned out to be the most consumed brand and the advertisement for this brand was also the most likely to be remembered by consumers (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 37f.). Interestingly, 4.8% of respondents also stated that they had changed their attitude towards working women and girls pursuing

higher education because of marketing (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 42f.). This indicates that marketing not only reacts to social trends, but creates them itself, as is believed by supporters of the mold-theory (cf. Florin et al., 2021, p. 113 f.). This example shows that marketing has helped shape the culture in Haryana.

5.5   Comparison of the Case Study

The information covered in this chapter is already listed with corresponding references in chapters 5.3 and 5.4 and is not cited again with text references in this chapter for reasons of readability.

Both case studies shed light on how brands establish themselves in the target market with products that are foreign to their culture. They represent two contrasting approaches. Coca-Cola adapted their advertising to the culture of their target market by addressing cultural characteristics of the target market in their advertising and thus reacting to and reflecting the culture, while the advertisers in Haryana were able to shape the lives, aspirations and attitudes of the people of Haryana rather than reacting to their culture. The success of both approaches suggests that it depends on the case whether advertising reflects the culture or advertising shapes the culture and can lead to their convergence in an international context. In this section, the case studies are examined in terms of their similarities and differences to identify conditions under which international marketing can shape culture and thus lead to cultural assimilation and when marketing reflects the culture of the target market.

The case studies were compared in the following criteria:

- Year of publication of the case study
- Regions considered
- Population density of considered regions
- Target group(s)
- Standard of living of the target group(s)
- Advertised products
- Cultural bound of advertised products
- Marketing measures to address the target group(s) and
- Effect of marketing on society.

In the table, some information is labeled "1.", "2.", or "A.", "B.", as the Coca-Cola case study focuses on the Coca-Cola product along different target groups and markets within India and the Haryana case study focuses on the Haryana market, which is served by different products and product categories. "1." stands for the information related to Coca-Cola's first target group, whereas "2." stands for the information related to Coca-Cola's second target group in India. "A." stands for the information relating to fast moving consumer products in Haryana and "B." stands for the information relating to consumer durables.

Table 1: Comparison of Case Studies

Criteria	Coca-Cola in India	Companies in Haryana
Year	2008	2007
Region	All of India	Haryana, India
Population density	Low to very high population density (both rural and urban)	Rather medium population density (rural region)
Target group(s)	1. modern Indian youths of middle to high income 2. Indian mass market, rural population, population of small towns and city dwellers with low incomes	Rural population of Haryana with low to medium income
Standard of living	1. high standard of living 2. low standard of living	Low to medium standard of living
Product	Coca-Cola as a stimulant	A. Fast-moving consumer products (e.g. hygiene products and cosmetics) B. Consumer Durables (e.g. motorcycles, refrigerators)

Cultural bound of advertised product	High	A. low to medium B. low
Marketing measures	1. -thematize the daily life of the target groups in the advertisements -Incorporate the target groups' idols in advertising 2. - Use of the culturally coined word "Thanda" - Representing target groups as protagonists in commercials - Promote local development projects	A. -sample bags - Advertising that appeals to emotions - Presentation of the products in the context of (professional) success, even if it is contrary to the conservative attitudes of the target group B. - Presentational events (e.g. street shows) -Sponsorship of sporting events -Advertising that emphasizes the benefits of the products
Effect of marketing on society	-Improvement in the standard of living due to development projects -Establishment of Coca-Cola as a synonym for "Thanda"	-Higher consumption -making life easier -Higher standard of living -Establishment of the products as indispensable -Higher efficiency -Motivation to consume

		-information about products, different lifestyles and clothing styles -More openness and progressiveness

Source: Own representation of information from MUKERJEE (2008) and KUMAR & BISHNOI (2007)

Both case studies were published in India one year apart from each other, which suggests that both case studies take place in a similar or even identical historical, structural and legal context. The geographical regions considered differ in size. While the Coca-Cola case study looks at marketing activities throughout India and thus at all urban and rural regions of India, the second case study deals specifically with the rural region of Haryana in India. The region considered in the case study on companies in Haryana therefore forms a subset of the regions considered in the case study on Coca-Cola. This relationship between the case studies becomes explicit with the mention of the Coca-Cola brand in the case study on Haryana (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 29; Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p. 37 ff.). Accordingly, the population density considered in the case study on companies in Haryana also forms part of the population densities considered in the case study on Coca-Cola in India. At the time of the case study, Haryana had a population density of approximately 477 inhabitants per square kilometer, which is slightly above the population density of India as a whole with 324 inhabitants per square kilometer, but far below the arithmetic mean with 933 inhabitants per square kilometer (cf. Bronger & Wamser, 2004, p.385). The population density in Haryana is therefore rated as medium in Indian comparison and is described as rural (cf. Kumar & Bishnoi, 2007, p.1). The Coca-Cola case study covers all population densities in India.

Nevertheless, Coca-Cola initially chose modern, westernized Indian young people with middle to high incomes, who are more likely to be found in urban regions, as their primary target group. Only later did they turn to the Indian mass market and thus also to the rural population, the population of small towns and low-income city dwellers. The former is very similar to the target group of the case study on companies in Haryana that considers the rural population of Haryana from the lower to middle income class.

Accordingly, the living standards of these two target groups are similar, rather low. Standard of living describes the goods and services desired by a particular person or group of people and is dependent on the national level of development (cf. Purdy, 2022). The standard of living is described here by people's access to food, clean water, adequate sanitation, health care and education as well as the possession of appliances such as refrigerators and telephones, the number of vehicles available for use, and the amount of disposable income, which are also factors in determining the standard of living (cf. Purdy, 2022). In contrast to the target group considered in the case study on Haryana and the second target group in the Coca-Cola case study, the first target group in the case study on Coca-Cola has a high income, meaning that they have access to all the goods listed above.

The two case studies differ greatly in terms of the products considered. The first case study looks at Coca-Cola, a soft drink, while the second case study looks at fast-moving consumer goods such as cosmetics and hygiene products and durable consumer goods for everyday use such as motorcycles. These products are linked to the culture to varying degrees. As a food product, Coca-Cola is, as described in section 4.2.1, a rather culturally bound product. In addition, Coca-Cola is perceived as an icon of American culture and stands for North American food culture like almost no other product (cf. Leatherman & Goodman, 2005, p. 833 f.). This contrasts with the durable consumer goods considered in the case study on companies in Haryana, which are culture free products, as their value depends heavily on their function, as already described in section 4.2.1. Fast-moving consumer goods are more difficult to categorize. Hygiene articles and cosmetic products are sold internationally in a highly standardized manner but are dependent on culturally determined beauty standards (cf. Nagara & Nurhajati, 2022, p. 259 ff.). One of the cosmetic products described in the case study on companies in Haryana is intended to lighten the skin in order to fulfill the beauty ideal of fair skin. As this beauty ideal does not apply specifically to a single culture, but is a very widespread beauty ideal throughout East Asia, the cultural affinity was rated as low to medium (cf. Nagara & Nurhajati, 2022, 260f.).

To appeal to both of their target groups, Coca-Cola reflected their target groups and their lives in their advertising and used symbols and popular heroes of these target groups. The advertising is intended to make customers see the brand as a friend or close acquaintance with whom they have a bond. This also explains why Coca-Cola promoted philanthropic development projects in underdeveloped rural or developing regions. This effort to portray

itself as a friend of the target group was not described in the Haryana case study, instead the marketing efforts described focus on exposing the population to these brands by facilitating access to them with, for example, sample packs or face-to-face events. If the marketing in the Haryana case study reflects the culture, it is as in Fair & Lovely's advertising, where values and beauty ideals of the target audience are selectively used, in this case fair skin as a symbol of beauty and success, to portray the benefits of the product. No consideration is given to whether the other content of the advertisement reflects or contradicts the culture of the target group. The benefits of the advertised product are particularly prominent in advertising for consumer durables. The commonality between the marketing measures of both case studies is the appeal to the emotions of the target groups in advertising for fast moving consumer products.

Coca-Cola was able to establish itself as part of the culture of the target group, while the companies in Haryana have influenced the life and thinking of the people of Haryana. What they have in common is that both have led to an increase in the standard of living in rural regions. Coca-Cola led to a higher standard of living through development projects that did not result directly from the benefits of the product, and in Haryana directly through the benefits of the advertised products.

5.6   Discussion of Results

International marketing for culture-free products can lead to a change in values and thus also in the core of the culture, as in the Haryana case study. However, the comparison of the case studies shows that international marketing does not always lead to cultural assimilation, like in the Haryana case study, but can reflect the culture of the target group, as in the Coca-Cola case study. The comparison of the cases has shown that this difference between the two is not due to the time period or the country in which the international advertising is broadcast, since the difference between the case studies in these criteria is negligible. Furthermore, the reflection or shaping of culture through international marketing appears to be independent of target groups and their living standards, due to the target group of the Haryana case study also being included under the target group two of the Coca-Cola case study and Coca-Cola also reflecting the culture of this target group in its advertising. Possible reasons for the different approaches in dealing with the culture of the target market could be the products

and their benefits as well as the cultural ties of the products to the culture of their home market.

Coca-Cola is a soft drink whose benefits lie within its taste and refreshing effect (cf. The Coca-Cola Company, 2024). Thus, Coca-Cola does not fulfill any benefit that improves the standard of living, simplifies life or promotes health and good looks, as is the case with the products considered in the Haryana case study. A higher standard of living, an easier life, good health and good looks could be aspirational goals communicated through the marketing of these products and rub off on the images shown in the marketing, so that viewers not only aspire to possess the products and their benefits, but also to the idealized life portrayed in the marketing of these products. From this perspective, cultural assimilation resulting from international marketing would be a side effect of people perceiving the benefits of the products and a life with the advertised products as desirable and associating the images and the values portrayed in them with this desirable life and emulating that. However, this would imply that advertising does not create false needs, but that the target groups inherently recognize the necessity of the advertised products. Geoffrey P. Lantos came to the same conclusion in 1987, quoting Packard from 1956 and Wright Mills from 1956, who said that marketing does not instill false needs in people, but that marketing appeals to genuine deep human needs in an unscrupulous way (cf. Lantos, 1987, p. 125).

Furthermore, the cultural affinity of the products to the home market is lower in the case study of Haryana than in the case of Coca-Cola, as already explained in the comparison of the case studies. For strongly culture-bound products, it could be crucial to adapt to the culture of the target market via marketing, if not via product diversification, to appeal to the target group. Culture-bound products need to overcome a greater cultural distance, which can be addressed by reflecting the culture of the target market in their marketing. Overcoming the cultural distance to the target market could explain why Coca-Cola positions itself in its marketing as a friend or close acquaintance to the Indian population. As a culture-bound and culturally foreign product, which is not characterized by its function but by its ability to convey cultural meanings to consumers, it is necessary to make the natural and common purchase decision in the target culture one's own. This can also be derived from the recognized classification of products into culture-bound and culture-free products for the marketing strategy, as this also implies that a culturally foreign product with a high cultural bond must adapt to the target market, as already explained in section 4.2.1 (cf. Schwarz-Musch,

2020, p. 127 ff.). Conversely, products with a low cultural bond, which are primarily characterized by their function, do not have to strictly adhere to the cultural conditions of the target market in their marketing and can certainly show culturally alien scenes in their marketing.

From the Coca-Cola commercials described above, which are strongly oriented towards Indian culture, it is clear that all of these commercials only depict exceptionally positive moments. However, this is unrealistic and does not represent the reality of life. The focus on positive aspects of culture can be attributed to the fact that Coca-Cola wants to create positive associations with its product. Lantos came to the same conclusion in 1987 (Lantos, 1987, p. 122). In the same work, Lantos also quoted Capitman from 1974, who explicitly commented on Coca-Cola and said that advertisers like Coca-Cola want to associate their products with socially desirable images in order to achieve higher sales figures (cf. Capitman 1974, as cited in Lantos, 1987, p. 144). That marketing is merely a distorted mirror of society is also an argument put forward by opponents of mirror-theory, as already explained in section 3.2.2.

6. SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND MODIFIED HYPOTHESES

In summary, it can be said that in certain cases international marketing can lead to cultural assimilation in the form of convergence of values and practices. These cases are those in which the cultural bond of the product to its domestic market is low and therefore a smaller cultural distance to the target market has to be overcome and the products are primarily characterized by their functions, which influence the lives of consumers in a way that they perceive as desirable. These factors can lead to advertisers limiting the extent to which they orient their marketing to the culture of the target market. The culturally alien lifestyles portrayed in the marketing of such products also become desirable, or at least accepted, lifestyles because they are portrayed in relation to a product which, because of its function, consumers assume will influence their lives in a desirable way.

Advertising for products with strong cultural ties, which are not primarily characterized by their function, is more strongly oriented towards the culture of the target market in their marketing. This is done to reduce the cultural distance to the population in the target market. However, it should be noted that the advertising of these products also reflects the culture of the target market in a distorted way.

The hypotheses need to be modified in some respects according to the results and further tested in future quantitative studies to explore the actual impact of international marketing on culture.

1) Marketing can awaken new, but not false, needs in consumers.

2) International marketing can lead to the consumption of products from foreign cultures and therefore influence lifestyles, if the consumption of these products are regarded as a tool for reaching an, in their view, aspirational goal.

3) International marketing and the images shown in marketing can shape society and its culture and only reflect society in a distorted way.

4) International marketing and the images represented in it can influence society and its culture and do not just reflect society. If international marketing reflects the society it is broadcasted in, it does so distortedly.

5) International marketing favors globalization and thus enables convergence of cultures, due to the confrontation with different lifestyles by means of international marketing, which is only weakly oriented towards the culture of the target sales market and thus promotes greater acceptance of these.

7. CRITICAL REFLECTION

Although a multiple case study already provides a more robust basis for hypothesizing than a single case study, this elaboration has limitations that are acknowledged in this chapter. The first problem is the small number of case studies. With only two case studies, it is not possible to ensure that the conditions identified are complete. With more case studies, further conditions could be identified, and more examples could be provided. However, academic work with more case studies could be confronted with the difficulty that there are very few case studies that deal with cultural change of a locality as a result of international marketing. Accordingly, the one-to-one comparison of the two cases in this thesis is not representative of the actual occurrence of the cases.

It was difficult to compare the two case studies as they both focused on different aspects. The Coca-Cola case study focused on a single product along different target groups in India and along the history of Coca-Cola in India. In contrast, the Haryana case study focused on a single target group, the people of Haryana, and their response to different products. Thus,

the Haryana case study does not examine the marketing activities of individual actors and their development in detail, as is the case with the Coca-Cola case study. This could possibly have led to a distorted view.

Furthermore, it is questionable whether the case studies are transferable to the present day, as they were published 17 and 18 years ago. However, since the publication of the case studies, the role of social media for (international) marketing and the (cultural) identity formation of individuals has become much more important, as described in chapters 3.4 and 4.1. For example, Instagram, now one of the most important social media for marketing in the B2C sector, only emerged after the publication of both case studies in 2010 (cf. Social Media Examiner, 2023; Instagram from Meta, 2020).

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I hereby declare on oath that I have written this thesis independently and without outside help and have not used any sources or aids other than those stated. I have identified the passages (direct or indirect quotations) taken verbatim or in terms of content from the sources used, naming the author and the source as such. If I have submitted the work elsewhere for examination purposes, either in full or in part, I have informed the examiners and the examination board of this.

Berlin, February 19, 2025

Place, Date and Signature