

A Comparative Study of Chinese and German Kitchenware Advertising Slogans Based on Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory

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Abstract: Based on Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, an empirical study was conducted to analyze the cultural factors of advertising slogans for a total of 60 kitchenware products from 20 companies on well-known Chinese and German online shopping platforms in 2023. The findings show that China and Germany exhibit cultural characteristics in three dimensions: long-term versus short-term orientation, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance. The results reinforce the importance of culture in the field of international sales and help brands to better grasp the direction of marketing.

Keywords: Hofstede's cultural dimension; Advertising slogans; Cross-cultural

1. Introduction

Advertising slogans are a common form of advertising expression, in which the key message is conveyed through the words, phrases and tone used. Advertisers will select the slogans that fits their cultural backgrounds. E-commerce is one of the platforms that use a lot of advertising slogans to sell products to the world. By 2015, brick-and-mortar retailers have explored online channels, constantly transcending and breaking the original boundaries to the integration of online and offline and logistics (Shen & Fan, 2016).^[1]

In the 50 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Germany and China, relations have deepened in terms of economy and trade and are generally developing in a good way. Advertising is also an important part to influence economic market. Deepening the study of cultural features in Chinese and German advertising slogans is conducive to further enlighten the product sales strategies. A more accurate grasp of the cultural needs can help enterprises to position their products more precisely, which is of certain guiding significance for the development of cooperation between the state and business.

Based on the Hofstede's cultural dimension, this study selects Chinese and German kitchenware advertising slogans on online e-commerce platforms and adopts the method of literature review and empirical research to analyze the cultural differences between China and Germany in order to deepen the cross-cultural communication.

2. Literature review

Hofstede's cultural dimension theory is an important theory in cross-cultural field research. Between 1967 and 1973, Hofstede distributed more than 116,000 questionnaires in multiple languages to understand the country differences in their values along various dimensions. Supplementing by the theories of several scholars, he concluded with six dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation (Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G.J. & Minkov, M., 2019),^[2] and permissiveness versus restraint.

Some studies conducted on theory itself. Ma Xingxiang and Wang Xinfang (2018)^[3] studied the content and application of Hofstede's cultural dimension theory in Chinese cross-cultural communication research by searching the literature from 2000 to 2018.

Many studies involve advertising or advertising slogans. Matthes, Prieler and Adam (2016)^[4] studied stereotypes of gender in television advertisements and found that gender stereotypes exist around the world; Saleem, Larimo, Ummik and Kuusik (2015)^[5] examined cultural and contradictory values in Eastern European advertisements and found that considering the differences between desired cultural values could better explain the relationship between society and advertising; Hatzithomas, Zotos and Boutsouki (2011)

^[6] examine Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance and the role of individualism versus collectivism in various types of humor in print advertising in culturally diverse countries. Quan Hui and Zhu Lihua (2015)^[7] studied ambiguity in Chinese-English advertising slogans and found that Chinese advertisements place more emphasis on traditional cultural values, history, etc., while English advertisements place more emphasis on personal interests, the importance of the future, etc.; Yue Xihua and Wu Li (2015)^[8] studied the differences in metaphors in Chinese-English commercial advertisements and found that conceptual metaphors in Chinese advertisements source domain focuses on affection, stability, etc., while in English advertisements emphasizes individuality, equality, etc.

3. Comparison of Chinese and German advertising slogans for kitchenware products

In this study, the advertising slogans of 10 companies each with German and Chinese advertising slogans in 2023, three products from each company and 60 products in total, were selected from the German Otto and Amazon and the Chinese Jingdong and Tianmao online shopping platforms. The advertising slogans of the two countries exhibit cultural characteristics in the long-term versus short-term orientation, individualism versus collectivism and uncertainty avoidance dimensions.

3.1 Long-term versus short-term orientation

Table 1 Percentage of long-term versus short-term orientation of Chinese and German advertising slogans

language	long-term orientation	short-term orientation
German advertising slogans	73.33%	26.67%
Chinese advertising slogans	66.67%	33.33%

The long-term orientation is shown in both German and Chinese advertising slogans. The percentage of German advertising slogans showing long-term orientation is about 73.33%, while the percentage of Chinese advertising slogans showing long-term orientation is about 66.67%.

Most of the German advertising slogans reflect the concept of sustainability and environmental protection. For example, the slogan for a Bosch refrigerator mentions “Die langlebigen, energiesparenden LEDs tauchen den Innenraum automatisch in ein brillantes weißes Licht.”, which means “The long-lasting, energy-saving LEDs automatically bathe the refrigerator in bright white light.” “energy-saving” and “long-lasting” highlight longevity and environmental protection. The introduction of Siemens includes the words “long-lasting freshness”, “efficient cooling” and “energy saving”. Therefore, sustainability and environmental protection have become one of the indicators when purchasing products.

Chinese advertising slogans show a long-term orientation with the themes of “keep”, “accompany” and “inheritance”. The slogan of a electric oven from 苏泊尔 is “轻松管控热量， keep好身材”， which means “Easy to control calories, keep a good figure”. “control” and “keep” show the characteristics of saving and lasting. The word “easy” appears repeatedly afterwards, implying that the business wants to present easy life. Some brands highlight “company”. For example, the slogan of a soymilk machine from 荣事达 is “静静的料理豆浆， 暖意常伴不吵闹”， which means “Quietly cooking soymilk, warmth always accompanying without noise”. The slogan of a multifunctional baking pan of 松下 presents a vibrant picture of the future from living alone to sharing as a couple to a family of four. This shows that the product can “accompany” you at all stages of life. Others choose cultural heritage as the goal. For example, 张小泉 emphasizes traditional craftsmanship. Its advertising slogan for a kitchen knife is “百年传承中华制刀工艺”， which means “100 years of inherited Chinese knife-making techniques”, showing that its products have passed the test of time.

Although both Chinese and German advertising slogans tend to have a long-term orientation, each has its own prominent focus. German advertising slogans are more focus on energy saving and environmental protection, reflecting their consideration for the permanence, while Chinese advertising slogans emphasize maintenance and companionship, as well as the desire for a better future. Many traditional cultural enterprises feature inherited techniques and craftsmanship.

3.2 Individualism versus collectivism

Table 2 Percentage of individualism versus collectivism in Chinese and German advertising slogans

language	individualism	collectivism
German advertising slogans	83.33%	16.67%
Chinese advertising slogans	40.00%	60.00%

China and Germany reflect large differences in the individualism versus collectivism dimension. Chinese advertising slogans are 60% collectivist, while 83.33% of German advertising slogans are individualistic.

Most of the German companies have “enjoy life” as the highlight. For example, a Bosch juicer says: “So genießt du frischen Saft immer so, wie du ihn magst!”, which means “Enjoy fresh juice the way you like it!” and highlights personal enjoyment and hobby. The slogan of coffee machine, which is often used as a break drink in daily life, is more individualistic.

Chinese companies associate products with family happiness and friends. For example, the slogan of a frying pan of 九阳 is “幸福就是与爱的人一起吃饭”, which means “Happiness is eating with your loved ones”, and the slogan of a hot pot from 拜格 is “约上三五好友涮起来”, which means “Eat hot pot with your friends.” The words “happiness”, “loved”, and “friends” are used as emotional support, linking the individual with the collective. Chinese people’s emphasis on the collective can also be seen in the inheritance of traditional culture.

3.3 Uncertainty avoidance

Table 3 Percentage of high and low uncertainty avoidance indices of Chinese and German advertising slogans

language	high uncertainty avoidance indices	low uncertainty avoidance indices
German advertising slogans	90.00%	10.00%
Chinese advertising slogans	43.33%	56.67%

Significant differences have also shown in the uncertainty avoidance dimension. While 43.33% of the advertising slogans in China show low uncertainty avoidance, 90.00% of the slogans in Germany reflect high uncertainty avoidance.

Many German brands introduce about safety and professionalism. For example, the advertising slogan of Bauknecht oven: “Drei speziell abgestimmte Programme mit Dampffunktion sorgen für ein saftiges Inneres und ein knuspriges Äußeres.”, which means “Three specially regulated programs with steam function ensure that food is juicy on the inside and crispy on the outside.” This type of statement is common in German advertising slogans and the word “sorgen für” is often used to mean “guaranteed”. A WMF pan’s slogan is “Auch wenn sie stark strapaziert werden überzeugen die Pfannen aus hochwertigem Edelstahl auch nach Jahren der Benutzung noch durch Glanz Form und Funktion.”, which means “Even though they are heavily used, pans made of high-quality stainless steel still convince with their luster, form and function after many years of use.” The word “convince” also express uncertainty avoidance.

Contrary to expectations, more Chinese slogans focus on creativity. A advertising slogan of coffee machine of 东陵 is: “即兴混搭, 足不出户, 变着花样喝咖啡”, which means “Improvise and mix, drink coffee without leaving home.” The advertising slogan of a soymilk machine of 荣事达 is “巧制各类潮饮, 玩转豆浆机”, which means “Make all kinds of tide drinks, play with soymilk machine.” The words “improvise”, “tide” and “play” convey the concept of enjoying innovative life and breakthrough of tradition.

4. Conclusion

From these three dimensions, China tends to be more long-term oriented, focusing on traditional culture and skill transmission. Family and companionship are the themes used by many brands. With social progress, China has paid more attention to innovation to create more space for development. The emphasis on quality and professionalism can be clearly felt on German e-commerce platforms. Environmental and sustainability concepts are incorporated into the products.

The advertising slogans used in e-commerce platforms reflect the cultural characteristics of each country. It is important to consider culture in international business activities. The different cultural backgrounds require different sales ideas to better stimulate consumer desire and promote economic development.

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