

**Міжнародна економіка**

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**ADAPTATION OF ADVERTISEMENT  
CAMPAIGNS TO FOREIGN MARKETS.  
A CONTENT ANALYSIS**

**Abstract**

The present paper examines whether multinational companies adapt their global advertising campaigns to the country of destination or standardise their communication strategy. The contingency hypothesis is widely accepted as an appropriate solution for the standardisation/adaptation debate. However, little research has been conducted to reveal which contingency variables are actually considered by multinational companies to define the appropriate degree of adaptation. We assume that the decision whether to convince by information or emotions depends upon the economic condition of the country of destination. The frequency of specific design elements is supposed to be influenced by the cultural profile of the target country. A content analysis of German and Russian print advertisements supports our assumptions to a large extent. Nevertheless, we found that German car manufacturers address the high Power Distance Index (PDI) of the Russian Federation insufficiently.

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### **Key words:**

Adaptation, standardisation, cross-cultural marketing, advertising, car manufacturer.

JEL: M37.

### **Introduction**

The debate whether to standardise or to adapt international advertising campaigns has been discussed in marketing science for more than 50 years. Since 1960s, many academicians have advised multinational companies to adapt their advertisement campaigns to the target market (Pratt 1956; Elinder 1961; Fatt 1964; Buzzell 1968; Sheth 1972; Melewar and Vemmervik 2004). Research has shown that purchasing behaviour differs according to cultural background, religion and derivation (De Mooij 2004). Nonetheless, most practitioners still prefer to standardise their campaigns in order to minimise marketing expenses (Agrawal 1995). In this way, companies do not address the specific needs of different target groups and therefore fail to tap the full potential. Moreover, academic findings have not yet been transferred into explicit decision rules for marketers. For that reason, multinational companies are still lacking standard guidelines indicating when to account for peculiarities of their target markets.

A way to solve the standardisation/adaptation (S/A) conflict is the approach of Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulos (1997) which combines the advantages of both perspectives. They recommend marketers to define the optimum level of adaptation by considering different contingency variables. Based on their framework, the present study examines the impact of economic conditions, cultural profile and added value on the S/A decision. By applying a content analysis, we examine whether multinational companies already consider these contingency variables.

### **Literature Review**

In the following, the two opposing positions of the S/A debate as well as the contingency hypothesis are discussed.

*Standardisation:* Levitt (1983) argues in his frequently discussed article «On the Globalization of Markets» that on a global scale consumer needs will converge over time (convergence thesis). From a marketer's point of view, this

would be an advantage regarding the development and introduction of products and services, the creation of a common brand image and the cost-saving effects by economies of scale (Douglas and Craig 1986; Harvey 1993).

*Adaptation:* Numerous researchers (e.g., Antonides 1989; Suerdem 1994) criticised that Levitt's reasoning is based on the assumption of a rational human being. In contrast to the convergence thesis, they argue that there are still significant differences in consumer behaviour between countries and cultures. Therefore companies should adapt the marketing mix to differences regarding cultural profile, economic conditions, media usage and legal restrictions (Britt 1974; Diamantopoulos et al. 1995; Kanso and Nelson 2002; De Mooij 2004). Empirical studies prove that the adaptation of advertising is necessary. Even in a relatively homogeneous market such as Europe, consumers of distinct cultural areas interpret a commercial message differently (Ward 1988). In some countries it is more effective to choose an emotional approach while in others consumers are more easily to convince by information (Papavassiliou 1990; Sirisagurl 2000; Chandra et. al. 2002). Moreover, marketers have to decide whether to include culture-specific contents in their advertisement campaigns or not.

*Contingency hypothesis:* Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulos (1990) point out that companies should neither fully standardise nor fully adapt their advertisements. The so-called contingency hypothesis claims that the degree of adaptation of an ad varies between these two extremes (Onkvisit and Shaw 2002). The optimum degree of adaptation depends upon different factors (contingency variables). By applying this «middle of the road» solution, a company can save costs and focus on a target group simultaneously. A literature review revealed the following main categories of contingency variables: country of destination, company and product (Figure 1).

## Hypotheses

### Economic Conditions

Hofstede (2001) showed that 71.0% of the variance of the Individualism Index can be explained by the GNP (Gross National Product). In accordance to this finding, the economic development of a country corresponds with the way the inhabitants interpret an ad (Chandra et al. 2002). Thus, East European consumers demand product information while Western European consumers want to know how the product underlines their uniqueness. Accordingly, a content analysis by van Herpen et al. (2000) revealed that advertising in transition countries (Russia, Czech Republic) contains more product specific information than advertising in industrial nations (Germany, Netherlands). The German «Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung» (GfK) confirmed this relationship between economical power and informational con-

tent of advertising by surveying six East and Western European countries (Dallmann 1998). Therefore, we derived the following hypotheses.

*H<sub>1</sub>: In economically lower developed countries, ads contain informative attributes more often than in economically higher developed countries.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: In economically higher developed countries, ads contain emotional attributes more often than in economically lower developed countries.*

Figure 1.

**Contingency Variables**

Categories	Contingency variables	References
<i>Country of destination</i>	Economic conditions*	Dallmann (1998); Van Herpen et al.(2000); Chandra et al. (2002)
	Legal conditions	Curry (2000); Keegan et al. (2002)
	Competitive conditions	Steenkamp i Ter Hofstede (2002); De Mooij (2004)
	Culture*	Dallmann (1998); Pae et al. (2002); De Mooij (2003)
<i>Company</i>	Corporate policy	Duncan i Ramaprasad (1995); Kanson i Nelson (2002); Laroche et al. (2001); Solberg (2002)
	Country of origin	Gurhan-Ganli i Maheswaran (2000); Lee et al. (2001); Loeffler (2001); Moon i Jain (2001)
<i>Product</i>	Cultural bounding	Boddewyn et al. (1986); Domzal i Unger (1987); Djursaa i Kragh (1998)
	Basic vs. additional value*	Dallmann (1998)

\* – included in the present content analysis.

**Culture**

According to Nakata and Pokay (2004) about a quarter of the approximately 600 articles on global marketing published in leading journals analysed cultural influences on consumer behaviour. Most of the studies base on theoretical approaches that define values as the core of culture (e. g., Triandis 1982; Schwartz 1992; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1999). The most wide-spread cultural concept is Hofstede's approach which distinguishes the five cultural dimensions «Acceptance of

Power Distance», «Individualism and Collectivism», «Masculinity and Femininity», «Uncertainty Avoidance» and «Long- and Short-Term Orientation». Hofstede identified the four first-mentioned dimensions on the basis of an empirical study in which 116.000 IBM-workers from 72 countries were surveyed between 1967 and 1973. Later Hofstede and Bond (1988) added a fifth dimension that describes differences between cultures influenced by Confucianism. As these cultures are not the object of our research we will not consider this dimension in the following.

The study of Hofstede originally aimed at determining work related values in different countries. In the following, plenty of studies have revealed that Hofstede's dimensions are suitable for explaining cultural specialties in consumer behaviour. For example, cultural dimensions correlate with the use of media and with the consumption of cigarettes and soft drinks (De Mooij 2001). Various studies have confirmed a significant relationship between the cultural profile of the target country and advertising elements (Madden et al. 1986; Albers-Miller and Gelb 1996; Lin 2001). Additionally, De Mooij (1998) revealed in an extensive cross-cultural content analysis of TV and print advertisement that marketers adapt their advertisement to the culture of the countries of destination. In the following, hypotheses about the relationship between culture and advertising appeals are derived from Hofstede's conception of culture.

### Acceptance of Power Distance

This dimension describes to which extent less powerful members of a country expect and accept unequal distribution of power. In cultures with high Index of Power Distance (PDI), individuals with a hierarchically higher position can show their social status openly (e.g., via status symbols). Accordingly, De Mooij (1998) proved empirically that advertisements in cultures with high PDI show symbols of status more often.

*H<sub>3</sub>: In countries with high PDI, ads contain status symbols more often than in countries with low PDI.*

### Individualism vs. Collectivism

This bipolar cultural dimension describes the relation between the members of a society. In countries influenced by Collectivism (COL) people are organised in strong, closed groups which protect them. In return, the group demands loyalty. In individualistic countries (IDV) the bondages are weaker. First of all, the individual is responsible for himself.

*H<sub>4</sub>: In countries with high IDV, ads contain signs of uniqueness and independence more often than in countries with low IDV.*

*H<sub>5</sub>: In countries with high COL, ads contain signs of group membership more often than in countries with low COL.*

### **Masculinity vs. Femininity**

The Masculinity Index (MAS) indicates how strongly gender role-expectancies within a culture differentiate from one another. Members of masculine societies expect men to be strong and focus on material goals. In feminine societies gender role-expectancies overlap: Men and women act femininely which means they are reserved, soft and harmony-oriented. In advertisements the masculine cultural background should be reflected by stressing achievement orientation and success.

*H<sub>6</sub>: In countries with high MAS, ads contain signs of success and achievement more often than in countries with low MAS.*

### **Uncertainty avoidance**

The Index of Uncertainty avoidance (UAI) reflects, in which way the members of a culture feel threatened by situations that are uncertain or unknown. This is expressed by the establishment of formal rules, intolerance, stress and low readiness for risk.

*H<sub>7</sub>: In countries with high UAI, ads contain risk-reducing attributes more often than in countries with low UAI.*

### **Basic vs. Additional Value**

The more universal the needs are, the more standardised the advertisements should be (Usunier 2000). If needs differ among countries, the adaptation strategy shall be applied (Dallmann 1998). In this regard, the distinction between basic and added value is essential. In general, the relative importance of the added value compared to the basic value rises with increasing wealth. In economically weaker developed countries products are mainly bought for their basic value (e.g., the transport function of a car; Goodyear 1993). In economically higher evolved countries the buying decision is rather influenced by new trends than by basic needs. This assumption is theoretically founded by Inglehardt's (1977) «Silent Revolution» that claims a change from materialistic (e.g., wealth) to post materialistic values (e.g., quality of life) in industrialised countries. Oreg and Katz-Gerro (2006) showed that post materialistic values promote environmental awareness. Accordingly, car manufacturers should communicate an added value regarding lifestyle and environmental friendliness. From these findings the following two hypotheses can be derived:

*H<sub>8</sub>: In economically higher developed countries, ads contain attributes of lifestyle more often than in economically lower developed countries.*

*H<sub>9</sub>: In economically higher developed countries, ads contain attributes of environmental compatibility more often than in economically lower developed countries.*

## Research Design

Our study compares Russian and German ads for middle and upper class cars. So far the purchasing power in Russia concentrates in a few industrial centres mainly in the Western parts of the country. The so called «new Russian market» consists of a few high-earning citizens. Remarkably, the Russian economy had grown from 2002 to 2003 by 7.3% (change in GDP), whereas the German economy stagnated (-.1%; see [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)). Facing saturated Western markets, Russia bares high potential for Western enterprises. For that reason, we chose the Russian Federation as the comparing nation. In addition, it can also be distinguished from Germany in terms of cultural issues. According to Hofstede's indices, the Russians rather accept uneven power circumstances than the Germans, whereas the Germans are more individualistic. In addition, the Russian Federation has a lower Masculinity Index and is rather eager to avoid uncertainty. Possible explanations can be found in the history. While Russia as a part of the former Soviet Union had been structured extremely hierarchically until the breakdown in 1991, Germany has been organised as a democratic federal state since the end of World War II (Kozminski 1991; Leonidou 1992). Moreover, the traditional values of the Orthodox Church support the power of the leading forces.

In Western countries, status-heavy products like cars have lost their indicating function. For manufacturing companies this means that they have to create new incentives to appeal to customers. People do no longer just want to drive; they want to express a certain lifestyle with their car. Since Germany is an economically higher developed country than the Russian Federation, car manufacturers should advertise with lifestyle attributes and environmental compatibility more often.

The general hypothesised relations will now be applied to the German and Russian markets (Figure 2).

We applied a *frequency analysis* (Berelson 1952; De Mooij 1998; van Herpen et al. 2000), a special type of content analysis, to examine if certain advertising attributes are used more often in Russian or German ads. Therefore ads of three German car manufacturers published in comparable popular magazines have been chosen (Germany: *Der Spiegel*, *Stern*; Russia: *Vlast*, *Ekspert*; Figure 3). Overall 31 Russian and 31 German ads of *Audi*, *VW* and *BMW* have been analysed. We examined ads from a 2-year-period (2003–2004) paying attention to an equal seasonal distribution. The objectives were generally full-page coloured ads. Native speakers checked whether the mentioned categories could

be found in the pictorial and textual attributes of the ads (see Figure 4). The intercoder reliability for the German and the Russian sample is .97.

Figure 2.

**Working Hypotheses**

	General working hypothesis	Application
H1	In economically lower developed countries, ads contain informative attributes more often than in economically higher developed countries.	Germany < Russia
H2	In economically higher developed countries, ads contain emotional attributes more often than in economically lower developed countries.	Germany > Russia
H3	In countries with a high PDI, ads contain status symbols more often than in countries with a low PDI.	Germany < Russia
H4	In countries with a high IDV, ads contain signs of uniqueness and independence more often than in countries with a low IDV.	Germany > Russia
H5	In countries with a high COL, ads contain signs of group membership more often than in countries with a low COL.	Germany < Russia
H6	In countries with a high MAS, ads contain signs of success and achievement more often than in countries with a low MAS.	Germany > Russia
H7	In countries with a high UAI, ads contain risk reducing attributes more often than in countries with a low UAI.	Germany < Russia
H8	In economically higher developed countries, ads contain attributes of lifestyle more often than in economically lower developed countries.	Germany > Russia
H9	In economically higher developed countries, ads contain attributes of environmental compatibility more often than in economically lower developed countries.	Germany > Russia

PDI = Power Distance Index, IDV = Individualism Index, COL = Index of Collectivism (100 – IDV), MAS = Masculinity Index, UAI = Uncertainty Avoidance Index.



Figure 3.

**Analysed Magazines**

	Stern	Der Spiegel	Эксперт	Власть
Layout	Images, text	Images, text	Images, text	Images, text
Content	General interest	General interest	General interest	General interest
Target group:				
sex	Male and female	Male and female	Male and female	Male and female
income	Above average	Above average	Above average	Above average
Source	<a href="http://www.guimedia.de/titel/stern/leserschaft">http://www.guimedia.de/titel/stern/leserschaft</a>	<a href="http://media.spiegel.de">http://media.spiegel.de</a>	<a href="http://www.expert.ru/expert/about">http://www.expert.ru/expert/about</a>	<a href="http://www.kommersant.ru/k-vlast/about.asp">http://www.kommersant.ru/k-vlast/about.asp</a>

Figure 4.

**Coding Plan (in extracts)**

Category	Image	Text	Key elements (exemplary)	References
<i>Strategy</i>				
Information	X	X	price, quality, performance, features, special offers	Resnik and Stern (1977); So (2004)
Emotion	X	X	happiness, comfort, joy, interest, grief, distraction	Dallman (1998); So (2004)
<i>Culture</i>				
Acceptance of Power Distance		X	social state, pride, prestige, power, dominance, prosperity, privilege	Pollay (1983); Cheng and Schweitzer (1996)
Individualism		X	independence, freedom, originality, uniqueness	Pollay (1983); Cheng and Schweitzer (1996)

Category	Image	Text	Key elements (exemplary)	References
Collectivism		X	acceptance, friendship, company, cooperation, rituals	Cheng and Schweitzer (1996)
Masculinity		X	achievement, success, career, effort, competition, leading position	Pollay (1983)
Uncertainty Avoidance		X	guarantee, security, research and test results	Van Herpen et al. (2000)
<i>Additional Value</i>				
Lifestyle	X	X	trends, hobbies, travel, adventure, fun, situations in life	Keller (1999)
Environmental compatibility	X	X	natural elements, animals, minerals, pure, gasoline consumption	Pollay (1983); Schmitt (1995)

## Results

First of all, we applied a  $\chi^2$ -test ( $df = 1$ ) to examine whether the frequency of the design elements differs significantly between the German and the Russian samples (Table 1). We also report the  $\Phi$ -coefficient for two dichotomous variables to evaluate the strength and direction of the relationship between the country of destination and the frequency of attributes. This coefficient can vary from  $-1$  to  $+1$ . It should be noted that these extreme poles can only be achieved under the condition of similar distributions in both variables. For that reason, the maximum value ( $\Phi_{\max}$ ) is reported as a reference point (Cureton 1959). In this analysis  $\Phi$  must be interpreted as follows: Positive values indicate that the frequency of design elements is greater in the Russian sample. Negative values have to be interpreted vice versa.

As supposed in hypothesis  $H_1$  and  $H_2$ , the German manufacturers adapt their strategy with respect to informative or emotional elements (Table 1). German ads contain significantly more emotional clues within text and picture than Russian ads ( $p < .01$ ). For the informative elements, we only found a significant difference in the pictorial presentation ( $p < .01$ ). In both countries textual information can be found very frequently ( $> 90.0\%$ ).

Table 1.

**Frequency of Textual and Pictorial Design Elements**

	Complete Sample		Germany		Russian Federation		$\chi^2$	$\phi$	$\phi_{\max}$
	<i>n</i> = 61	%	<i>n</i> = 31	%	<i>n</i> = 31	%			
<i>Strategy</i>									
Information (Image)	22	35.5	6	19.4	16	51.6	7.05**	0.34	0.74
Information (Text)	57	91.9	28	90.3	29	93.5	0.22	0.06	0.30
Emotion (Image)	40	64.5	25	80.6	15	48.4	7.05**	-0.34	0.74
Emotion (Text)	35	56.5	23	74.2	12	38.7	7.94**	-0.36	0.88
<i>Culture</i>									
Acceptance of Power Distance	17	27.4	5	16.1	12	38.7	3.97*	0.25	0.61
Individualism	25	40.3	13	41.9	12	38.7	0.07	-0.03	0.82
Collectivism	18	29.0	5	16.1	13	41.9	5.01*	0.28	0.64
Masculinity	33	53.2	15	48.4	18	58.1	0.58	0.10	0.94
Uncertainty Avoidance	25	40.3	1	3.2	24	77.4	35.46***	0.76	0.82
<i>Additional Value</i>									
Event (Image)	29	46.8	22	71.0	7	22.6	14.58***	-0.48	0.94
Event (Text)	35	56.5	18	58.1	17	54.8	0.07	-0.03	0.88
Environment (Image)	21	33.9	15	48.4	6	19.4	5.83	-0.31	0.72
Environment (Text)	8	12.9	8	25.8	0	0.0	9.19**	-0.38	0.38

\* – significant at 95%; \*\* – significant at 99,0%; \*\*\* – significant at 99,9%.

In addition, we observed that the car manufacturers also adjust their design elements to the cultural background of the target market. Thus, marketers used status symbols more frequently in Russia ( $p < .05$ ;  $H_3$ ). As supposed in hypothesis  $H_5$ , Russian ads include more signs of group membership ( $p < .05$ ). According to  $H_7$ , we found a highly significant difference in the use of risk-reducing design attributes ( $p < .001$ ): Whereas 24 of the Russian ads referred to safety measures, only one German ad contained this attribute. However, hypothesis  $H_4$  and  $H_6$  had to be rejected. No significant difference in the use of individualistic and masculine attributes was found between the two countries.

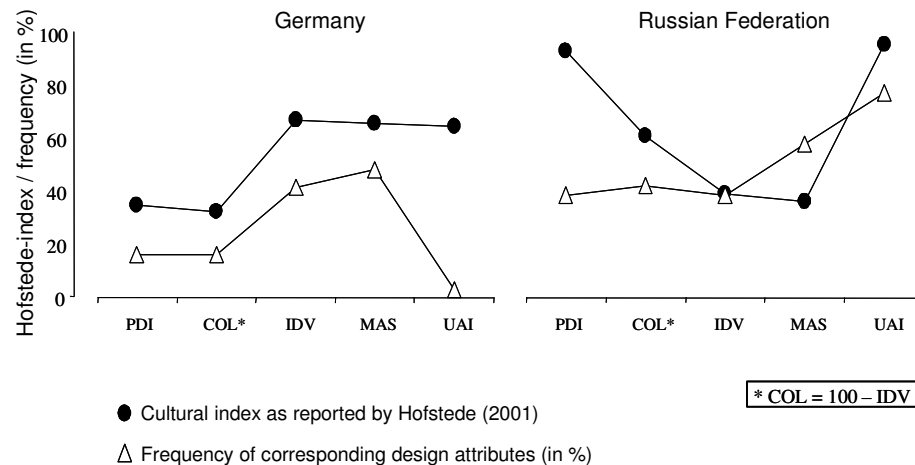
The results supported our hypotheses comparing the added values to a large degree. According to hypothesis  $H_9$ , the German ads contained signifi-

cantly more signs of environmental compatibility, both in text ( $p < .01$ ) and illustration ( $p < .05$ ). Hypothesis  $H_8$  was confirmed concerning the visual attributes ( $p < .001$ ). However, no difference was found between the frequency of text promising lifestyle quality in Russian and German ads.

In the next step, the frequency of culturally adapted design attributes is compared with the degree of the cultural indices reported by Hofstede (2001). This revealed parallelism to a large degree (Figure 5). In general, we found that the level of the cultural index was reflected by a great amount of corresponding design elements in the ads. However two striking results must be noted: First, in spite of the above-average level of Uncertainty Avoidance on an international scale (UAI = 65), German advertising campaigns include almost no risk-reducing attributes (3.2%). Second, although Russian ads (38.7%) contain far more status symbols than German ads (16.1%), the frequency does not yet mirror the high level of Acceptance of Power Distance in the Russian Federation (PDI = 93).

Figure 5.

**Cultural Profile and Advertising Attributes**



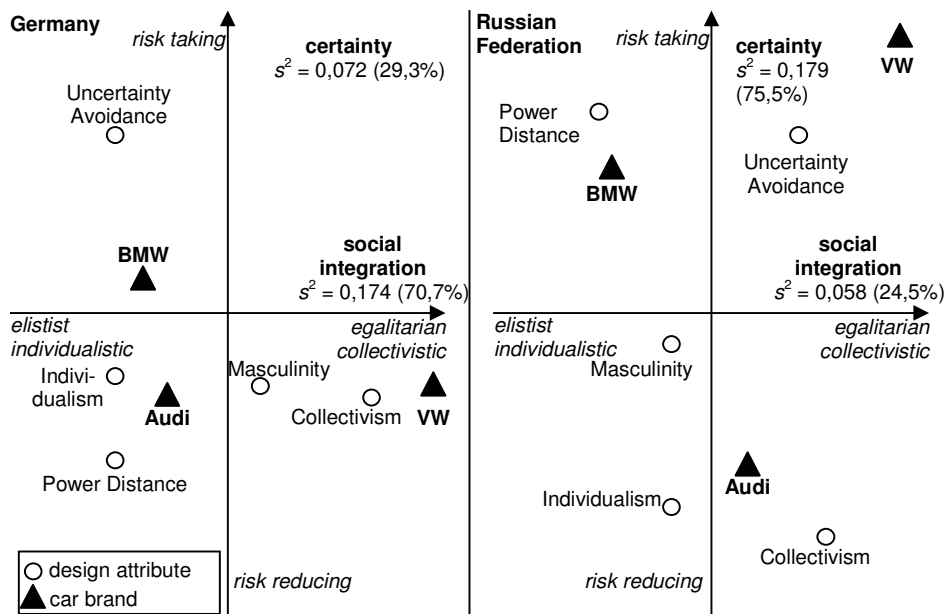
Furthermore, we compared the S/A decision of the three *car manufacturers*. Thus, we applied  $\chi^2$ -tests for all three manufacturers separately comparing the German and the Russian ads. *Audi* and *VW* largely adapt their strategy to the target market. The frequency of emotional and informative elements in the pictorial presentation differs significantly between their German and Russian ads (*Audi*:  $p < .05$ ; *VW*:  $p < .10$ ). Thus, they include more informative illustrations in

Russia and show more emotional visualisation in Germany. Only VW uses more emotional textual elements in Germany than in Russia ( $p < .05$ ). Concerning the *design elements*, some differences between the manufacturers were found. Only BMW systematically put greater emphasise on status symbols in Russia than in Germany ( $p < .05$ ). Audi is the only company that pays attention to the higher degree of collectivism in Russia ( $p < .001$ ). All of the three manufacturers include risk-reducing signs in the Russian Federation more frequently than in Germany ( $p < .001$ ). With regard to added value, no difference was found between the Russian and German BMW ads. In Germany illustrations of Audi and VW contain more signs of lifestyle quality than in Russia ( $p < .05$ ). In addition, Audi stresses environment-friendly properties in pictures more often in Germany ( $p < .01$ ).

Next, a *correspondence analysis* (Hill 1974; Greenacre 1993) was applied to detect and visualise the structure of the three brands and the corresponding use of cultural signs in their ads. Figure 6 presents graphically the positioning of the three companies in Germany and Russia.

Figure 6.

### Results of the Correspondence Analysis



In both samples, the correspondence analysis identified two underlying dimensions that can be interpreted as «social integration» and «certainty». Again, the analysis of German ads reveals, that none of the three manufacturers includes risk-reducing sign. This is indicated by the far distances from «Uncertainty Avoidance» to the position of the brands (left figure). Compared to the other brands Audi tries to transport an individualistic image. The figure on the right side illustrates that BMW stresses status symbols in Russian advertising campaigns. The outsider position of VW in Russia is noticeable. The ads of this manufacturer hardly contain signs of the cultural dimensions.

## Discussion

This study shows that the German car manufacturers apply the adaptation approach. In particular, they adapt the decision whether to convince by information or emotions to the economical conditions of the country of destination. Hence, they emphasise emotions in advertisements published in Germany. In Russia, informative elements dominate. Furthermore, when it comes to design, marketers pay attention to national peculiarities. Consequently, German ads stress the lifestyle quality and environment-friendly properties of cars. There is also some evidence that they orientate towards the cultural profile of the target market as operationalised by Hofstede's dimensions.

But why do they change their ads with regard to three dimensions -- «Acceptance of Power Distance», «Collectivism» and «Avoidance of Uncertainty», but neglect «Individualism» and «Masculinity»? If advertisement is a mirror of the society, – as many researchers assume it to be (Holbrook 1987; Pollay and Gallagher 1990), – then the German car manufacturers are offering Germany and Russia an intercultural mirror, which gives a largely accurate reflection, but is still steamed-up in certain places. One reason might be that the car manufacturers are not aware of these crucial differences (Germany: IDV = 67, MAS = 66; Russia: IDV = 39, MAS = 36). However, it's more likely that they ignore these differences intentionally. As Pollay and Gallagher (1990) pointed out, marketers should adapt their ads only to those cultural dimensions that support their own interests, for example, corresponding to the ideal brand image. Furthermore, it should be noted that the cultural values reflected by an advertising campaign depend upon the product category because each product category is associated with a different utility promise (Holbrook 1987). One should consider that, in the Russian Federation, the target group of the advertised middle and upper class cars consists of the wealthy people who want to express their success and uniqueness. Consequently, it is reasonable that the advertising campaigns contain more signs of Masculinity and Individualism than would have been expected by viewing Hofstede's data.

We also found a highly significant difference concerning the use of risk-reducing elements (Germany: 3.2%; Russia: 77.4%). As hypothesised, the dif-

ference can be explained by the corresponding UAI (Germany: UAI = 65; Russia: UAI = 95). Presumably this difference is strengthened by the chosen advertising strategy (Germany: emotional vs. Russia: informative). Risk-reducing design attributes are usually technical data or judgements of independent tests or experts. This means they have an informative character. For that reason they are excluded from German ads which try to persuade with emotions.

### **Implications for Further Research**

It should be stressed that we ran a content analysis to examine whether German car manufacturers prefer the standardisation or the adaptation strategy. Further analysis is needed to detect the efficacy of the two strategies. Analysing only commercials of car manufacturers should be noted as another limitation of the study. Numerous examinations have shown that the optimal degree of standardisation/adaptation depends upon the product category. Therefore, further studies should compare the contributions of contingency variables like the product category or the country of origin.

In the future, researchers ought to discuss whether Hofstede's cultural indices are adequate contingency variables or not. Besides some general criticism (e. g. Yoo and Donthu 2002), one should consider that the indices which are based on data collected more than one decade ago need to be updated. Since the Russian transformation process might substantially alter the core values of this society the Hofstede indices might be obsolete. According to this, Naumov and Puffer (2000) recently found a Russian Power Distance Index (PDI = 40) significantly lower than reported by Hofstede (PDI = 93). Moreover, they showed that the Russian culture in the 1990s appealed to be more moderate in Masculinity and Individualism than reported by Hofstede. The Russian Federation has continued to experience dramatic political and cultural upheaval since the Perestroika. It has to be considered that the attenuation of the high PDI in the study of Naumov and Puffer (2000) might only be valid for the chosen sample. They surveyed students and faculty members who are younger and better educated than the average population. Therefore, the values reported by Hofstede might still be more appropriate for the advertising strategy of automotive manufacturers. To create future advertisement campaigns according to the actual degree of Hofstede's cultural dimension, we recommend to re-examine the cultural profile of the relevant target group in both countries.

In addition, the cultural profile of a country should only be considered as a proxy variable. Marketers should rather take into account the culture of their target group, which could even be a subculture of the national culture with a different value structure. Further analysis should rather focus on the identification of contingency variables of the target groups than operating on a national level.

## Managerial Implications

In summary, all German car manufacturers already adapt their creative advertising strategies to countries of destination. Nevertheless, some considerable differences among the three producers' creative tactics are found. While Audi and VW design their international campaigns differently, BMW largely applies a standardised solution. The superiority of the adaptation perspective to the standardisation approach cannot be proven by this study; still our analysis leads to the recommendation that this manufacturer needs to further adapt its advertising campaign. In addition, all manufacturers could improve their commercial message by paying more attention to the dominant characteristic of the Russian cultural profile. The Russian Power Distance Index is above-average compared with other countries evaluated by Hofstede (2001). Only the Malaysians are found to accept Power Distance to a greater extent than Russians. Therefore, marketers should include more status symbols in their ads. This is even more true for the analysed middle- and upper-class cars, which Russians usually associate with excessive wealth (Supphellen and Grønhaug 2003).

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