

# Culture & International Marketing Strategy

Hofstede's 6 Cultural Dimensions  
Extended Frameworks · Global Case Studies

Power Distance

Individualism

Masculinity

Uncertainty Avoidance

Long-Term Orientation

Indulgence

# TODAY'S AGENDA

01

## Why Culture Matters in International Marketing

*The stakes, failures, and opportunities*

02

## Hofstede's 6 Cultural Dimensions — Deep Dive

*PDI · IDV · MAS · UAI · LTO · IVR with brand examples*

03

## Extended Frameworks

*GLOBE Study · Trompenaars · Hall's Context & Time*

04

## Mini Case Studies

*McDonald's · Samsung · Airbnb · Coca-Cola · IKEA*

05

## Strategic Frameworks for Cultural Adaptation

*Standardization vs. Localization matrix*

06

## Group Discussion & Application Exercise

*Design a market entry for your brand*

# Why Culture Matters in International Marketing

~80%

of international  
expansion failures  
linked to cultural  
misalignment

## Pepsi (Taiwan, 1963)

*"Come alive with Pepsi" translated as "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead"*

## Chevrolet Nova (Latin America)

*"No va" means "doesn't go" in Spanish — product flopped*

## IKEA Fartfull Desk

*English-speaking markets mocked the product name — a branding lesson in phonetics*

**Key Insight: Culture shapes how consumers perceive value, build trust, and make decisions. Ignoring it is the costliest mistake in global marketing.**

## OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ Premium pricing in high-UAI markets
- ✓ Relationship marketing in collectivist societies
- ✓ Status branding in high-PDI markets
- ✓ Sustainability messaging in LTO cultures

# Hofstede's 6 Cultural Dimensions — Overview

## Geert Hofstede

Dutch social psychologist  
1928 – 2020

IBM cross-national survey:  
116,000 employees  
in 70+ countries  
(1967–1973)

### PDI Power Distance

**Low:** Flat hierarchy, equality  
**High:** Accepts inequality, status-driven

### IDV Individualism vs. Collectivism

**Low:** Group loyalty, we-culture  
**High:** Self-reliance, I-culture

### MAS Masculinity vs. Femininity

**Low:** Care, cooperation, quality of life  
**High:** Competition, achievement, success

### UAI Uncertainty Avoidance

**Low:** Risk-tolerant, flexible rules  
**High:** Rules-driven, risk-averse

### LTO Long-Term Orientation

**Low:** Tradition, present focus  
**High:** Future planning, perseverance

### IVR Indulgence vs. Restraint

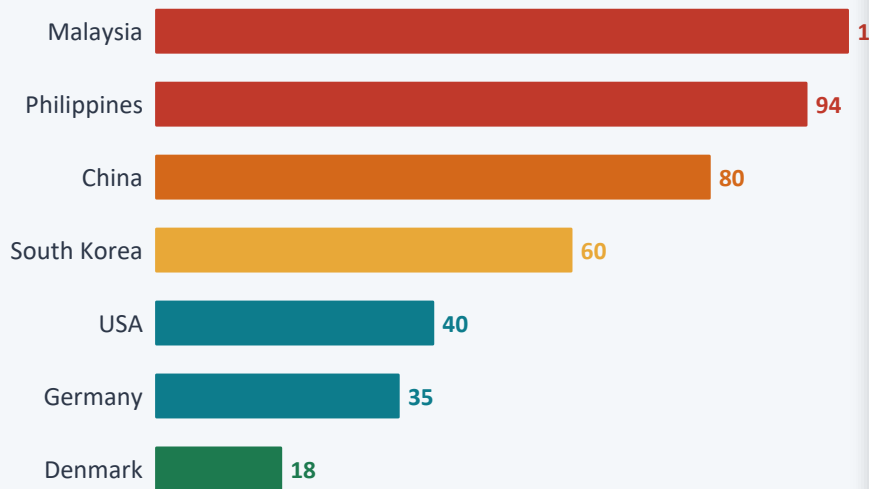
**Low:** Suppresses gratification  
**High:** Allows enjoyment, leisure

*Original model (1980): 4 dimensions → Extended to 5 (1991, Bond's CVS) → 6 dimensions (2010, Minkov)*

# Dimension 1 — Power Distance Index (PDI)

*Definition: The degree to which less powerful members of a society accept*

## PDI Scores by Country



Example: Louis Vuitton in China — Status-driven luxury advertising with celebrity ambassadors in high-PDI market strategy

## Marketing Implications

### HIGH PDI Markets (e.g., China, Korea)

- › Expert/celebrity endorsements carry huge weight
- › Hierarchical decision-making → target senior buyer
- › Luxury brands signal status; premium pricing works
- › Advertising: formal, authority-based messaging

### LOW PDI Markets (e.g., Denmark, Netherlands)

- › Peer reviews & user-generated content more effective
- › Flat, friendly brand tone resonates better
- › Anti-establishment messaging can appeal
- › Employee empowerment stories build brand trust

## Dimension 2 — Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV)

### INDIVIDUALIST

US USA (91) · AU Australia (90)

#### Cultural Traits:

- Personal goals > group goals
- "I" identity
- Self-reliance celebrated
- Privacy valued

#### Marketing Approach:

- "Be yourself" messaging
- Personalization & customization
- Individual achievement stories
- Direct call-to-action ads



Nike: 'Just Do It' — personal triumph

### COLLECTIVIST

CN China (20) · KR Korea (18)

#### Cultural Traits:

- Group harmony over individual goals
- "We" identity
- Loyalty to family/company
- Face-saving behaviors

#### Marketing Approach:

- Family/community in advertising
- Group discounts & referral programs
- Brand trust via endorsements
- Gifting & sharing campaigns



Samsung in Korea: family, legacy, togetherness

# Dimensions 3 & 4 — Masculinity (MAS) & Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)

## MAS | Masculinity vs. Femininity

### High MAS

*Japan (95), Austria (79), Hungary (88)*

### Low MAS

*Sweden (5), Norway (8), Netherlands (14)*

- › High MAS → competitive ads, success stories, product performance
- › Low MAS → welfare themes, environmental responsibility, work-life balance
- › Japan: "Striving for excellence" resonates; soft messaging underperforms
- › Scandinavia: IKEA's equality & simplicity narrative works perfectly

Brand Insight: Red Bull's aggressive, masculine 'Stratos' campaign exceeded expectations in Austria (MAS 79) and Japan (MAS 95), but needed softer framing in Scandinavian markets.

## UAI | Uncertainty Avoidance Index

### High UAI

*Greece (112), Japan (92), Russia (95)*

### Low UAI

*Singapore (8), Jamaica (13), Denmark (23)*

- › High UAI → guarantees, certifications, detailed specs matter
- › Low UAI → novelty, experimentation, disruption messaging works
- › Japan: extensive product testing & money-back guarantees needed
- › Singapore: fintech innovation adopted faster — less regulatory fear

Brand Insight: McDonald's Japan introduced extensive allergy labeling, calorie charts, and ingredient transparency specifically for the high-UAI Japanese market — a market adaptation absent in Anglo markets.

# Dimensions 5 & 6 — Long-Term Orientation (LTO) & Indulgence (IVR)

## LTO | Long-Term Orientation

### High LTO

*East Asia (China 87, Japan 88, S.Korea 100)*

### Low LTO

*USA (26), Nigeria (13), Colombia (13)*

- › High LTO: invest in brand heritage, durability messaging
- › Sustainability & ESG resonate strongly — future generations
- › Low LTO: quick wins, immediate ROI, quarterly promotions
- › Korea: Samsung's '100-year vision' strategic messaging
- › USA: 'Get it now', seasonal deals, instant gratification ads

Example: Unilever's 'Sustainable Living' plan — positioned differently in LTO-high Asia (long-term stewardship) vs. LTO-low Western markets (immediate impact & savings).

## IVR | Indulgence vs. Restraint

### High Indulgence

*Mexico (97), Nigeria (84), Australia (71)*

### High Restraint

*Pakistan (0), Egypt (4), China (24)*

- › Indulgent markets: hedonic, fun, pleasure-driven advertising
- › Humor, entertainment, and leisure messaging = effective
- › Restraint markets: duty, discipline, control themes land better
- › Coca-Cola 'Taste the Feeling' — works in indulgent markets
- › China: modesty/family duty in ads outperforms hedonistic copy

Example: McDonald's 'I'm Lovin' It' campaign — doubled down on joy and self-indulgence in high-IVR markets, while in Egypt adopted halal-certified serious brand messaging.



# Extended Cultural Frameworks Beyond Hofstede

## GLOBE Study (House et al., 2004)

62-country study; expands on Hofstede with 9 cultural dimensions including Performance Orientation, Humane Orientation, and Assertiveness.

**Marketing:** Added nuance: Performance Orientation predicts responsiveness to quality/innovation messaging. Useful for B2B marketing in emerging markets.

📌 *Humane Orientation (high in S. Asia) → cause-marketing campaigns resonate strongly in India, e.g., Tata Group's CSR-heavy brand identity.*

## Hall's High/Low Context Communication

High-context cultures (Japan, Korea, Arab world): meaning is implicit, relationships matter, non-verbal cues critical. Low-context (USA, Germany): explicit, direct, written contracts.

**Marketing:** Ad copy in Japan is often atmospheric and emotional, while German advertising tends to be technical and fact-based.

📌 *Volkswagen's German ads feature precise engineering data; VW's Japanese ads use scenic imagery and lifestyle storytelling.*

## Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (7 Dimensions)

Focuses on how cultures reconcile dilemmas: Universalism vs. Particularism; Individualism vs. Communitarianism; Neutral vs. Affective; Specific vs. Diffuse; Achievement vs. Ascription.

**Marketing:** Particularist cultures (China, Russia) prefer relationship-first marketing; Universalist cultures (USA, Germany) want clear rules & transparent pricing.

📌 *SAP's CRM go-to-market in China required local relationship-building events (particularism) vs. webinar-heavy strategy in Germany (universalism).*

## Hall's Monochronic vs. Polychronic Time

Monochronic (Northern Europe, USA): time is linear, punctuality critical. Polychronic (Latin America, Middle East, S. Asia): multitasking, relationships over schedules.

**Marketing:** Campaign deadlines, delivery promises, and service SLAs should reflect local time orientation. 'Same-day delivery' resonates in monochronic markets.

📌 *Amazon Prime's launch timing strategy: aggressive same-day delivery in Germany/USA; relationship-first approach in India through Kirana partnerships.*

# Case Study 1: McDonald's — Cultural Localization Across 100+ Countries

*McDonald's operates in 100+ countries and is a textbook example of 'glocalization' — globally consistent brand standards combined with deep local cultural adaptation.*

## JP Japan (High UAI, High LTO)

- Teriyaki McBurger, Ebi Shrimp Burger, Matcha McFlurry
- Seasonal menus for gift-giving culture (Omiyage)
- Extensive allergen/calorie transparency (High UAI)
- All-beef patties → chicken/fish dominance (food preferences)

Result: Japan is McDonald's #1 most profitable market per-store. Cultural adaptation drove premium pricing acceptance.

## IN India (High PDI, Collectivist, High UAI)

- No beef/pork menu items — 100% localised
- McAlloo Tikki, Maharaja Mac (chicken)
- Separate veg/non-veg kitchens — signals respect
- Family-focused advertising vs. individual messaging

Result: India became one of McDonald's fastest-growing markets after the menu overhaul in the 1990s.

## SA Saudi Arabia (High PDI, High UAI, Restraint)

- Halal-certified entire menu
- Segregated family/single male seating sections
- Closed for prayer times — respect for religious norms
- No pork; alcohol-free beverages only

Result: Maintained premium brand perception; adapted to local norms rather than pushing Western standards.

## FR France (High UAI, Individualist, High MAS)

- McCafé expansion — premium coffee culture alignment
- Table service in restaurants (respect for dining culture)
- Slow food movement pressure → local sourcing messaging
- Longer sit-down dining experience

Result: France, despite anti-American sentiment, became one of McDonald's most profitable European markets.



**Discussion: Where does McDonald's STOP adapting? What are the limits of localization?**

# Case Study 2: Airbnb — Trust, Community & Cultural Resistance

*Airbnb's peer-to-peer model is inherently individualistic (IDV) and low-UAI — challenging to launch in collectivist, high-uncertainty-avoidance, and high-PDI cultures.*

## Cultural Barriers Encountered

### China (PDI 80, IDV 20, UAI 30)

Strangers in the home violates family privacy norms. Trust in unknown platforms is low. Government regulations limit operations.

### Japan (UAI 92, PDI 54)

Strict cleanliness expectations. Hosts fear negative reviews. Distrust of foreigners in private spaces. Regulatory uncertainty.

### South Korea (IDV 18)

Communal apartment complexes; neighbors' approval matters. Minbak (traditional homestay) culture preferred to 'foreign' platform.

### India (PDI 77, UAI 40)

Safety concerns for female travelers. Hosts wary of mixed-gender guests. Strong family/community norms limit stranger hospitality.

## Airbnb's Cultural Adaptations

### China: Aibiyong (爱彼迎)

Renamed platform in Chinese: 'Love Each Other Welcome'. Local team, WeChat integration, identity verification system tailored for China.

### Japan: 'Super-Host' Trust Seals

Rigorous host vetting; cleanliness scores prominently displayed; Japanese-language dedicated support to alleviate high-UAI concerns.

### India: Women-Only Feature

Introduced 'Women Hosts Only' filter for solo female travelers — direct response to safety-linked cultural norms.

### Global: 'Belong Anywhere' → Local Stories

Shifted from abstract belonging to hyper-local storytelling — featuring neighborhood guides and cultural immersion narratives.



**Discussion: Is Airbnb's model fundamentally Western-individualist? Can it truly scale in collectivist cultures, or does the model need to be reinvented?**

# Case Study 3: Samsung vs. Apple — One Product, Two Cultural Strategies

*Both brands sell premium smartphones globally — but their marketing strategies reflect their cultural DNA and are tailored differently across markets.*

## KR Samsung — Collectivist, High PDI

**Home Market (Korea):** Samsung = national pride, 'our company'. Emotional advertising focuses on family, togetherness, and Korean technological achievement. Employees in ads.

**Emerging Markets:** Partnerships with Bollywood stars in India; positioned as aspirational yet accessible vs. Apple's elite-only pricing.

**Customization Depth:** More regional variants — Galaxy J (India), Galaxy A (price-sensitive). Reflects Confucian hierarchy — different tiers for different status groups.

**Hofstede Alignment:** Long-term partnerships with telecom carriers (LTO). Feature-heavy phones appeal to high-UAI markets wanting control. Family plan marketing (IDV-low).

**China Strategy:** 'Galaxy' became aspirational symbol. Samsung invested heavily in local R&D, partnered with Baidu/Tencent — signaling commitment beyond mere sales.

## US Apple — Individualist, Low PDI

**Core Brand DNA:** Think Different — radical individualism. Self-expression, creativity, non-conformity. Global campaign rarely modified; brand consistency = premium cue.

**China Paradox:** Apple became STATUS SYMBOL in collectivist China (PDI 80). Owning an iPhone signals success to peers — PDI dynamic repurposed. Sold out at launch every year.

**Minimal Localization:** Unlike Samsung, Apple rarely adds regional features. iMessage, FaceTime stay global. In China, does comply with iCloud data storage laws — pragmatic adaptation.

**Hofstede Tension:** Apple's IDV-91 DNA vs. China's IDV-20 = tension. Yet aspirational individualism (owning Apple) = status performance in collectivist cultures.

**Japan Adaptation:** "Shot on iPhone" campaign used Japanese photographers; Japanese-language Siri improvements. Maintained brand purity while adding cultural flavor.

 **Discussion:** Can a brand with strong cultural DNA (IDV-USA) become a status symbol in opposing cultures? What does Apple's China success tell us about Hofstede's limits?

# Case Study 4: Coca-Cola — Happiness Localized Across Cultures

*'Open Happiness' / 'Taste the Feeling' — One global platform, radically different executions based on cultural values.*

## CN China — Collectivist, High PDI

- Spring Festival (CNY) campaigns — family reunion narrative
- Red can = luck, prosperity alignment (cultural color coding)
- Gift pack campaigns for gifting culture (face-giving)
- Chinese calligraphy name bottles: 'Share a Coke' localized

*Key Insight: Coke's CNY family reunion ad consistently ranks #1 most-watched Chinese new year ad. Family > individual joy.*

## BR Brazil — High IVR (59), Collectivist

- Carnival-linked campaigns — joy, dance, community
- Local samba music in ads; Brazilian Portuguese copy
- "Refreshing Friendships" not "personal enjoyment"
- Open-bottle sharing imagery dominates visuals

*Key Insight: Brazil's high indulgence (IVR 59) + collectivism = group celebration framing delivers strong brand love.*

## SA Saudi Arabia — High UAI, Restraint

- Family iftar Ramadan campaigns — central placement
- No mixed-gender advertising — separate narratives
- "Togetherness over enjoyment" messaging
- Halal-adjacent purity messaging in ingredients

*Key Insight: Coca-Cola sales peak during Ramadan in Saudi — communal breaking of fast is the key cultural touchpoint.*

**Key Learning: The same emotional 'happiness' core is reframed as individual (USA), family (China), community (Brazil), or religious (Middle East) — Hofstede-informed execution.**

# Strategic Framework: Standardization vs. Localization Matrix

← LOW Cultural Distance →

## STANDARDIZE

*Same product, same message*

Luxury goods (Chanel, Rolex)  
Technology specs (Intel)  
B2B software (SAP)

## ADAPT MESSAGE

*Same product, local story*

Coca-Cola 'Open Happiness'  
McDonald's core menu + local ads  
Apple core product + local celebs

## ADAPT PRODUCT

*Modified product, similar story*

McDonald's menu localization  
P&G fragrance by region  
Unilever skincare formulas

## FULL GLOCALIZATION

*New product, new story*

KFC in China (Shrimp burgers)  
Airbnb Aibiyang in China  
Starbucks Reserve in Japan

**Decision Framework:** Assess Hofstede distance + product category + brand equity. High PDI/UAI/IDV gaps → localize product. High IVR/MAS gap → adapt message. Similar cultures → standardize for scale efficiency.

# Group Exercise & Discussion

## Your Task (20 minutes)

- 1 Choose a brand: (Starbucks / Netflix / Nike / Hyundai / WeChat)
- 2 Select a new target market from a different cultural region
- 3 Identify the top 3 Hofstede dimension gaps between home and target market
- 4 Map to Standardization/Localization Matrix quadrant
- 5 Design 3 specific marketing adaptations using the frameworks
- 6 Present a 2-minute pitch to the class

## Discussion Questions

- Q1** Is Hofstede still relevant in 2025's digital, interconnected world?
- Q2** How does social media erode or amplify cultural differences in marketing?
- Q3** Can a brand be 'too local' — losing global brand equity?
- Q4** How should Gen Z's cross-cultural 'global citizen' identity change marketing strategy?
- Q5** Is the China market one cultural segment or many?

# Summary: Key Takeaways for International Marketing

01

## Hofstede's 6 Dimensions are a Starting Point

PDI, IDV, MAS, UAI, LTO, IVR provide a systematic lens. They are empirical averages — not stereotypes. Always validate with primary market research.

02

## No Single Framework is Sufficient

Combine Hofstede with GLOBE, Trompenaars, Hall's Context, and your own data. Use multiple lenses for richer cultural intelligence.

03

## Culture Affects Every Marketing Variable

Product design, pricing strategy, distribution channel, advertising tone, celebrity choice — all must be culturally calibrated. Not just translation.

04

## Glocalization is the Gold Standard

McDonald's, Coca-Cola, and Airbnb all found that neither pure standardization nor complete localization wins — the balance is strategic.

05

## Culture is Dynamic — Not Static

Generational shifts (Gen Z), digital globalization, and migration are rapidly reshaping cultural values. Hofstede scores from 1970s must be updated.

06

## Respect ≠ Submission to Culture

The best international marketers understand cultures deeply but also know when to introduce new values (sustainability, gender equality) strategically.



# Further Reading & Resources

## Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind

*Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov (2010)*

The foundational text. Required reading.

## The Silent Language / The Hidden Dimension

*Edward T. Hall (1959 / 1966)*

Context, time, and proxemics in cross-cultural communication.

## The Culture Map

*Erin Meyer (2014)*

Practical 8-scale framework. Highly readable for practitioners.

## Global Marketing Management

*Warren Keegan & Mark Green (2020)*

Comprehensive textbook covering all international marketing topics.

## Riding the Waves of Culture

*Fons Trompenaars & Charles Hampden-Turner (1997)*

Reconciling cultural dilemmas in business.

## Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study

*Robert J. House et al. (2004)*

62-country empirical study extending Hofstede.



Q & A