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Abstract

Growth of research addressing the relationship between culture and consumption is exponential [Ogden D., Ogden J. and Schau HJ. Exploring the impact of culture and acculturation on consumer purchase decisions: toward a microcultural perspective. Academy Marketing Science Review 2004;3.]. However culture is an elusive concept posing considerable difficulties for cross-cultural research [Clark T. International Marketing and national character: A review and proposal for an integrative theory. Journal of Marketing 1990; Oct.: 66–79.; Dawar N., Parker P. and Price L. A cross-cultural study of interpersonal information exchange. Journal of International Business Studies 1996; 27(3): 497–516.; Manrai L. and Manrai A. Current issues in the cross-cultural and cross-national consumer research. Journal of International Consumer Marketing 1996; 8 (3/4): 9–22.; McCort D. and Malhotra NK. Culture and consumer behavior: Toward an understanding of cross-cultural consumer behavior in International Marketing. Journal of International Consumer Marketing 1993; 6 (2): 91–127.; Nasif EG., Al-Daeaj H., Ebrahimi B. and Thibodeaux M. Methodological problems in cross-cultural research: An updated review. Management International Review 1991; 31 (1): 79–91.; Lenartowicz T. and Roth K. A framework for culture assessment. Journal of International Business Studies 1999; 30 (4): 781–98.]. This article examines different approaches to conceptualising and operationalizing culture in marketing studies. The article discusses the advantages of using cultural dimensions — in particular Hofstede's values. The article proposes a three-step approach to operationalize culture including nationality, Hofstede's cultural dimensions and measuring culture at the individual level.
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1. Introduction

Culture constitutes the broadest influence on many dimensions of human behavior. This pervasiveness makes defining culture difficult (McCort and Malhotra, 1993). This difficulty hampers research about the influence of culture on international consumer behavior (Manrai and Manrai, 1996; McCort and Malhotra, 1993; Clark, 1990; Nasif et al., 1991; Dawar et al., 1996; Lenartowicz and Roth, 1999) and has been used to criticize cross-cultural research (Sekaran, 1983). Culture is "a convenient catchall for the many differences in market structure and behavior that cannot readily be explained in terms of more tangible factors" (Buzzell, 1968: 191), "a 'rubbish bin' con- cept," which constitutes rather clear and strong images of the superficial form the concept of culture is often called upon, as an explanatory variable for residuals, "when more operative explanations have proved unsuccessful" (Usunier, 1999: 94).

2. Defining culture

Tylor provides one of the earliest definitions of culture: "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of society" (1871, in McCort and Malhotra, 1993: 97). Subsequent contributions share the all-inclusive nature of culture as affecting aspects of human life in a society.

The difficulty in distinguishing strictly cultural factors from other macro-level influences further complicates defining culture. Culture differs intrinsically from other macro-environmental factors: "Culturally patterned behaviors are thus distinct from the economic, political, legal, religious, linguistic, educational, technological and industrial environment in which people find

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themselves" (Sekaran, 1983: 68). Yet, isolating purely cultural from other macro-environmental influences might be unfeasible, as no clear-cut boundaries exist among these interrelated influences. "Culturally normed behavior and patterns of socialization could often stem from a mix of religious beliefs, economic and political exigencies and so on. Sorting these out in a clear-cut fashion would be extremely difficult, if not totally impossible" (Sekaran, 1983: 68).

3. Operationalizing culture

Although definitional difficulties pose a challenge to cross-cultural research, culture's influence on consumption and marketing has drawn increasing attention in recent years. Lenartowicz and Roth (2001) report that almost 10% of the articles published in 10 renowned journals during 1996–2000 used culture as an independent variable. Consequently, a number of approaches have been used to identify and operationalize culture allowing its inclusion in empirical research.

Based on a twenty-year review of cross-cultural consumer research, Sojka and Tansuhaj (1995: 4) concluded that researchers have followed three approaches to operationalize culture: through language, through material goods/artefacts, and through beliefs/value systems. Language offers "an interpretative code or schema for organizing and presenting the world", but is not a good indicator of ethnicity and cannot be used alone to explain different behaviors across subcultures and cultures. Possessions/artefacts allow a more concrete operationalization of culture, as goods embody visible evidence of cultural meaning. Many cultural artefacts (e.g., durable goods, toys, and clothing) have been studied in cross-cultural contexts. Finally, values/belief systems (e.g., fatalism, materialism, and relations with others) as operational definitions of culture were deemed instrumental in understanding cross-cultural consumer behavior.

Lenartowicz and Roth (1999) use the term "culture assessment" to identify a valid cultural grouping and propose the following typology: Ethnological description; Use of Proxies—Regional Affiliation; Direct Values Inference (DVI) and Indirect Values Inference (IVI). This typology provides a comprehensive perspective of approaches to operationalizing culture in the literature and hence is reviewed below.

3.1. Ethnological description

Ethnological description pertains to "qualitative approaches, typically sociological, psychological and/or anthropological, used as bases for identifying and/or comparing cultures" (Lenartowicz and Roth, 1999: 783). This approach provides a descriptive appraisal of cultures.

International marketing studies have used Hall's classification of high- and low-context cultures as such an approach (Wills et al., 1991; Samli, 1995; Mattila, 1999; van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003). The distinction is based on the way messages are communicated in each culture: explicitly or in the context. Although useful, this classification has limitations, as it merely allows the classifications of cultures along one

dimension. Similarly, Gannon's (2001: XV) approach to the study of culture uses metaphors as a method to understand and compare the cultural mindsets of nations. A cultural metaphor is defined as "any activity, phenomenon, or institution which members of a given culture emotionally and/or cognitively identify". This approach provides an intuitively appealing subjective description, which is useful in understanding foreign cultures. The Ethnological description approach guides emic studies of culture, which aim at studying intensively a single culture to describe and understand indigenous, specific phenomena. It has been rarely used in international business (Lenartowicz and Roth, 1999).

3.2. Use of proxies — regional affiliation

This approach consists of defining culture based on characteristics that reflect or resemble culture (e.g., nationality or place of birth) and is common in business applications (Hoover et al., 1978; Dawar and Parker, 1994; Steenkamp et al., 1999; Lenartowicz and Roth, 2001). Hofstede (1984) and Steenkamp (2001) support this approach. Steenkamp (2001) argues that there is empirical support for within- and between-country differences making nationality an acceptable proxy of culture. Moreover nations "are the source of considerable amount of common mental programming of their citizens" (Hofstede, 1991: 12) since nations with a long history have strong forces towards further integration. In fact, culture, country, nation, and society are often used interchangeably (Sekaran, 1983; Nasif et al., 1991). However, given the imperfect correspondence between political boundaries and culture even in culturally homogeneous countries (Sheth and Sethi, 1977), scholars should sometimes include multiple ethnic groups in each country under study.

The "proxies" approach has been used at different levels of culture. "Culture can be defined on different levels of analysis, ranging from a group level to an organizational level or a national level" (Erez and Earley, 1993: 23) or on a group of nations such as the European Union (Steenkamp, 2001). For example, Mattila's study (1999) about the influence of culture on purchase motivation in service encounters distinguished between Asian and Western cultures. In a similar vein, Dawar and Parker (1994) proposed the "ethno-geographic trade area" as an alternative operationalization of culture, defining four cultural clusters: North America; EEC; non-EEC Europe; and others. On the opposite pole, subcultures have also been studied (Lenartowicz and Roth, 2001).

Other proxies have also been used, such as the level of a culture's engagement in the retail sector (Dawar and Parker, 1994). Samli (1995) argues that consumer behavior could be predicted using a scoring system on relevant cultural variables that would allow the identification of specific international consumer behavior patterns. He proposed the following set of variables: class structure, language, context (low/high), interpersonal relationships, needs hierarchy, role of the sexes, role of children, territoriality, temporality, learning, work ethic, need for privacy, exploitation of resources, resource utilization, family role in decision making, family size, religiosity, tradition orientation, and technology grasp.

However, this approach is merely a classification method that lacks measures to test hypothesized relationships regarding the influence of culture on dependent variables.

3.3. Direct values inference (DVI)

This approach comprises measuring the values of subjects in a sample, and inferring cultural characteristics based on the aggregation of these values (Lenartowicz and Roth, 1999). Hofstede's (1984, 1991, 2001) study used such an approach. Based on statistical analyses of a multi-country sample on work-related values, Hofstede proposed that cultures are comparable on five dimensions, common to all countries under study (Hofstede, 1991, 2001): individualism/collectivism; uncertainty avoidance; power distance; masculinity–femininity and long-term orientation.

Schwartz's universal structure of values fits this approach as well (Schwartz, 1992, 1994; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987, 1990; Schwartz and Sagiv, 1995). He identifies universal psychological values and proposes a theory for the universal content and structure of values. Schwartz framework offers great potential in international marketing (Steenkamp, 2001).

Finally, several studies replicated Hofstede's study of work values using different scales (e.g., Dorfman and Howell, 1988; Fernandez et al., 1997; Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Furrer et al., 2000; Liu et al., 2001) or his values survey module (VSM; Hoppe, 1990; Heuer et al., 1999; Merritt, 2000; Schramm-Nielsen, 2000; Pheng and Yuquan, 2002). Of these, Hoppe's (1990) study has been used as an update of Hofstede's scores (Steenkamp et al., 1999).

3.4. Indirect values inference/benchmarks (IVI)

This approach uses secondary data to ascribe characteristics of cultural groupings without directly measuring members of the group. The most notable example of this approach is the use of Hofstede's scores of national cultures (Hofstede, 1984). Lenartowicz and Roth (1999: 786) suggest caution in the use of the benchmarks approach: "The concern with this approach is potential measurement error arising from the extrapolation of cultural values from the group assessed by the benchmark study to the sample being surveyed". This method, with caveats, is adequate for formulating hypothesis and providing measures of cultures for cross-cultural studies with an indirect approach.

All four methods have inherent weaknesses. Thus Lenartowicz and Roth (1999: 787) contend that "no single methodology is able to address the inclusive set of criteria relevant to culture assessment in business studies".

A parallel discussion regarding approaches to operationalize culture pertains to the use of a limited number of dimensions to capture cultural differences.

4. The use of cultural dimensions

According to some authors, the usefulness of the concept of culture to explain cultural differences depends on being able to unpack it and identify its components as "Culture is too global a concept to be meaningful as an explanatory variable" (van de Vijver and Leung, 1997: 3; Leung, 1989; Schwartz, 1994; Bagozzi, 1994; Samiee and Jeong, 1994). The use of a limited number of dimensions to compare cultures has anthropological roots. Early scholars in this field argued that cultural diversity results from different answers in different societies to similar universal questions: "the existence of two sexes; the helplessness of infants; the need for satisfaction of the elementary biological requirements such as food, warmth and sex; the presence of individuals of different ages and of differing physical and other capacities" (Kluckhohn in Hofstede, 1984: 36). Parsons and Shills (1951) delineated cultural pattern variables or cultural dilemmas that define and categorize cultures: affectivity versus affective neutrality; self-orientation versus collectivity orientation; universalism versus particularism; ascription versus achievement and specificity versus diffuseness. These contributions have influenced modal personality studies, focusing on "to what extent do the patterned conditions of life in a particular society give rise to certain distinctive patterns in the personality of its members?" (Inkeles and Levinson, 1969: 118). Inkeles and Levinson (1969) proposed the terms social character, basic personality structure, and national character.

Identifying reliable dimensions to synthesize major distinguishing aspects of culture could be a major contribution to cross-cultural research. They would provide an alternative to conceptualise and measure culture as a complex, multidimensional structure rather than as a simple categorical variable. Nonetheless, using dimensions to capture the multidimensional culture construct has not been without criticism. Namely, this approach has been criticized for its failure to fully capture all relevant aspects of culture:

> It would be a triumph of parsimony if many diverse cultural differences in decision making could be explained in terms of a single cultural disposition, such as individualism–collectivism. For this reason, the dispositional approach has attracted many advocates. Yet, the existing evidence for the dispositional view falls short (Briley et al., 2000: 159).

While this criticism is valid, the benefits of this approach for international marketing and cross-cultural research outweigh its limitations:

> The identification of reliable dimensions of cultural variation should help create a nomological framework that is both capable of integrating diverse attitudinal and behavioral empirical phenomena and of providing a basis for hypothesis generation (Smith et al., 1996: 232).

Additional emic dimensions are probably needed to characterize unique aspects of particular cultures. However, in the interest of parsimony, it is incumbent on the researcher to demonstrate that an apparently emic cultural variation cannot be represented adequately as a point along a universal dimension (Schwartz, 1994: 88).

5. Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Several scholars discuss the choice of dimensions most appropriate for conceptualizing and operationalizing culture (Bond, 1987; Clark, 1990; Dorfman and Howell, 1988; Hofstede, 1984, 1991; Inkeles and Levinson, 1969; Keillor and Hult, 1999; Schwartz, 1994; Smith et al., 1996; Steenkamp, 2001). However, Hofstede's framework is the most widely used national cultural framework in psychology, sociology, marketing, or management studies (Sondergaard, 1994; Steenkamp, 2001). Hofstede used 116,000 questionnaires from over 60,000 respondents in seventy countries in his empirical study (Hofstede, 1984, 1991, 2001). He created five dimensions, assigned indexes on each to all nations, and linked the dimensions with demographic, geographic, economic, and political aspects of a society (Kale and Barnes, 1992), a feature unmatched by other frameworks. It is the most comprehensive and robust in terms of the number of national cultures samples (Smith et al., 1996). Moreover, the framework is useful in formulating hypotheses for comparative cross-cultural studies. Consequently, Hofstede's operationalization of cultures (1984) is the norm used in international marketing studies (Dawar et al., 1996; Engel et al., 1995; Samiee and Jeong, 1994; Sivakumar and Nakata, 2001; Sondergaard, 1994). Table 1 compares Hofstede's dimensions to other approaches for unpacking the concept of culture. It shows a high level of convergence across approaches, supports the theoretical relevance of Hofstede's framework, and justifies further use of his dimensions.

5.1. Individualism–collectivism

Individualism–collectivism describes the relationships individuals have in each culture. In individualistic societies, individuals look after themselves and their immediate family only whereas in collectivistic cultures, individuals belong to groups that look after them in exchange for loyalty.

5.2. Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance refers to "The extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations" (Hofstede, 1991: 113). This dimension deals with the need for well-defined rules for prescribed behavior.

5.3. Power distance

This dimension reflects the consequences of power inequality and authority relations in society. It influences hierarchy and dependence relationships in the family and organizational contexts.

5.4. Masculinity–femininity

Dominant values in masculine countries are achievement and success and in feminine countries are caring for others and quality of life.

Table 1
Comparison of Hofstede's cultural framework with other models

	Masculinity/ Feminity	Individualism/ collectivism	Power distance	Uncertainty avoidance	Long-term orientation	Other
Hofstede (1984)						
Hofstede (1991, 2001)						
Inkeles and Levinson (1969)*	Conceptions of self		Relation to authority	Primary dilemmas or conflicts		
Triandis (1995)						
Chinese Cultural Connection (1987)	Human heartedness	Integration			Confucian work dynamism	Moral discipline
Clark (1990)*	Relations to self		Relation to authority	Relation to risk		
Trompenaars (1997)	Neutral/emotional	Universalism/particularism Individualism/ communitarianism			Attitudes to time	Specific /diffuse Achievement/ascription Attitudes to the environment
Dorfman and Howell (1988)						Paternalism
Schwartz (1994)	Mastery/harmony	Autonomy/conservantism Loyal involvement/ utilitarian involvement	Hierarchy/ egalitarianism Conservantism/ egalitarianism			Discussion of a third dimension 3 deferred
Smith et al. (1996)						
Keillor and Hult (1999)						National heritage/culture homogeneity/belief system/ consumer ethnocentrism
Steenkamp (2001)*		Autonomy/collectivism	Egalitarianism/hierarchy	Uncertainty avoidance	Mastery/ nurturance-	

* Refers to theoretical contributions. The remainders are empirical studies.

5.5. Long-term orientation

Long-term orientation "stands for the fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular perseverance and thrift" (Hofstede, 2001: 359). A late addition to the initial four (Bond, 1987), this dimension represents a range of Confucian-like values and was termed Confucian Dynamism. Hofstede (1991) later proposed the long-versus short-term designation as more appropriate for this dimension.

Hofstede's work has been simultaneously enthusiastically praised and acidly criticized. Importantly, it could provide "the beginnings of the foundation that could help scientific theory building in cross-cultural research" (Sekaran, 1983: 69). A review of the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) resulted in 1036 quotations from culture's consequences in journals during the period 1980 to September 1993 (Sondergaard, 1994).

On the other hand, Hofstede's work has several short-comings. First, empirical work that led to uncovering the initial four dimensions took place in 1967–73. Thus the findings might be outdated. However, although cultures change, such change is believed to be very slow (Sivakumar and Nakata, 2001) and relative cultural differences should be extremely persistent. Hofstede argued that culture change basic enough to invalidate the country index scores should not be recognizable for a long period, perhaps until 2100 (Hofstede, 2001):

National cultural value systems are quite stable over time; the element of national culture can survive amazingly long, being carried away forward from generation to generation. For example countries that were once part of the Roman Empire still share some common value elements today, as opposed to countries without a Roman cultural heritage (Hofstede and Usunier, 1999: 120).

Scholars have also criticized the process of identification of dimensions as empirically- rather than theoretically-derived (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996), as capitalizing on chance (Erez and Earley, 1993), as constituting a subjective and arbitrary aggregation of items (Fernandez et al., 1997; Dorfman and Howell, 1988), as non-exhaustive (Schwartz 1994), and as based on one corporation (Schwartz, 1994; Erez and Earley, 1993; Lenartowicz and Roth, 2001). Finally, critics question the applicability of the dimensions to all cultures, emphasizing that "one can conjuncture that other types of samples might yield different dimensions and order of nations" (Schwartz, 1994, 90; Erez and Earley, 1993). Nonetheless, Hofstede argues that the need for matching samples derives from the difficulty of obtaining representative national samples and that what was measured were differences between national cultures and "any set of functionally equivalent samples from national populations can supply information about such differences" (Hofstede, 2001: 73).

6. Use of Hofstede's cultural dimensions in marketing studies

Although Hofstede used a work-related context and originally applied his framework to human resources management, it is being used increasingly in business and marketing studies (Milner et al., 1993; Sondergaard, 1994; Engel et al., 1995; Dawar et al., 1996; Sivakumar and Nakata, 2001; Shamkarmahesh et al., 2003).

These dimensions have been used to compare cultures, to support hypothesis, and as a theoretical framework for comparing cultures even if, in some cases, the actual scores are not used and the dimensions are measured with new or adopted instruments (Lu et al., 1999). This research has confirmed the relevance of these cultural dimensions for international marketing and consumer behavior (see Table 2 for selected papers on culture's impacts on consumer behaviors). Notably, Collectivism influences innovativeness (Lynn and Gelb, 1996; Steenkamp et al., 1999; Yaveroglu and Donthu, 2002; Yeniyurt and Townsend, 2003; van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003), service performance (Birgelen et al., 2002), and advertising appeals (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996). Uncertainty avoidance impacts information exchange behavior (Dawar et al., 1996), innovativeness (Lynn and Gelb, 1996; Steenkamp et al., 1999; Yaveroglu and Donthu, 2002; van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003; Yeniyurt and Townsend, 2003), and advertising appeals (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996). Power distance affects advertising appeals (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996), information exchange behavior (Dawar et al., 1996), innovativeness (Yaveroglu and Donthu, 2002; Yeniyurt and Townsend, 2003; van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003), and service performance (Birgelen et al., 2002). Masculinity impacts sex role portrays (Milner and Collins, 1998), innovation (van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003), and service performance (Birgelen et al., 2002). Finally, long-term orientation influences innovativeness (van Everdingen and Waarts, 2003).

7. Operationalizing culture using Hofstede's dimensions

Multiple methods should be used to assess cultures as no single method "is sufficient to comply with all of the methodological and conceptual requirements for the valid identification of a cultural group" (Lenartowicz and Roth, 1999: 788). Thus, a cross-cultural

Table 2
Impact of Hofstede's dimensions in international marketing and consumer behavior

	Individualism	Uncertainty avoidance	Power distance	Masculinity	Long-term orientation
Innovativeness	X	X	X	X	X
Service performance	X		X	X	
Advertising appeals	X	X	X		
Information exchange behavior		X	X		
Sex role portrays				X	

study of exploratory and risk-taking behavior used a three-method approach to assess culture (Soares, 2005): regional affiliation, indirect values, and direct value inference. Given its uniqueness in using a multi-measure assessment of culture, this article describes this study in more detail.

The regional affiliation approach builds from the use of proxies. Soares (2005) uses nationality to reflect culture. Although caution is recommended in using this approach, there is empirical support for between-country differences (Hofstede, 1984; Steenkamp, 2001). Nation can be used as a proxy for culture since members of a nation tend to share a similar language, history, religion, understanding of institutional systems, and a sense of identity (Dawar and Parker, 1994; Hofstede, 1984), making its use a common approach to operationalize culture (e.g., Hoover et al., 1978; Dawar and Parker, 1994; Steenkamp et al., 1999; Yeniyurt and Townsend, 2003).

Secondly, Soares (2005) uses benchmarks, the indirect values approach, which consists of ascribing characteristics of cultures based on other studies. She uses Hofstede's (1984) scores to classify Portugal and the UK as two countries with opposite scores on Hofstede's dimensions. Portugal is a collectivistic, feminist, long-term oriented, high uncertainty avoidance, and high power distance culture while the UK has an opposite profile. For example, the UK scores the highest on individualism and Portugal the lowest of the European countries Hofstede (1984) examines. They differ on uncertainty avoidance (47/48th and 2nd of 53, respectively). Using countries with similarities across some theoretical aspects while being as far apart as possible on others has been recommended to improve reliability and enhance generalizability (Alden et al., 1993; Sivakumar and Nakata, 2001).

Finally, Soares (2005) uses the direct value inference approach, based on measuring the values of subjects in a sample to infer cultural characteristics. Thus, although Hofstede's classification of cultures provides a starting point for evaluating Cultural Values, the samples were further classified on cultural dimensions in a manner adequate to their characteristics.

Researchers use different approaches to assess cultural values: using individual values, using individual's perceptions of group values (Leung, 1989), or using what Hofstede terms, "ecological level of analysis." The analysis that uncovers Hofstede's values follows from correlations among items in each scale and from factor analysis to define the measures using mean scores from respondents aggregated at the national level. However, scholars question the meaningfulness and usefulness of measures obtained based on as ecological level of analysis for micro-level research (Dorfman and Howell, 1988; Yoo et al.,

2001). Individual values are more appropriate predictors of individual behavior "unless collective Cultural Values are strongly shared by the members of the cultural group" (Lenartowicz and Roth, 2001: 150). Dake (1991: 77) has a similar perspective and proposes assessing culture from the "individual orientations toward what we think of as the ethos of a culture or the thought of an age" perspective:

> Culture (…) provides a collectively held set of customs and meanings, many of which are internalised by the person, becoming part of personality and influencing transactions with the social and physical environment. Hence, orienting dispositions are viewed at the individual level as attributes of personality, to the degree that they are held by collectives they may also be viewed as cultural biases (Dake, 1991: 78).

Thus, research should study cultural values at the individual level, using individual's perceptions of group. Following this approach, culture, usually conceived as an attribute at the is measured at the individual level as evidenced by the strength of an individual's belief in key cultural dimensions. However, except for social psychology's operationalization of the individualism/collectivism dimension (Triandis et al., 1988; Triandis, 1995), validated instruments for measuring cultural values are scarce.

Furrer et al.'s (2000) cultural values scale is the first option that Soares (2005) considers. They propose 20 7-point Likert items (four for each dimension) on the basis of Hofstede (1991). Soares pre-tested the scale for reliability in Portugal and found it to be unreliable (Table 3).

Subsequently, Soares examines ways to improve the scale by adding items to it. Hofstede (1991) summarizes key differences between opposing poles of each cultural dimensions in terms of general norm, family, school and work place and politics and ideas (except for long-term orientation). Seven marketing and social sciences' judges familiar with the Portuguese and British cultures analysed his summary and identified items that

Table 4
Reliability for the pre-tested semantic differential instrument for measuring cultural values

	Items	*n*	Alpha
Power distance	7	58	0.41
Masculinity	7	58	0.72
Individualism	7	58	0.27
Uncertainty avoidance	7	59	0.22

Table 3
Reliability of cultural values scale (Furrer et al., 2000)

	Items	*n*	Alpha
Individualism	4	106	−0.26
Long-term orientation	4	105	0.21
Masculinity	4	106	0.51
Uncertainty avoidance	4	106	0.17
Power distance	4	107	0.35

Table 5
Reliability of the CVSCALE

	Items	Portugal	*n*	UK	*n*
Long-term orientation (LTO)	6	0.55	155	0.74	150
Power distance (PDI)	5	0.61	159	0.78	151
Collectivism (COL)	6	0.79	158	0.72	148
Masculinity (MAS)	4	0.74	161	0.78	150
Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)	5	0.69	157	0.69	151

differentiated best between the two. Furthermore, she uses semantic differential items to emphasize the opposite poles of each statement so that they will be more meaningful to respondents (Green et al., 1988). The revised 28-item scale was pre-tested with Portuguese students to assess internal consistency (Table 4).

Subsequently, Soares identifies the cultural values scale (CVSCALE) as an alternative (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Yoo et al., 2001). This 26-item instrument measures the five cultural dimensions, is applicable to general consumer situations and has adequate psychometric properties (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Lenartowicz and Roth, 2001). In her study, the scale has good reliability for collectivism and masculinity and modest but acceptable reliability for the other dimensions in the Portuguese sample and good reliability for the UK sample (except for uncertainty avoidance; Table 5). Therefore, this instrument was used to measure cultural values at the individual level and thus concluded the three-step approach to operationalize culture by Soares (2005).

8. Conclusion

Culture is a fuzzy concept raising definitional, conceptual, and operational obstacles for research on it and on its consumer behavior influences. We discuss several approaches to conceptualizing and operationalizing this multidimensional construct in research and propose a multi-measure approach to assess culture using Regional Affiliation, Indirect Values, and Direct Value Inference. We do not intend to argue that using a few dimensions provides a complete description of cross-cultural differences. However, we argue that Hofstede's framework constitutes a simple, practical, and usable shortcut to the integration of culture into studies. In spite of some criticisms to his dimensions, the argument that they capture cross-country differences has received extensive support (Lynn and Gelb, 1996). Thus, there is wide support in the literature for the use of this conceptualization and operationalization of culture. Measuring these dimensions at the individual level should constitute an important contribution to cross-cultural research. While operationalizing culture remains a challenge, our multi-method approach constitutes a contribution towards capturing this elusive concept. The implications of this paper for further research on culture follow Soares (2005) and Donthu and Yoo (1998) as a promising start. Beyond their reliability across countries (Portugal and the UK; Soares, 2005), they also provide nomological validity as evidenced by their impact on optimal stimulation level and risk-taking. However, further research should examine the scale's reliability and validity in additional countries and research contexts beyond those studies by Donthu and Yoo (1998) and Soares (2005).

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