

Short Communication

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The International Advertising Framework in the Covid-19 Crisis-Case Study in Germany, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

Transculturation describes the phenomenon of merging and converging cultures. Quantifying culture in advertising helps to define the relevant emotional palette a brand can use with a particular audience, as emotions are often conveyed by culture and drive engagement, brand recall and purchase intent. What is more, International Advertising strives for being more cost efficient by merging cultures despite if their own idiosyncrasies. Framed in the Worldwide COVID-19 crisis and the divergent country responses to it, we used the Hofstede method to affirm that the only way to drive engagement, brand recall and purchase intent in International Advertising is plotting countries with similar cultural imaginary.

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Introduction

Cultural diversity is one of the main assets to understand the influence of globalization within the constitutive elements that articulate today's society. The problems of conceptualization of this factor, within the social archetypes, are deriving in short term policies that avoid deepening in diversity and multiculturalism [1].

Understanding the key to the digital society without recognizing the diversity, mobility and transculturality factors is impossible. Large companies have accepted this fact as a key factor and base their business strategies on variables such as those mentioned.

Culture and the cultural industry have become great commercial advocates and, according to : "their invocation to solve problems that previously corresponded to the sphere of economy and politics, under the assumption that culture would contribute to the reduction of social conflicts and economic development, especially through cultural industries"[2]. In this sense, Vergara indicates that, according to Barbero, "it has been proposed that globalization sets in motion a process of interconnection at the world level, which connects everything that "instrumentally is worth", and disconnects everything that for "that reason, is not worth"[3].

The debate on the connections between culture and cultural diversity is still open and needs to be reflected upon. There are official positions such as that of UNESCO that "the main elements enshrined in the CDCE (Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions) should be employed to contribute to greater coherence in view of the objective

of promoting cultural diversity, including vis-à-vis the WTO (world Trade Organization) and other international organizations, and "puts forward potential paths for such coordination". There are also other types of intentions that indicate that the cultural industry that most influences cultural diversity is the one that has the least to do with it and this changes the way we think about it "the distribution of GVA across economic sectors has shown that the group that includes IT, software and computer services is clearly the major contributor to value creation in economic terms" [4].

How the Cultural Industries have been Historically Shaping the Collective Memory of Humankind in a Trans-Cultural Society

Mattelart stated that culture is "the collective memory that makes communication possible between the members of a historically located community" [5]. Culture has always been linked to the concept of memory and, inevitably, to the capacity to transmit it in different cultural periods. Technology, therefore, has always been at the service of recording, storing and transmitting their communicative identities. The fidelity to the registered fact that the use of tools brings (let's think about the book as the beginning of this tradition) has served and helped to shape the social, cultural and political evolution since immemorial times.

Thus, culture has always been used as a communication process and communication as the most plausible manifestation of any outstanding and, above all, registered cultural event. The value of culture goes through the capacity of transmission and the degree of social influence. This value, therefore, can be quantified since both values, transmission and influence, are articulated to achieve clearly identified objectives. states that culture as a collective memory creates a "community of meaning (expressive function), allows adaptation to a natural environment (economic function), and finally gives them the capacity to rationally argue the values implicit in the prevailing form of social relations (rhetorical function)" [6].

This configuration of culture as a social backbone has been linked to commercialization, industrialization and, in general, to all variables of social evolution that have led to technological advances. There is a culture of non-industrialization but of commodification based on dynamics such as the visual arts (museums), live performance (theater, musicals, sports) and artistic heritage. This culture is based on unique productions, where the object itself or time is what articulates the cultural fact and conditions the social functions. And, precisely, this uniqueness and the inability to replicate it is the greatest condition for determining the cultural value of each cultural event.

But from the evolution towards the possibility of replicating the cultural object, an industry based on culture has been developed. The capacity of copying and distribution allows the development of a series of parallel services around culture that helps to exploit, almost to infinity, the functions of culture as a defender of the memory of a people. The starting point remains an unique creation, but with the capacity to be reproduced indefinitely.

The digitization of information has created a new perspective on cultural goods, which are born unique but instantly have the capacity to be infinitely reproduced and globally distributed throughout the planet.

And it is here where the value of the cultural product increases its economic function although the quantitative and, above all, qualitative value of the expressive and rhetorical functions decreases.

Cultural industries use digital distribution networks as a neural device in which the key is to reach the whole and not to focus on the parts. And it is precisely the quantification of the scope that brings the most economic value to the merchandise and opens culture to its necessary commodification. Consequently, memory is constructed according to strategies of economic scope of a macro and micro nature, and not according to the exclusive context in which culture is generated as an objective of cultural development.

The consumption of culture through digital distribution platforms implies an individual use of cultural goods and moves away from the capacity of building collective memory that culture traditionally had. Memory is ephemeral and is valued according to the individualized uses produced in the very act of consumption. Moreover, the user needs to be connected around platforms that measure, evaluate and determine the interests of each individual in a paradox that is creating virtual cultural memory to the detriment of the cultural capital of each society.

The cultural industry of the replica, as such, has jumped the concrete cultural fact of each society and has created a new paradigm where the break of physical barriers and of cultural nature are necessary to make cultural goods economically profitable. Transculturality has gone from being an unit of analysis in the cultural event to becoming the necessary support on which to understand the construction of collective memory. And it is here that the break with previous analogical eras takes place and a new foundation is built on which to base the culture of the future.

Therefore, consumption is global and the uncertainty of consumption causes losses and increases in the value of the culture industry, probably associated with this era of cultural revolution.

At the same time, the industry has overcome the differentiated merchandise and has included it in windows of cultural support. The cultural industry has overcome the individualized industry of

the book, the press, the cinema, the record, etc., to reach or arrive at digital windows built around, mainly, distribution platforms. However, cultural merchandise is an unique fact and, in this first phase at least, it must take into account specific and concrete values of each of the cultural factors that make up the various societies.

Memory starts from unique and differentiated facts but transculturality is fundamental to build the social story and determine its value, mainly economic. The first consequence of this step forward is that the traditional barrier between editorial products and flow culture that had conditioned the debate and policies in relation to cultural industries has been overcome.

Hofstede's Cross-Cultural Dimensions Model: The Effects of Culture in the Values of German, UK, Spanish and Italian Societies

By applying the Hofstede model to research for global branding and advertising in cross-cultural research, we have noted an advance of methodological techniques but less conceptual analysis of cultural dimensions when formulating hypotheses. Some research questions ask for better understanding of how dimensional models work. Examples are the question as to which cultural dimensions are especially relevant to advertising, and the suggestion that cross-cultural studies that examine the impact of culture should actually measure how the individual respondents stand on the cultural dimension investigated [7]. In comparative cross-cultural research, the properties of individuals as observed within a country are aggregated and then treated as culture-level variables. These variables can be used to explain variation of phenomena (other aggregate data) at country level (e.g. differences in ownership of computers between countries). The aggregated data represent a mix of different people as a society consists of a variety of people. Thus culture is not one king-size personality that can be used for measuring individuals. Patterns of associations observed at the culture level (also called the ecological level) can be different from patterns at the individual level. For instance, has shown that patterns of associations with 'freedom' are different at the individual and at the cultural (national) level [8]. Within countries, individuals who score high on the importance of 'freedom' also tend to score high on the importance of 'independence of thought and actions'. But if the scores for all individuals in each nation are averaged, the nations where on average 'freedom' is scored as more important than in other nations are not those scoring higher on the importance of independence, but those scoring higher on 'protecting the welfare of others'.

The individual associations are based on psychological logic, the national associations on the cultural logic of societies composed of different, interacting individuals. Measuring individual respondents on scales based on aggregate data is an ecological fallacy. Cultural dimensions relevant to advertising Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey have best described the influence of the various dimensions of culture on verbal and non-verbal communication styles, which are reflected in advertising styles [9]. The three dimensions that explain variance of communication styles are: power distance, individualism/collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. For appeals and motives reflected in advertising, generally the product category defines the most relevant dimensions [10]. The dimensions that are relevant for a product category can be discovered only by correlating the data with the GNI/capita and country scores of all five dimensions.

Sometimes researchers challenge the predictive value of the Hofstede model because their hypotheses were not supported, instead of challenging the formulation of the hypotheses shown on [11]. Several aspects of the Hofstede dimensions must be

considered when formulating hypotheses:

1. Some manifestations of each dimension are more work-related, whereas others can be applied to consumer behaviour and advertising
2. Often it is a configuration of dimensions what explains variation
3. Value paradoxes have to be taken into account. It is not easy to recognise values in advertising as advertising appeals may reflect both the desired and the desirable [10]
4. Misunderstanding the content of a dimension
5. The effect of the researchers' cultural roots when selecting and interpreting manifestations of the values of the dimensions

Power Distance

Illustrates the relationship between bosses and subordinates, but it is also about everyone having his or her rightful place in society versus equality. The latter explains the need for luxury brands as status symbols in high power distance cultures.

Achievement

Is an important value of masculine cultures. When combined with individualism, success can be shown, less so when combined with collectivism. Innovativeness and the wish for change are low in high uncertainty avoidance cultures, but combined with high power distance, appeals like modernity and innovation provide status. High 102 scores within the Hofstede Model on masculinity and power distance explain status needs. In high power distance cultures, status brands demonstrate one's role in a hierarchy [10]. In masculine cultures, status brands demonstrate one's success. The configuration of high power distance and uncertainty avoidance explains the importance of personal appearance. The Japanese (high PDI/high UAI) judge people by clothes, which is not the case with the Chinese (high PDI/low UAI). Whereas, in Japan, the proper way things are done and one's social status provide face, for the Chinese face is related to one's economic capability. In content analysis of advertising, the picture of a family is assumed to be a reflection of collectivism, but paradoxically it can also be a reflection of individualism where people are afraid that family values are disappearing. In collectivist cultures, advertisers may even feel a lesser need to depict families because the family is part of one's identity; it is not the desirable [12]. Comparison of the number of people shown in advertisements is not a measure of individualism/collectivism. A better measure is measuring the directness of communication - for example, by comparing the use of personalised headlines. Uncertainty avoidance tends to be confused with risk avoidance (Roth 1995). The degree to which people insure themselves is not related to uncertainty avoidance. Instead, more life insurance policies are sold in individualistic cultures than in collectivist cultures. In the former, should one die early, one cannot count on family to support one's dependants [13]. Showing people in relation to others can be a reflection of collectivism, but also of the affiliation needs of feminine cultures. Collectivism is not about subordinating oneself to the group. The latter is the typical description from an individualistic view of the person. The group itself is one's identity. Power distance is about accepting as it is a two-way street. Female nudity in advertising should not be confused with sex appeal, as researchers from masculine cultures may assume, there is no correlation with masculinity [14].

Are we Witnessing the Beginning of a New Mass Media Revolution?

New forms of production, distribution and consumption of audiovisual content have been modifying the space and basis of the audiovisual industry in recent years. Social networks have

become another element of action within this random and, in a certain sense, totally variable universe, which allows action on content to be integrated with the development of the plot. Social networks, that is, the digital meta-society in which reality is constructed in relation to the massification of quantifiable thought, has resolved a form of synergy with the mass media in which the latter have become a mere extension of the former. Users' needs allow for the articulation of lines of action in the media that imply that "When broadcasting a need for support online, individuals develop strategies for seeking support that balance their desire to gain assistance with concerns about positive self-presentation", turning their search into a way of building a virtual character with his or her own line of thought based on the facts explained in the reality of the media [15]. The networks converge in nodes that include the essence of a way of building the real that is not articulated, therefore, based on a line of thought and opinion based on the unique guidelines led by the owners of the media, but the new reality is a set of nodal influences in which the line of thought and opinion is decided in relation to the amount of interactions with the message, making the owners of the media necessary but not fundamental intermediaries since "Visibility and persistence are unique to certain online channels" [16]. Social networks "such as Facebook, facilitate the process of supportive communication by providing access to large numbers of potential support providers, lowering the barriers to participating in supportive interactions, and allowing users to broadcast their requests for support" [17].

indicates that "the scenario of technological and business convergence has caused companies (public and private) to try to redefine their position within the value chain with continuous vertical integration processes whose final activity is not easy to define" [18]. Furthermore, the four large technological companies that we could call GAFA (Google, Amazon, Facebook and Apple) have occupied the production and distribution spaces that, in previous times, were occupied by the large companies of the classic cultural industry. These companies have converted the value of the content into a kind of analysis of the metadata associated with it, both in terms of the narrative construction itself and the use and custom that each user makes of it. The value of the content is not defined by the extent and diffusion of it, measured in linear amounts of downloads, but by the integration and interrelationship that the consumption of a specific content has in relation to the environment in which it is downloaded. No content acquires an economic and monetization value by the mere fact of being consumed, but by the platform, time, use, and integration of it within the goal reality that each user is actively and continuously building with our constant interaction on the Web.

And here we find, indeed, a new revolution of the media but not centered on them: the revolution of the Meta-Media, in the sense that the functionality of construction of the communicative message is beyond the very functionality implicit in the existence of the media. The value of the message, therefore, is not constructed through the mass media, but rather it starts from them and becomes profitable when it has surpassed them to form part of the normalized discourse within the networks. Likewise, not only is there a unidirectional discourse in which the origin and profitability of the content is centred on the broadcast companies, but "streaming" has turned the networks into authentic generators of emotional content that compete directly with professional content. The emotion of the user-generator of content (UGC) has not only known how to make a profit, but has also reached a greater share of emotional influence towards an audience perfectly profiled in the same interests, achieving that "the act of streaming should be understood fundamentally as "a performance," including

the need to emotionally prepare and ensure the performer is in the right “mood” beforehand” [19].

The crisis provoked by COVID 19 is a consequence of the idea of emotionality in a systematic way and, as we will probably see in the coming years, it will be built through parallel realities managed by contents integrated in networks, both by broadcast companies and UGCs. These new Meta-Media are configured as those responsible for managing entities and constructions of reality, based on digital experiences and, normally, with a high degree of particular interest focused on emotionally viralizable messages. With all this, the parallel realities of the Meta-Media never manage to converge except in specific cultural facts that condition the difference between countries and cultures.

And it is at this turning point, where it is decisive to study habits rather than the linearity of the figure of use on a content. Parallel digital realities can converge on certain levels of habits that can be evaluated and measured through digital social interaction. Therefore, the main problem derived from the COVID-19 pandemic will not be merely health-related, but the medium and long-term implications involve economic factors with variables that have never been measured before and, therefore, not taken into account. In other words, the pandemic has changed the habits and customs of all societies, introducing action factors that had never been taken into account before: Social distance, the possibilities of digital work, the crisis of mobility as a fundamental element for the diffusion and distribution of content (music, films, series, etc.) and, therefore, added advertising, the digital economy of small and medium enterprises based, after the change, on distance and not on physical space, or the necessary demand for sustainable production and a return to industrial production systems based on the local are some of the variables that have changed and are creating a unique and innovative space where the media will have a structuring but not essential role as they have done up to now.

Social distancing is one of the keys to be taken into account from now on. Most brands have always tried to integrate action experience, mainly group experience for cost savings, with their product, creating habits that have served to build audience loyalty. This new way of experiencing group virtuality and not the real thing, implies new routines based on security and virtual interaction. And the media does not escape from this, having to position its business model in a purely digital environment where product positioning is vital to achieve acceptable returns. The revolution in the media involves a greater contribution to the personal development of its audience, having to identify the precise parameters that define each individual. In fact, the analysis of interaction data is becoming more relevant than audience measurement.

Teleworking goes deeper into this same idea; the spaces and mobility defined in schedules and action habits are going to change drastically, reducing the need for content consumption in relation to the routines of the working world. And this new circumstance greatly affects the media, which has always based its communication strategies, and therefore the advertising market, on the daily habits of its consumers. Teleworking changes the environment of interaction and the routines of action on audiovisual content and, therefore, modifies the programming strategies and the interest of the content, extending the frontiers of action to new spaces that, in all probability, will go beyond the city to the rural area. And, with these new circumstances, interests and needs change, extending frontiers towards more concrete aspects. And, as always, the media must be in the front line.

The relocation of strategic industries will also condition the form and habits of consumption and, therefore, will directly influence the distribution and logistics market. In this new scenario managed by digital interaction but centred on experience with reality, sustainability and the capacity to integrate economic policy into the environment, it will be fundamental to position brands within the new routines of action and interrelation with the product. The media are part of this new reality that starts from the virtual but must be immersed in the real to counter with certain guarantees of success. We cannot expect that the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic will not imply changes in the way of understanding the relationship between the media and the users; the film industry is already suffering the first changes with the release of big productions through platforms and not in cinemas as it has happened with *Mulan* (Disney), so everything is going to move to a new way of understanding a business model in all the media, mainly based on more specific interests and located in geographical areas of interest to each user.

The Media Industry before and after COVID-19: How the Most Affected European Countries have Coped with Social Isolation. New Trends, Media Consumer Habits and Brand Adaptation

The 7th of January 2020, China reported the pathogen which started provoking several cases of unknown pneumonia since the 8th of December 2019 as a novel coronavirus. The confirmed cases raised to 7736 on January 30th. The cause of the rapid spread of the novel pathogen from China to Europe is still uncertain, but a crucial factor was the timing of the first COVID-19 outbreak, prior to China's annual Lunar New Year holiday. Culturally, this is the largest and most important holiday of the year, hence people return to their family homes. This was the cause of the several billion person-trips made by residents and visitors during this time, mostly on crowded planes, trains, and buses. Knowing this meant each infected person could have numerous close contacts over a protracted time and across long distances. Even though the Government started strict containment measures, from cancelling Lunar New Year celebrations to self-isolation, the outbreaks in Europe commenced.

The media industry trends right before the gradual COVID-19 outbreaks were different from each country subject of this study, but all of them had something in common: they were not aware of the fact of to which extent their marketing ecosystems will change after their correspondent outbreaks. We selected 4 of the first 6 most affected countries per coronavirus cases according to [20]: Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. First and foremost, we compare the Hofstede's Insights [21] data extracted per market and we put them into relation with the already introduced Hofstede model [10].

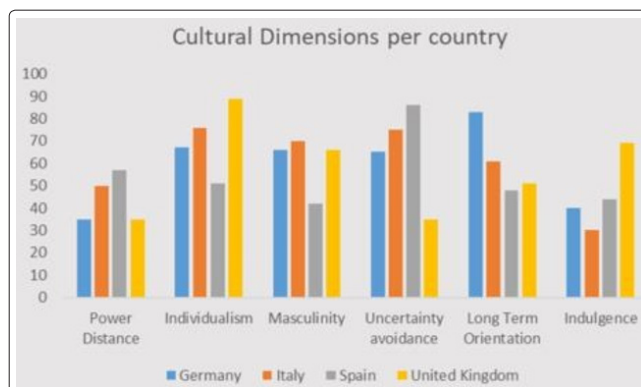


Figure 1: Cultural Dimensions Comparison

Italy

stands as the first and most affected country. The reasons behind it are still unknown, but the fact is that the Mediterranean market has been most hit by the COVID-19 outbreak. Though the actual reasons are not disclosed, we can find some answers based on demographic, cultural (shown on Figure 1) and media consumer facts:

Demographic Analysis

1. The high percentage of elderly population. In 2018, a 22.6 percent of the population was 65 years old or over.
2. The dense population. Italy is a densely populated country, with an average density of 533 people per square mile. In comparison, Germany has a population density of 235 people per square mile while the U.S. has 94. Urban areas are even denser: Rome has 5.800 per square mile and Milan 19,000. This sums up to almost double compared to cities like Berlin or Washington.
3. North Italy's International Business Hub is known worldwide. A high percentage of international business summits are held in northern Italy. To this, we can also add the weight of the fashion industry and its connection with China, epicentre of the epidemic.

Cultural Dimensions

1. The Individualism dimension, though it can vary within the whole country, it shows a higher index than their German and Spanish neighbors. The southern you go, the more accurate the statement of the family network and the group one belongs to are important social aspects, and rituals such as weddings or Sunday lunches with the family are occasions that one can't miss.
2. With a score of 50, Northern Italy tends to prefer equality and a decentralisation of power and decision-making. Control and formal supervision is generally disliked among the younger generation, who demonstrate a preference for teamwork and an open management style. The high score on Individualism accentuates the aversion of being controlled and told what to do. Plus, a key factor in emergency management is observing and learning from the examples of others, which Italy didn't have [22].

Media Consumer Behavior

1. Let us narrow down to Italian media consumer's behaviour. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, there was a significant increase of cinema affinity trend within the Italian population, which was abruptly disrupted by the COVID-19 situation: 22/23 February 2020, Italy's box office lost 4.4 million of euros (-44 percent compared to the previous weekend (15/16 February)).
2. The social media behaviour also changed after February 24th: social conversations have shown a significant decrease compared against the mainstream portals' content. This showed a homogeneous coverage trend 2 days after the main peak.
3. Content-wise, Italian social media behaviour has never lost its sarcastic touch: the top five most retweeted contents were informative and ironic. The informative came mostly from the Red Cross and the official Department of Health accounts. The ironic, from famous and non-famous people who criticised people's panicky behaviour in regard to the pandemic.
4. In a nutshell, Italy has struggled – and is continuing to fight – against an unprecedented crisis that found dangerously fertile ground in elements of the country's demographics, business, geography and culture.

5. But its people haven't lost their social habits – just adapted them, and created perhaps a temporary new national motto: "Distanti ma uniti." Distant, but united. This national motto can be applied to the rest of the markets subject of this analysis: even though the restrictions are real, the desire of communicating and being socially active prevailed. In another form, but stayed.

Germany

As Italy was reporting 250 cases of death in one day the 13th of March of 2020, their neighbours from the North were following up their development closely. The German population developed quickly from an initial panicky feeling (panic buying, extreme social distance measurements) to a state of adaptation towards the so called "new normality". The reasoning behind this is mainly based on:

Demographic Analysis

1. Germany's population is the second oldest in the world, after Japan. "All of these are risk factors for this virus as well as many other infectious diseases," Jens Spahn said. "If you go by the definition, 30 to 40 percent of the population is in a high risk group."
2. 50 percent of the economy won't be affected, or only slightly (50 percent of resilience). Specific sectors like real estate, housing sector, information and telecommunications and large parts of the public service are expected to experience little or no impact.

Cultural Dimensions

1. An elder society who embraces individualism and independence is translated into a better social distancing measurement's accomplishment [23]
2. Germany's high score of 83 indicates that it is a pragmatic country, where people believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions easily to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results.
3. Their low Power Distance, where the certainty for own decisions is not covered by the larger responsibility of the boss, Germans prefer to compensate for their higher uncertainty by strongly relying on expertise. It is a fact, compared to Spain and Italy. The initial panic quickly faded as the trust in Government as the utmost specialists response grew (the level of contentment on how the Government handled the COVID situation raised from a 44 percent in March to a 66 percent in April 2020 [24].

Media Consumer Behavior

1. E-commerce usage raised since the beginning of the pandemic due to the social distance measurements. E-Commerce portals showed new usage hours: 6-8 am. This is a consequence of the remote work standardization, which is encouraged throughout the country, even from the Government.
2. ATL (Above The Line) media consumption increased since the beginning of the pandemic, with linear TV as the one who increased the most, with an increase of 14 percent year on year.
3. Brands confront a recession but also an unique opportunity to obtain better prices on a cluttered media market space, according to [25].

Spain

Stands out as one of the most affected by the COVID-19 crisis and we can break down the main cause as per below:

Demographic Analysis

1. The heterogeneity of the pandemic across Spain, as in Italy, is reflected in wide differences between regions (Comunidades Autónomas), with some of the most affected ones losing up to 10-15 years of weekly life expectancy and more than 2 years in annual life expectancy, whereas other regions' life expectancy was hardly affected. This, added to the old population, were the main factors of Spain being one of the most affected countries.
2. The effects of delayed care of chronic conditions, cumulative anxiety, alcohol consumption, and other factors during the pandemic may contribute to elevated mortality.

Cultural Dimensions

1. Spain, being an extremely collective country, where their folk belong to groups that take care of each other in exchange for loyalty, social distancing measurements became extremely complicated to follow.
2. With a Long Term Orientation score of 48, Spain is a normative country. Spanish people like to live in the moment, without a great concern about the future. In Spain, people look for quick results without delays.
3. Confrontation is avoided as it causes great stress and scales up to the personal level very quickly. There is great concern for changing, ambiguous and undefined situations. Thus, for example, in a very recent survey 75 percent of Spanish young people wanted to work in civil service (i.e. a job for life, no concerns about the future) whereas in the USA only 17 percent of young people would like it [21].

Media Consumer Behavior

1. TV experienced the highest increase, with a +80 minutes daily consumption, compared against the beginning of the pandemic. Newscasts are the main source of information and the most reliable one.
2. Confinement made the difference compared against the rest of the countries. Spanish people compensated the lack of any social interaction by going fully digital (79 percent of the daily time was spent in watching online content).
3. E-Commerce grew exponentially. A 29 percent of the day was dedicated to online shopping during the confinement in Spain (14 March-21 June).

UK

Demographic Analysis

1. The majority of excess deaths (75 percent) occurred in those aged 75 and over. COVID-19 deaths were equivalent to 80 percent of the excess in every age group, except the oldest age group where this proportion is lower. There have been fewer deaths than expected in children under 15 years of age.
2. The mortality rates from COVID-19 in the most deprived areas were more than double the least deprived areas, for both males and females. This is greater than the inequality seen in mortality rates in previous years, indicating greater inequality in death rates from COVID-19.
3. The density of population difference among regions made a difference. For instance, although the first confirmed cases of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK were outside the capital, London emerged as an epicentre of the pandemic early in its spread across the UK.

Cultural Dimensions

1. At a score of 89 the UK is amongst the highest of the Individualist scores, beaten only by some of the commonwealth countries it spawned i.e. Australia and the USA. The British

are a highly Individualist and private people.

2. Most importantly the combination of a highly Individualist and curious nation is a high level of creativity and strong need for innovation. This emerges throughout the society in both its humour, heavy consumerism for new and innovative products and the fast highly creative industries it thrives in – advertising, marketing, financial engineering.
3. A high score of 69 indicates that the British culture is classified as indulgent. People in societies classified by a high score in Indulgence generally possess a positive attitude and have a tendency towards optimism. In addition, they place a higher degree of importance on leisure time, act as they please and spend money as they wish.

Media Consumer Behavior

1. Growth in Digital Commerce and Online Grocery demand
The law firm Squire Patton Boggs reports that 49 percent of shoppers in the UK would consider buying online. However, half of 2,000 consumers questioned in the survey said that they would try to avoid buying online from international sellers that ship from China. Also, due to the unprecedented high demand, the online supermarket Ocado has already advised consumers about delays in delivery.
2. Increased purchases of canned and non perishable goods. It is reported that 34 percent of shoppers are already stockpiling after the COVID 19 outbreak, whose 17 percent of the purchases covers tinned food, toiletries and dried goods. According to Managing Director Nigel Broadhurst, shoppers are spending significantly more than normal. Sales of frozen food have seen notable increases and there has been a trend towards customers selecting multi buy deals and larger packs.
3. According to a survey by debit and credit card operator Barclay-card, more than a quarter of shoppers said they were avoiding high streets and other busy places because they were afraid of contracting the virus. Digital content and subscriptions services, such as Netflix and Now TV has reported a growth of 12.4 percent, while takeaways and fast food sales rose 8.7 percent.

Data Interpretation and Discussion

We can conclude that a more stable economy and a well-developed Public Healthcare system were the main allies to face the COVID-19 crisis. Even though the crisis is not over, these conclusions will be still valid at any stage of the conjuncture.

Consumers Behaviour overall before the Covid-19 outbreak in UK, Italy, Germany and Spain, Despite their Cultural Differences:

1. Consumer's buying habits towards the end of 2019 were defined by the Conscious way of consuming (they don't only want to eat meat and dairy alternatives; they choose clothes that are leather- and fur-free and use non-animal-derived ingredients in their beauty and personal care products. They oppose animal testing for cosmetics and pharmaceutical products, as well as farming methods such as the use of antibiotics in animal-rearing and mega or factory farms).
2. Increasingly, consumers are driven to examine and question everything they read, see and hear. This inherent mistrust of information, perpetuated by social media, encourages similar behaviours while shopping. With Brexit looming, tensions surrounding the potential China-US Trade War and volatile currencies in Latin America due to political turmoil, people are wiser than ever about what they spend their money on and assess all options before committing.
3. Where people are buying: Research is online (Mobile), final

conversion offline. E-Commerce. Need for brands to adapt quickly, as some countries' infrastructure is barely coping with the new demand. This trend might persist after the Coronavirus period.

4. Brands should look to build on these behaviours moving forward by capitalizing on more people becoming familiar with online shopping, video technologies, events, etc.
5. Media consumption changed throughout EMEA and their implications for upcoming media campaigns and their media channel mix (i.e. move budgets from OOH activities into TV/ VOD and digital media).
6. Ensure consumer stabilisation: Invest in your core customer segments that demonstrate a long term growth potential and/or high customer lifetime value. Be sure to anticipate their evolved behaviour and need and address them using hyper personalised messages. If they are subscribe and save members for example, messaging them within an earlier time-frame to offer stock would be a further loyalty driving message.

Conclusions

The COVID-19 reality is becoming a paradigm of new construction of the cultural systems that define each society and identify it in its own sphere of construction.

The solutions and the way to establish measures to contain the spread of the virus and to contain the economic disaster that is occurring in Europe due to the restrictions, are independent variables for each country but aggregated in the trans cultural models that are exercised from the field of advertising. Cultural factors are part of the communicative action since they are based on behavioral patterns associated with a certain social space. The conception of basic concepts on cultural variables is based on the logic of each society that is formed by the interaction between individuals.

The logic of the advertising company accepts these differences to reinterpret them and, thus, be able to arrive at transculturality as an element of communicative value. The fact that the dimensions of Hofstede's model have a bearing on the fact that innovation and the desire for change are scarce in cultures that avoid uncertainty, is contrary to the logic of advertising. This fact conditions the business logic in which production systems are globalized and built to meet global demands. Therefore, there is a need to find cultural interactions between countries with common markets such as those studied here. In this way, the construction of the advertising message becomes trans cultural and, in this way, the management of business resources necessary for the campaigns economizes.

This need, before the pandemic, was one of the bases on which the logic of advertising communication was being built. However, the emergence of COVID-19 has unleashed a revolution in the individual's demand to overcome cultural obstacles and identify himself as an example of a cross-cultural society in which actions to combat an endemic problem must be shared. This unification of actions explains the tendency that is being generated to try to overcome the cultural model of each country. The fact is that geographical and political boundaries are very weak in the face of the mobility factors implicit in the construction of Europe.

We must take advantage of this circumstance to understand that cultural limits impede the development of cultural patterns that hinder a meta-model of European culture capable of highlighting

our differentiating factor concerning other major global cultures. And here, advertising has an essential support point where it can build messages with supranational values based on this new cultural universe.

The outlook is uncertain, but cultural strategies in Europe must converge to consolidate themselves in an unstable world, in which the economic circumstances brought about by the pandemic will strain the cultural patterns that have marked European history. This new model will be based on communication and, here, advertising, as a builder of reality, will play an essential role.

The influence of audiovisual content in the culture of each society is beyond doubt. Digital reality turns this influence into a survival necessity for large companies since the logistic distribution infrastructure that sustains them is based on centralizing resources to serve larger geographic spaces thanks to the instantaneity provided by digital networks. Any platform is articulated around cross-cultural identity relationships from which they benefit in the production and distribution system.

The new identity that is being managed approaches culture as a transnational element and away from the geographic locality that identifies the cultural patterns existing until now. The logic of change is imposing itself on the way we relate to each other as individuals and, by extension, on cultural construction. In fact, this new paradigm is shaped by overcoming cultural factors that had traditionally served to define the cultural and economic action strategies of both companies and states.

The advertising message has entered fully into this new dynamic and communication companies are using it to optimize their workflows, distribution, and market segmentation. As a result, the advertising logic changes and is defined as a global strategy that seeks personalization - outside of massive cultural identities and localized in a territory - to reach cultural patterns located in the universality and delocalization of the digital space.

COVID-19 has helped to develop and consolidate these new cultural patterns more rapidly, which translates into the generation of a new communicative space.

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