

**UNIVERSITY OF VAASA  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS STUDIES**

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**CULTURE AND CONSUMER RESPONSE ON ADVERTISING  
Comparison of Finnish and Italian consumers**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study takes a look at consumer response on advertising. More importantly it focuses on how culture affects the way consumers respond to advertising. Culture's effect is studied through advertising standardization and adaptation. The theoretical part of the study presents theories on international advertising from the point of view of standardization and adaptation, and takes a look at the meaning-based models of consumer response. Based on theory, a framework is developed which presents the interaction between the consumer and the advertisement. Cultural theories from Hofstede, Schwartz and GLOBE are presented in order to identify the different dimensions of national culture. Based on the discussion a framework is again presented, and Finnish and Italian cultures are described.

The theoretical frameworks of international advertising and national culture form the basis of the empirical part of the study. The study is qualitative in its nature and focus groups are used as the main source of data. The empirical part of the study looks at the consumer responses from two different cultures, Finnish and Italian. Two focus group interviews are organized, one for each culture. Television commercials are shown to the participants and the commercials are discussed in groups. Both standardized and adapted commercials are shown in order to see the differences in responses.

The findings of this study show that culture is present in consumer response to advertising. They also confirm that consumers are active when reading the advertisements and a process of interaction is created between the consumer and the advertisement. Culture in addition, determines the level of effectiveness the advertising has on a consumer. Consumers responded for both standardized and adapted advertising. However, adapted advertisements clearly reached a more profound level of interaction. The managerial implications of the study suggest that advertisements should be adapted when the advertiser aims to create a deeper relationship with the consumer. Standardized advertising can also be used but the values that the advertisements present should be carefully planned. The findings also highlight the importance of implementation in advertisement creation.

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**KEYWORDS:** Consumer response, advertising, culture, standardization, adaptation





## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2003 McDonald's launched an advertising campaign which was to be the company's first global campaign. The campaign was named after its main slogans "i'm lovin' it" and the German version "ich liebe es", and it featured a global pop star. It was highly standardized by a single set of commercials and a single brand message although some adaptation, such as translations, was also done. The theme was further integrated in each country's advertising, promotions, public relations, and restaurant merchandising. The campaign turned out to be the company's most successful campaign resulting in highest sales figures and longevity. In 2010 McDonald's re-launched the campaign with an updated touch referring to the outstanding results that it had brought earlier, and by stating that a global way was the way to go. Despite the success of McDonald's global advertising, the dilemma between global and local remains a debate in different areas of business. (McDonald's 2003, Bryson York 2010)

### 1.1. Background of the study

Advertising is a big part of marketing communication in both national and international business. It can be considered as one of the most effective ways of promotion and marketing communication. Advertising can be defined as a message placed in a media. Usually it has been strategically well planned. The advertiser has chosen a target audience for the advertisement, created a message they want to spread and planned an effect they want the advertisement to make. In addition the advertiser chooses the media in which the advertisement will be presented which can vary from television to print advertising and internet banners. It can be said that almost every company uses advertising in its marketing. International advertising means that a company uses same or somehow adapted advertisements in several countries and markets. In the current markets more and more companies are creating international or even global advertisement campaigns with which they hope to reach the hoped results and goals. However, when advertising comes international or global it faces several obstacles and barriers. One of the most significant obstacles is culture. (Czinkota & Ronkainen 2004: 538, Albaum & Duerr 2008: 563)

The word *culture* has many different definitions and meanings. However, usually the definition depends on the context in which the word is mentioned. Hofstede (2005) defines culture as *the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the*

*members of one group or category of people from another.* The Oxford English Dictionary (2010) gives several explanations also, depending on the context. One of them, and the most significant for this study, is that culture is a set of *distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, products, or way of life of a particular society, people, or period* thus a society or a group characterized by such customs. Culture has been a subject in several studies in various fields of study due to its ambiguous character. It still remains an interesting variable since it characterizes different groups and explains their behaviour. Culture's role as a challenge is raised when considered action that goes across these different groups. These actions and the way they should be taken face obstacles that are created by the different cultures themselves.

In international advertising culture becomes an obstacle when companies consider the question of standardization and adaptation. Jain (1989: 70) defines the strategy of international marketing standardization as a use of a common product, price, distribution and promotion program on a worldwide basis. Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulos (1997: 504) define the international advertising standardization as the use of a common approach to promote the same product across national boundaries. Adaptation on the other hand is the opposite of standardization. Adapting means that the advertisements are fitted to every area, based on for example cultural values or other known characteristics of a market. Adaptation has become an interesting topic because of the internationalization and globalization of markets. Every country and culture has their own regulations, laws, customs, values etcetera and these create barriers to advertising. The advertisers must think and plan their advertising strategies well and decide to which point, if at all, they will adapt their advertisement. In some cases the advertisements are more likely to be adopted whereas sometimes a standardized advertisement will save money and time and still provide good results. (Albaum & Duerr 2008: 580, Jain 1989: 70)

The discussion of standardization and adaptation has been a subject of research since the 1950s. Several studies have been conducted on the subject looking at different product categories and differences between countries and market segments. Okazaki and Mueller (2007) have studied the research area by looking at previous studies done in cross-cultural advertising. According to their summary on the research, the question of standardization and adaptation was the second most studied topic (22 per cent), right after cultural values which was the most studied topic (37 per cent). This shows the interest in the topic and also the amount of information that already exists within the topic.

Taylor (2005) has also studied the international advertising research. He takes a look at the progress made in the area of research and suggests interesting topics for future studies. As Okazaki and Mueller (2007) also Taylor states that there have been a lot of studies looking at cultural values especially by using content analysis. According to Taylor these studies could be used as a base for studies, and hypotheses could be developed based on them. Taylor states that instead of studying existing phenomena, the studies should concentrate on what is effective with consumers. This could be done for example by studying the different execution techniques and their effectiveness.

A recent article by De Mooij and Hofstede (2010) also states applications to the research area. According to them, several studies done in the dilemma of standardization and adaptation show that adaptation strategy is often more effective. In fact the question of effectiveness seems to have raised interest in the cross-cultural advertising. Based on previous studies in the area it is clear that there are cultural differences. Countries and cultures differ from each other regardless of which cultural theory one uses. What is clear after the previous studies is that cultural differences exist and they can be used either by adapting and targeting the advertising to the specific culture or by standardizing the advertising for all the audiences. Instead of looking again to this existing phenomenon and how it occurs, it would be interesting and significant to question the effectiveness. More importantly the effectiveness of advertisements should be studied from the consumer's perspective. It would be interesting to question how consumers from different cultures respond to these different kinds of advertisements, and if adaptation is seen as a more effective way of advertising, do standardized advertisements also reach a response from the consumers. By looking at these issues the dilemma between standardization and adaptation could be answered from another point of view that provides useful information for the advertisers when executing their campaigns.

## 1.2. Research question and objectives

In addition to a research purpose a study needs research questions and objectives. These questions and objectives clarify the problem of the research and narrow it down. It can be said that research questions drive the research and structure the problem better. (Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005: 43-47) The research question that this study tries to answer is:

*What is the role of culture on consumers' response to advertising?*

To answer the above defined research question three objectives have been set up. These are:

1. To describe and analyse international advertising studies related to standardization and adaptation, and consumer's response
2. To identify dimensions of national culture
3. To study the consumers' response to standardized and adapted advertisements in the pre-selected cultures

By following these objectives this study will first create a theoretical background for the subject and finally try to answer the research question. Furthermore a framework will be formed based on the findings and conclusions, and managerial implications will be given.

### 1.3. Definitions and delimitations

The study will take a look at the consumer response on advertising and especially the response on standardized and adapted advertisements. The adaptation in this study is done based on culture. The culture is defined and studied in the study through various dimensions. The cultural dimensions used in this study will be the five dimensions by Geert Hofstede, GLOBE dimensions and Schwartz's value dimensions. These theories were chosen because of their common use in international advertising studies.

The goal of this study is to show if and how adaptation improves the effectiveness of advertising through more efficient consumer response. The empirical part of this study concentrates on two selected countries, Finland and Italy. Most of the international advertising studies study the US in comparison with another country. However in this study a European overview will be taken by choosing two countries representing the north and the south of Europe. Thus the differences between these cultures will not be radical but it will provide an overview on standardization and adaptation that can be done within Europe. The empirical part will be done by a comparison analysis between standardized and adapted commercials. Television commercials will be used because they often present more cultural values than other forms of advertising do and companies are willing to invest more in them. The advertisements will be chosen from both countries and both standardized and adapted commercials will be taken.

Another limitation is that the effectiveness will be viewed only from the consumers' perspective through theory on consumer's response and by concentrating on meaning based effectiveness of advertising. This limitation was done in order to better limit and define what is meant by advertising being effective. In practice this means that for example factors like selling figures or return on investment will not be included.

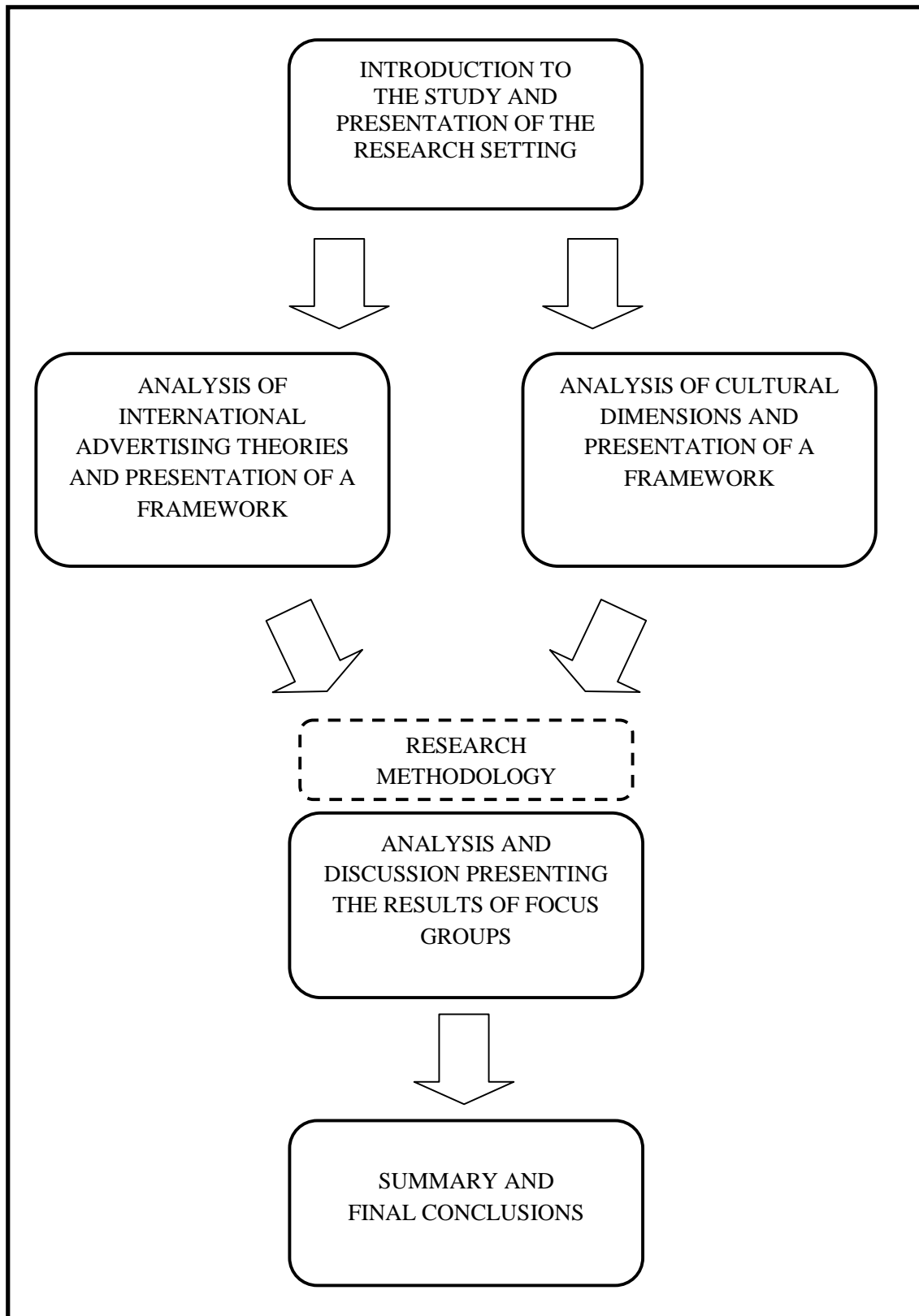
#### 1.4. Structure of the study

The study will be divided into six different chapters in a logical order of sequence. The first chapter of the study will present the background of the study and the research questions and objectives. In addition it will present the definitions and limitations of the study. The second chapter of the study will then take a look at advertising theory. It will first discuss cross-cultural advertising from a more general point of view and then go on to standardization and adaptation theories of advertising. Finally effectiveness of advertising and consumer response is studied by presenting previous studies on the subject concentrating mainly on reader-response theory and meaning-based models of advertising effectiveness.

The third chapter of the study will take a look at culture and cultural studies. Three different cultural studies are presented: Hofstede, GLOBE, and Schwartz's studies on culture. In addition the final part of the second chapter presents the summary on cultural theories and draws conclusions on how national culture can be described through them. Italy and Finland are then described through these conclusions.

Fourth chapter of the study will take a closer look at the methodology of the thesis. The chapter will discuss the research design and justify the choices done for the empirical part. The empirical part will be conducted in the fifth chapter. This chapter will present the analysis and discussion based on the focus group interviews. Finally in chapter six the study will be drawn together by presenting the summary and conclusions based on the discussion done in chapter five. Chapter six will thus include summary and conclusions, which will further present managerial implications and suggestions for future studies.

The whole structure of the study can be seen in figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Structure of the study

## **2. GLOBAL AND LOCAL ADVERTISING TO CONSUMERS**

The business scene has gone through a series of changes during the past years. One of the most significant changes has been the globalization of markets. More and more companies have grown into doing business around the world and some companies are global already when they are born. The reasons behind the change are several. During the past years the trade policies have become more liberal and the countries are keen to co-operate on several different levels. Furthermore technology has given the tools for this by the advances in communication and information technologies. Overall the world is in a peaceful condition which allows the countries and companies to establish international and global businesses. (Theodosiou & Leonidou 2003)

One of the most visible business operations to become international is companies' marketing and more importantly marketing communication. In any industry given promotion campaigns and marketing communications are vital for every company. A company needs to provide information on available products or services that buyers need, to make their purchasing decisions. In today's international environment, promotion campaigns reach worldwide audience and thus become cross-cultural communication. To succeed in this the companies have to use effective coordination and planning. The marketing strategies have to be carefully planned, conducted and measured. The keys to succeed in international markets are given and the possibilities are vast. However, various barriers still exist which every marketer has to be aware of. The differences between countries such as legal, economical or cultural differences create challenges for the companies reaching for success. (Albaum & Duerr 2008: 546-547, Czinkota & Ronkainen 2004: 538)

International advertising is one of the most commonly used and visible of international marketing communication and promotion methods. It can be defined as a non-personal presentation of sales messages through various media internationally which is paid for by the advertiser. Many companies choose international advertising as a way of promotion because of its ever-growing potential. International advertising also offers significant savings in production costs of a campaign and it helps companies to create a continuous brand. When companies choose to use international advertising, they face several issues that have to be decided upon. The companies have to consider issues such as in which countries and markets do they want to advertise, what advertising style should be used, or how much resources will be used. However, one of the most debated issues in companies' international advertising is the dilemma between standardization



and adaptation which will be discussed in the following chapter. (Albaum & Duerr 2008: 548, 563)

## 2.1. Standardization and adaptation of international advertising

As stated previously in the study, standardization and adaptation of advertising has been an on-going debate for sixty years. In international markets the competition between companies has become fiercer and advertising is used as a tool to win that competition. It is clear that companies are eager to find the best and most efficient ways to promote themselves thus the standardization and adaptation issue is significant for their strategies. In addition, when a debate has existed for sixty years, one thing is clear; both poles have their convincing advantages and challenges.

Agrawal (1995) studied the debate in international advertising by looking at both practitioner and academician perspectives on the issue. He reviewed previous studies from the 1950s to 1980s and their main approaches to standardization and adaptation. Table number five presents the results of his study thus the overall trends that the debate has taken during the past decades.

**Table 1.** Practitioner and academician approaches to international advertising 1950s-1980s. (Agrawal 1995: 44)

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s
Practitioners	Adaptation	Trend towards standardization	Adaptation	Standardization
Academicians	Adaptation	Contingency	Adaptation/contingency	Adaptation

The table shows that while practitioners have altered between the two poles, academicians have been more consistent in preferring adaptation. In the beginning of the debate both practitioners and academicians tended to prefer adaptation. This was due to the lack of information on international consumers and markets and to the common use of local advertising agencies. In the 1960s the information increased and even the academicians suggested that advertising should be standardized to a certain level. Contingency approach to the dilemma in fact argues that best sides situation

specifically from both options should be taken. In the 1970s the academicians conducted several studies which showed the differences between consumers thus they turned towards adaptation again. This trend continued in the 1980s. The practitioners on the other hand preferred adaptation in the 1970s mostly due to greater nationalistic forces and unsuccessful standardized advertising in the 1960s. In 1980s the practitioners however, turned back to standardization which was made easier due to the birth and growth of multinational advertising agencies. As seen from the table the development of the dilemma is dependent on several issues that often can come even from outside the actual world of business. However, especially in the way the practitioners have altered their attitude, the main issue to be noted is that both adaptation and standardization have convinced them for being the best way to act. This highlights the challenge that the dilemma presents. (Agrawal 1995: 42-44)

A more recent study studying the prior research concerning the debate is done by Ryans, Griffith and White (2003). They take a look at the debate by trying to answer mainly why the previous research has not provided a clear answer to it and what should be done in order to form one. As a broad conclusion to their review of several studies, they state that research in the area has focused mainly on “doing research” instead of trying to conceptualize it. Ryans et al. (2003) emphasize that the debate will never come to an end before a solid theory on the subject is created. Thus there is need for more theoretical development and testing in order to provide a framework based on which companies could make their decisions. Ryans et al. (2003) thus agree that one clear answer might not be the correct way of facing the dilemma. Instead the suggestion of creating a framework based on which companies can work on, highlights the way in which the dilemma should be considered separately for each case. The development of this kind of framework however would require wide research with different variables and would include both consumers’ and companies’ point of views.

Since for now there is no clear theoretical framework to apply in the dilemma, studies speaking for both poles should be presented. First of all, the theories that speak for the standardization of the advertisements state that the basic human needs wants and expectations go across national, geographical and cultural boundaries since the world is becoming more global. Thus the standardization method expects that the values and lifestyles of people are similar regardless of which country they are from. Globalization has had its effect also on peoples’ needs and even more importantly in their wants. People have access to same data and information from all over the world that in one way or another shape their expectations on life. In fact, the standardization process is also considered easier due to the growth of these international communication channels,

growing use of Internet, and the emergence of global market segments. Consumers can easily find out about the lifestyle of others all over the world and this way shape their own. Celebrities on the other side of the world can decide the colour you should be wearing this season, and it can be much more effective than advertising that colour through adapted advertising. (Albaum & Duerr 2008: 580, Theodosiou & Leonidou 2003: 142)

Standardization is often used for several motives and it brings a variety of benefits. However the most significant reason is usually the cost efficiency and economies of scale it provides. A standardized advertisement gives the advertiser considerable savings in media costs, advertising production costs and advertising illustrative material. These savings can either be used to support the standardized campaign or the company can decide to invest them in any other way. In addition, standardization enables the creation and development of a consistent corporate and brand image across countries. When for example Volvo decided they needed to change their brand image from safety to a sportier one, it used standardized advertising. In this case a global standardized campaign was considered to be able to shape the brand image in a more efficient and coherent way. (De Mooij 2005: 8, Papavassiliou & Stathakopoulos 1997: 50, 4, Theodosiou & Leonidou 2003: 142)

Furthermore standardization reduces managerial complexity by improving the control and coordination of company's international operations. Instead of creating different advertising campaigns in different countries, the company creates one standardized and this way controls its brand and the way it is marketed. Volvo also assured that in each country the brand image would be taken to the right direction, by creating a global standardized advertising campaign (De Mooij 2005: 8, Papavassiliou & Stathakopoulos 1997: 50, 4, Theodosiou & Leonidou 2003: 142)

However, several theories claim that standardization of advertising is an oversimplification of reality (Theodosiou & Leonidou 2003: 142). Researchers state that regardless of globalization of markets, there are several characteristics that require the adjustment of company's marketing strategy. Consumer needs, use conditions, purchasing power, commercial infrastructure, culture and traditions, laws and regulations, and technological development are all factors that cannot be standardized across the countries (Theodosiou & Leonidou 2003: 142). Even if the consumers have access to the same information, their purchasing power might not allow them to gain a similar lifestyle they see somewhere else. In addition traditions, laws and regulations in each country can in a very effective way, decide what kind of marketing can and should

be used. For example in western cultures an advertisement with a housewife would not attract the consumers in the same way it would in more collectivistic cultures.

Albaum and Duerr (2008: 580) also state that people's needs vary based on culture. They say that although some basic needs might be similar in different cultures, people might not be satisfied with similar communication appeals and approaches. This means that the standardization of a product could be appropriate but acknowledging that usage and buying motives vary for most products, the advertising strategies should be adapted.

Studies speaking for adaptation of advertising also state that the cost-reductions companies get from standardizing its advertising should not be the most important objective. Instead the companies should focus on long-term profitability that can be reached through higher sales when companies better exploit the different consumer needs across countries. By this is meant that the companies, adapting their advertising to match their target market in a certain country, create a closer relationship with their customers. This relationship often ties the consumers closer to the company which means that they keep purchasing the product also in the future. (Theodosiou & Leonidou 2003: 142)

In addition adaptation theories see that in advertising both the advertiser's and the recipient's cultural background affect or even determine the message perception. De Mooij (2005: 8) states that the researchers that speak for standardized advertising speak about standardizing the stimulus but they do not considerate the response to standardized stimuli. This is a very interesting point of view also for this study. It suggests that consumers do give a different response to standardized advertisement than to adapted one. In addition the response to adapted advertising is considered more effective. In fact DeMooij suggests that by taking into consideration the response, the advertisers would find need for adaptation.

De Mooij (2005: 139-140) states also that advertising that goes across cultures lacks shared conventions. These conventions are essential when people read the messages of advertisements. In fact, the message and the way it is perceived will decide how effective the advertisement is. In addition, De Mooij (2005: 32) states that an advertisement to be effective must accomplish certain goals. These goals are:

1. Create meaningful associations
2. Be relevant and meaningful
3. Be linked with people's values
4. Reflect the role the product or brand plays in people's lives

5. Reflect people's feelings and emotions
6. Be instantaneously recognized

All these goals support the idea that both the advertiser's and the recipient's cultural background affect the success of an advertisement. For example a standardized advertisement would not easily be linked to people's values or reflect people's emotions. In fact, these six goals are all influenced by the culture thus it should mean that a standardized advertisement will not reach all of them. This on the other hand would suggest that the standardized advertisement would not be effective. The following chapter will take a closer look at the effectiveness of advertising in general and more importantly to the consumer response that advertisements get. (De Mooij 2005: 32)

## 2.2. Consumer response on advertising

Effectiveness can be defined in several different ways depending mainly in which context it is being studied. Oxford English Dictionary (2010) defines effectiveness as *the quality of being effective*. Thus it can be described as an action that has an effect on a certain object. In advertising, the advertisements are effective when they have a desired effect on the target consumer group. Thus the consumers respond in a way that the advertiser was hoping them to respond and therefore there is communication between these two actors. The level of advertising effectiveness and consumer response can be measured and studied in several different ways depending on for example who's point of view is taken, the consumer's or the advertiser's. However, very seldom the issue is simple and one clear answer can be found. (Aitken, Gray & Lawson 2008)

The first advertising effectiveness models were developed in the 1960s. Already from the beginning, the studies were mainly quantitative in their nature and concentrated on surveys and statistics from the advertiser's point of view. McCracken (1987: 121) commented on the early studies on effectiveness of advertising by stating that these studies saw the consumer as an entity constantly looking for information. He named this approach as information-based. This approach however, is not enough when the research is more interested in issues such as consumers' experiences, attitudes, emotions, or behaviour. These issues already give the consumer a bigger role than just an entity looking for information. In addition, the reasoning that consumers have behind these issues is more complex and cannot be measured simply through statistics.

Aitken et al. (2008) state in their study that advertising effectiveness research is more and more interested in consumers, than actually in the content and forms of advertising. Thus consumers have reached a more important role in these studies and their behaviour is more and more studied. Furthermore the consumers are seen more as actors who communicate with the advertisers and the advertisements instead of just information receivers. This change in advertising effectiveness research has developed a new area of studies, the meaning based models and reader-response theories. These models and theories are significant especially for this study since they present ways to study the consumer and consumer's response to advertising on a deeper level.

The meaning-based models on advertising form the basis for reader-response theories. McCracken (1987) presents these meaning-based models by first highlighting the role of culture in consumers' responses to advertising, which the information-based approaches ignore. He claims that when individuals observe and look closely at advertisements they are looking at material that has been formed culturally. In addition these individuals are interpreting this material according to their own cultural conventions. Culture is thus involved both in the process of message creation as in the message perception. In this study, culture's role in message perception is studied but also its role in the creation process would be an interesting subject of study.

From here on, the definition of meaning-based models can be drawn. The meaning based models are a way for the consumers to form a variety of meanings as outcomes to personal interest-driven, culturally situated act of advertising interpretation. Thus these models explain how the consumers actively interpret advertising by forming meanings from it. These meanings furthermore shape consumers' behaviour, attitude, and several other issues related to the relationship with a product. This point of view in fact, gives research qualitative methods in order to deeper analyse the consumer response on advertising by looking at the meaning creation process instead of only focusing on the behaviour happening after. (Mick & Buhl 1992: 317)

The reader-response theories and their development are studied more closely in the study by Aitken et al. (2008). They present the need for more comprehensive and consumer-centred studies of advertising effectiveness. As stated before, the reader-response theories share the aspects and characteristics with the meaning based models. In these theories the consumer is seen as a reader of advertisements who responds in a certain way. These responses are mainly influenced by the reader's culture, context and experience. For example a response from two persons from the same culture, in the same context might differ due to their different life experiences. Thus the process is

interactive presenting the exchange between the consumer and the advertiser. Aitken et al. (2008) state, that the outcome from this interaction is a negotiated understanding of an advertisement. Thus understanding is seen as an outcome in a similar way that meaning-based models see the creation of meaning. The understanding and meaning that is created by the consumer further explains the way in which the individual experiences the advertisement, and can thus be used in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the advertisement. (Aitken et al. 2008: 279-282)

Scott (1994) studied the reader-response theory more closely and developed its use in consumer research. In her study Scott looked at the existing theory and offered suggestions about how it could be used in studies about the way consumers read advertisements. In the study, she first takes an overview on the reader-response theory. Scott presents the theory as a way of reading where no correct way of reading exists. Instead the reading happens together with the probable knowledge, expectations or motives of the reader who forms a response to the advertisement. Although the responses can vary based on several factors, the readings are based on collective conventions such as culture, and groups can have similar strategies of reading and thus shared responses. Scott states that reader-response theory should be more used in advertising studies because it would allow the researchers to better study the impact of advertising in both reading and exchange. Thus it would give a more thorough view on the entire process of advertising reading and responding to it.

Scott refers to a study by Mick and Buhl (1992) when presenting the already existing studies that use the reader-response approach to advertising. Mick and Buhl have conducted a significant research in order to elaborate the meaning-based models which is considered significant also for this study. They claim in their study that earlier studies even on meaning-based models are mainly concentrating on interpretive analyses of advertisements and their content, instead of consumer response and behaviour. Thus their study makes an effort in order to look on advertising more thoroughly from the consumer's point of view. They describe consumer as an entity embedded within a sociocultural context, consisting of several different characteristics. Consumer's personal history and current self that have been forged through environment and the private self, guide the consumer's behaviour and understanding. This it does also in the process of advertising receiving and interpretation. Consumers make sense of advertisings and interpret them, and this way, experience the advertising. In their study Mick and Buhl put their model into a test by conducting an empirical study by studying three Danish brothers in life history interviews. The study looked at how these brothers created meaning in advertising when their backgrounds were very similar due to family

relations. The authors asked the brothers for example how they experienced a certain advertisement. By looking at how these brothers experienced advertising Mick and Buhl received support for their model for example by finding similarities in their responses. Family relations can in fact be considered as a very connecting variable. Culture, which is researched in this study, is also an interesting variable since it does not tie people with each other that tightly but affects them all on a profound level.

Mick and Buhl (1992) established the beginning of meaning-based models and their application to advertising effectiveness studies. Studies have been conducted with concentration on meaning and response to advertisement which is considered useful also for this study since theoretical framework can be built on them. Kenyon, Wood and Parsons (2008) conducted a study in which they put into a test the meaning-based models, including the one by Mick and Buhl. They studied the decoding of advertising with young people in order to see what kind of meanings they developed and how these meanings were constructed. The study included seven discussion groups and 16 in-depth interviews. The main conclusion drawn from the study by Kenyon et al. was that when readers were creating meanings it was done based on their knowledge and previous experiences. The process of creating meaning was seen as a complex process in which several different issues influenced. They pointed out that when creating the meanings the participants draw information also from their inherited culture which thus had a direct influence on the meaning. Different variables thus were seen effective but the recognition of culture can be considered the most significant for this study.

Bartholomew and O'Donohoe (2003) conducted a study on children's response to advertising by looking at it from the meaning based and reader-response theories' perspective. The study was interpretive and qualitative in its nature and the methods used included photo diaries, individual interviews and focus group discussions. By applying a qualitative method the authors were able to explore the way in which the children experienced advertising. The authors asked for example the children to talk freely about advertisements that they liked and disliked, and they were asked to create an advertisement for an imaginary product. As findings the authors identified three roles – ad masters, ad controllers and ad critics – which the children took that gave them a degree of power and guided their dealings with advertising. Furthermore the children were seen as active readers who were able to understand advertising and create interaction with it. For this study the study by Bartholomew and O'Donohoe was considered significant since it used methods that will be used also in this study. Qualitative methods were proven useful since they gave the possibility to freely discuss

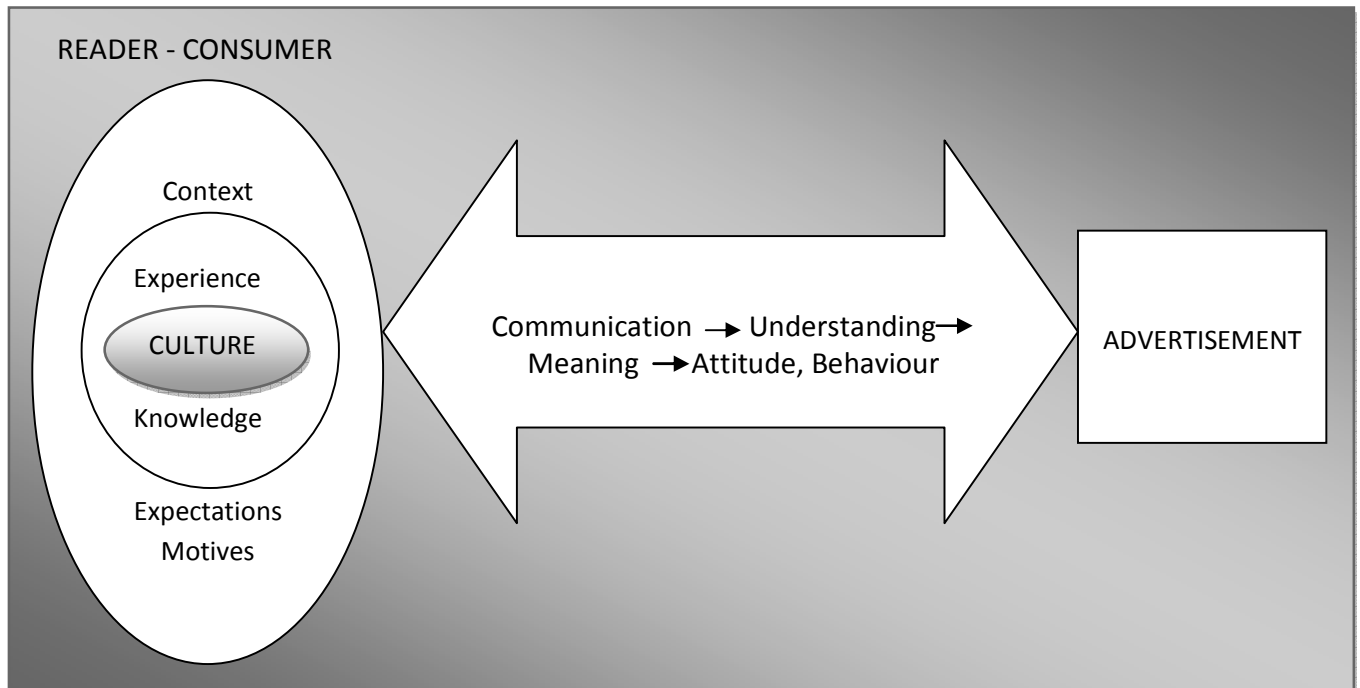


with children. In addition the study showed how readers of advertisement, even children, are able to create interaction instead of just receiving information.

Yannopoulou and Elliot (2008) also conducted a study on advertising by applying the reader-response model. They studied how different audiences interpreted different kinds of print advertisements. The audiences were divided into interpretive communities based on the respondents' social class. In their study Yannopoulou and Elliot justified the choice of the model by referring to its ability to emphasize the meanings that consumers get from advertisements instead of giving a textual analysis. The authors were interested in in-depth data and thus this was the correct method to apply. They conducted all together thirty in-depth interviews in the UK with participants from middle and working class, both male and female. The results of the study showed that there could be found significant differences in the responses based on social class and even gender of the participants. Thus the environment in which these persons found themselves had shaped their way of seeing advertisements. This would suggest that also culture is a significant variable when interpreting advertising. The authors further encouraged the future studies to concentrate on what consumers do with advertisements rather than what advertisements do to them.

Hung, Li and Belk (2007) conducted a two-step study on advertising perception. They studied first the role of modern women in advertising in China and then furthermore the female readers' perceptions of these advertisement images including modern women. They also refer to the need of studying the meanings behind the consumer's readings of advertisements. Furthermore, an interesting addition is how they emphasize the role of shared cultural conventions and common experiences that form the basis of the reading process. The second part of the study and its results give significant insights also for this study. The authors interviewed all together fourteen women one at a time in a semi-structured setting by showing them five different advertisements. The goal of this was to define the responses these women gave to the images used in the advertisements. The results of the study showed that the participants used several ways of identification and a variety of response strategies when reading the advertisements. These responses further explained the attitudes these women had towards the pictures used in the advertisements. Thus the process of receiving advertising was considered as an interactive process in which different variables affected the final outcome which furthermore affected the attitude and behaviour of these women. For this study this is considered significant since it presents the process point of view on the issue of advertisement reading.

Several studies have thus been conducted in the area of consumer response on advertisement concentrating on different aspects and variables. However, by looking at the studies some common insights can be drawn. Figure number two presents the summary of these studies and their models on how consumers respond to advertising.



**Figure 2.** Consumer response on advertising.

In the figure, consumer is seen as a reader which consists of several different characteristics. All these characteristics; culture, context, expectations, experience, knowledge, and motives, affect the process that is created between an advertisement and the consumer. However, the different characteristics can be seen in different levels in the consumer. Context, expectations and motives are all factors that vary based on the situation. For this reason they can be found on the outer circle. Experience and knowledge are characteristics that are deeper in the consumer and do not change as fast as the previous ones. However these are characteristics that are still visible to a certain level, also from the outside. Culture is situated in the most inner circle since it is the most hidden and stable characteristic. It shapes the consumer from within and does not change in the way the other characteristics do. This makes it an interesting subject for study for its unique character.

The actual interaction between the consumer and the advertisement is presented as a two way arrow since the theories on consumer response highlight the interaction being

both ways. Consumers do not just receive information from an advertisement but instead create a deeper level with it. Thus the interaction between consumer and advertisement consists of several elements. First of all there is communication between the two actors which shows in the way the consumer interacts with the advertisement. This leads to understanding which means that the consumer understands the advertisement and its message. Communication can thus happen without the consumer actually understanding the message of an advertisement. Understanding can further lead into the creation of meaning which can be considered as the most important part of the interaction. When consumer creates meaning, he takes the understood message and reflects it to different aspects of his personal life. Thus the consumer evaluates the message by looking at how that specific message contributes in their lives. By creating meaning the advertisement can be considered successful because it then affects the attitude and behaviour of the consumer. Shaping consumer's behaviour and attitude is significant since it affects directly to the relationship between the product/service and the consumer.

The previous studies on the subject and the theories that they developed thus presented a complex interaction between a consumer and an advertisement. The response that consumers give is often the result of two way interaction in which several minor characteristics play a significant role. From this interaction, the consumer response towards a certain advertisement can be drawn and the level of effectiveness can be studied.

### 3. DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE

#### 3.1. Culture definitions

As mentioned earlier in this study, the concept of culture is very widely used in different contexts and there are many definitions of culture. The most common use of the word, especially in informal speech can be the referring to high art such as classical music or theatre. This study concentrates on different aspects of culture. In fact the more significant descriptions are those which describe culture as something that binds groups together (De Mooij 2005). As referred earlier, one of the most well-known definitions of culture in the field of cultural studies and the most significant one for this study is by Geert Hofstede. He has described culture as *the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another* (Hofstede 2005: 4). The idea of distinguishing groups from one to another is the aspect that marketing and advertising consider important because those are the reasons why the dilemma of standardization and adaptation exists, because there are differences between different groups.

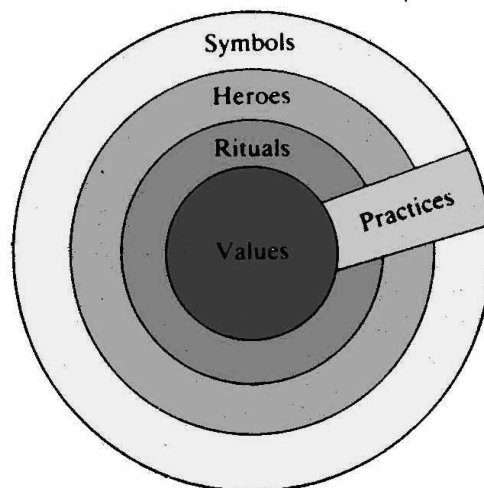
Also earlier referred explanation for culture, found in the Oxford English Dictionary (2010) is significant for this study since it gives a detailed description for the term. It says culture consists of *distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, products, or way of life of a particular society, people, or period*. This explanation defines the different dimensions that form a culture and the differences between them. These are ideas, customs, social behaviour, products and way of life. All of these dimensions can affect the marketing strategies of a company and more importantly the success of these strategies.

The authors of project GLOBE, which will be further studied later on in this study, also defined their own view on culture and its definition. According to these researchers culture could be defined by being *the shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations*. (House, Quigley & de Luque 2010: 114) The idea of transmitting culture across generations is interesting since this definition is the first one to introduce the point of view.

For this study culture is defined through all these previous definitions. Culture is for the most seen as both distinguishing and bonding. It creates groups of people that bond due

to their shared way of life but also distinguish themselves from other groups for the same motives. The members of these groups have common values, traditions and customs, behaviour, ideas, beliefs, and identities. Most importantly the members share their interpretations. This suggests that people from the same culture interpret events in a same way but differently from other groups. This forms the basis of this study since it recognizes the role of culture in consumers' interpretations of advertising.

In addition Hofstede (2005: 6-8) defined the differences between cultures. According to him these differences formed an onion which can be peeled one layer at a time. The deepest parts of a culture are the values which can be found in the core of the onion. Going outwards there are rituals, heroes and symbols. These three are subsumed under the term practices. The theory is presented in figure number three.



**Figure 3.** The “Onion”: Manifestations of culture at different levels of depth. (Hofstede 2005: 7)

Symbols, heroes and rituals are the visible part of a culture that is why they are categorized under the term practices. Symbols are for example words, gestures or pictures that are understood in the same way by people from a certain culture. These factors are found on the most superficial layer of the onion because they change easily during time and different cultures can copy them from one to another. In advertising symbols are very important and the advertiser must understand the differences between cultures. A symbol in one culture might have a totally opposite meaning in another. (De Mooij 2005: 37)

Heroes are a big part of a culture because they are seen as role models by the members of a certain culture thus affect even the values in a culture. Heroes can be real life persons or imaginary ones and they create characteristics that are prized in a culture. Rituals are for example the ways of greeting or ceremonies in a culture. They are considered as an essential part of a culture and are implemented for their own sake. (De Mooij 2005: 37-38, Hofstede 2005: 7-8)

Values are found in the centre of the onion because they present the core of a culture that cannot be easily seen by outsiders. Also to the members of a culture the core values can sometimes be difficult to observe because people are not consciously aware of them. Values are acquired already in a very early part of our lives in an unconscious way. It is self-evident that values affect the way advertising is interpreted in a culture by its members and so affect also the dilemma of adaptation and standardization. (De Mooij 2005: 38-39, Hofstede 2005: 8)

Several significant studies have been made in the area of culture. Hofstede's study is one of the most referred to and the dimensions are used in hundreds of studies. However, Hofstede's study has received also criticism and alone it is not sufficient to provide a wide enough view on culture and its characteristics. Okazaki and Mueller (2007) state in their study on cross-cultural advertising research that cultures are most often compared with respect to Hofstede's dimensions, the GLOBE study, and Schwartz's theory on cultural values. All these three studies will be presented from the oldest to youngest in the following chapters in order to study better what cultures consist of and to create an understanding on the different aspects of culture. Finally a summary will be presented on the theories and they will be compared between each other in order to reach a comprehensive description of a national culture. In addition Finnish and Italian cultures and their differences are studied based on the conclusions of the chapter.

### 3.2. Hofstede's five dimensions of national culture

As stated earlier in this study, Geert Hofstede has made a remarkable cultural research on different dimensions of culture. He conducted a study during the 1960's and 1970's in which he studied the leaders of IBM and their cultural backgrounds. Based on his findings Hofstede further distinguished five different dimensions that he identified as cultural dimensions. These are *power distance*, *individualism/collectivism*, *masculinity/femininity*, *uncertainty avoidance* and *long-term orientation*. Hofstede

studied different cultures and gave each of them a score on a scale from zero to hundred for every dimension. These dimensions and scores help the understanding of the differences between cultures and explain the different ways of acting. They clarify the differences and give actual examples in which dimensions certain cultures differ from one to another. (De Mooij 2005: 59-60)

*Power distance* dimension looks at the inequality in a culture from the point of view of a less powerful member. It defines to what extent the less powerful members accept and expect the power to be distributed unequally. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is approved and supported by the followers as much as by the leaders. It is obvious that all cultures or societies are unequal but more important is that some are more unequal than others. (Hofstede 2010)

In high power distance cultures there can be seen a clear social hierarchy where everyone has their own place. The differences are respected and authority is given naturally. In high power distance cultures social status must be visible to others so that the respect and authority required can be given. Older people are important in high power cultures and they are proud to be older whereas low power distance cultures older people want to look younger. Advertising in high and low power distance countries is different because the goals differ between them. For example in a high power culture a company wants to get their brand as a number one brand in the country but in a low power culture challenger brands are often favoured. (De Mooij 2005: 60)

*Individualism* versus its opposite *collectivism* dimension takes a look at the different levels of integration within a culture. In individualistic cultures everyone is supposed to look after themselves and their closest family only. In collectivistic cultures people are integrated very strongly in groups, often extended families that look after them in exchange for loyalty. Word "I" is more used in individualistic cultures as in collectivistic cultures the word "we" is more common. In collectivistic cultures the goals and needs of a group are more important than those of an individual and ones identity is defined by the group. In individualistic cultures self-actualization is important and people make part of groups that they have joined willingly. Overall the world is considered more collectivistic than individualistic. De Mooij (2005: 62) states that from seventy to eighty per cent of the world's population is collectivistic. (De Mooij 2005: 61-63, Hofstede 2010)

Also in international advertising there can be seen differences between individualistic and collectivistic countries. In collectivistic countries for example corporate brands are

more popular than product brands and people are interested in concrete product characteristics. In individualistic countries brands can even be seen as unique human personalities. (De Mooij 2005: 64-65)

The contrast between *masculinity and femininity* is the third dimension by Hofstede. This dimension takes a closer look to the values in a society. In a masculine society achievement and success are highly valued whereas in a feminine society caring for others and quality of life are found very important. In masculine societies men are supposed to be tough and focused on material success whereas women should be modest and tender. In feminine societies both women and men are supposed to be modest and tender. In a masculine society the members tend to think the bigger and the faster the better. On the other hand in a feminine society small is beautiful and the society is more people oriented. Feminine cultures appreciate modesty and no one should brag about their success. (De Mooij 2005: 65-67, Hofstede 2005: 120)

In advertising subjects like winning, success and status are very often used. All of them are very tightly linked to the contrast between masculinity and femininity. This makes the dimension an important one to understand when planning an advertising strategy. The approach has to be different in a masculine society than in a feminine one. (De Mooij 2005: 67)

*Uncertainty avoidance* examines a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. It looks at unstructured situations like unknown, surprising or unusual situations and examines how the members of a certain society handle these situations and behave in them. Where the avoidance is high the situations are being minimized even by law and rules whereas in uncertainty accepting cultures the unstructured situations are not seen as a negative thing and there are only few rules. The life is less structured where the level of avoidance is low and also conflict and competition are seen less threatening than in high avoidance cultures. (Hofstede 2010, De Mooij 2005: 67-68)

The people are also different depending on the level of uncertainty avoidance. In a culture where the avoidance is high people are more emotional, they have generally a higher level of anxiety and tension and the communication between them is more formal. People also release their tension by showing emotions, talking loudly, expressing with their hands and driving cars more aggressively. In low uncertainty avoidance cultures people are more phlegmatic and they do not express their emotions. (Hofstede 2010, De Mooij 2005: 67-68)



A fifth dimension was added later to Hofstede's study in co-operation with Chinese scholars. This dimension divides cultures *into long-term oriented and short-term oriented*. Long-term oriented cultures exhibit a practical future-oriented perspective as the short-term oriented cultures have a conventional historic or short-term point of view. In long-term oriented cultures people value perseverance, thrift and sense of shame. In short-term oriented cultures the values are personal steadiness and stability, respect for traditions and protecting one's face. (De Mooij 2005: 69-70, Hofstede 2010)

### 3.3. Schwartz's universal value theory

The previous cultural theory by Hofstede concentrated on developing dimensions of culture based on different characteristics of each culture. This was mainly done in order to identify common characteristics that cultures share with each other or the opposite ends they present. Furthermore with this theory the cultures are then categorized and compared and used in future research in several fields of study. Another series of studies on culture is done by Shalom Schwartz. As most of the cultural theories, also Schwartz's studies have the origins in Hofstede's study (Schwartz 1992: 1). Schwartz's study concentrates on values. He defines values by describing five different features they present. According to Schwartz and Bilsky (1987: 3-4) values are (1) concepts of beliefs, (2) they pertain to desirable end states or behaviours, (3) transcend specific situations, (4) guide selection or evaluation of behaviour and events, and (5) are ordered by relative importance. Thus they present the desired goals that individuals have that guide them in their lives. Schwartz studied values in order to find out how these values are affected by individuals' social experiences and how values effect behavioural orientations and choices they make. In addition he studied values in order to see what the cross cultural differences in them are, how these differences are caused, and what their effects are. The point of view of cultural differences is the one which is considered most significant for this study. (Schwartz 1992: 1-2)

Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) first constructed a theory in the first study on values and identified that values are representations of three universal requirements of human existence: biological needs, interactional requirements for interpersonal coordination, and societal demands for group welfare and survival. Schwartz further developed the study between 1988 and 1992 by looking at the universality of values and the cross cultural differences in them. He conducted a large survey in 38 different countries, including both Finland and Italy, in order to find out which are the truly universal values. Based on these two studies all together ten different universal values were

finally identified: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. (Schwartz & Bilsky 1987, Schwartz 1992: 18, 37)

*Power* and *achievement* share several common characteristics. Power presents values that are connected with social status thus authority and prestige such as wealth, whereas achievement can be defined by individuals' believe in personal success and ambition. The main difference is that power values highlight more the attainment and preservation of power whereas achievement emphasizes the constant competence in human interaction. (Schwartz 1992: 8-9, 1994: 22)

*Hedonism* is the common term presenting the values related to pleasure and sensuous gratification for an individual. It simply describes the values connected with satisfying the needs of oneself. Examples of values are enjoying life and pleasure. *Stimulation* is the set of values that derive from the need for excitement, novelty and challenge in life. It describes the belief of individuals that there has to be variation in life in order for it to be stimulating. This set of values shares common characteristics with the one of *self-direction* which consists of values that emphasize independent thought and action-choosing together with creating and exploring. (Schwartz 1992: 5-8, 1994: 22)

*Universalism* describes the values that people have towards the universe and how it should be treated. Such values are connected with understanding, appreciation and tolerance together with protection of the welfare of the universe thus all people and nature. Examples of values are equality and broad-minded. *Benevolence* shares to some extent the same values with universalism. It consists of values that are connected with preservation and enhancement of welfare but instead of universe, it concentrates on people that are in closer personal contact with an individual. Examples of values are honesty and loyalty. *Conformity* on the other hand shares some common characteristics with benevolence. It can be described as the ability to control one's actions, inclinations, and impulses that could be upsetting or harming to others or even violate the social expectations or norms that exist. Like benevolence, also conformity is more concerned of people that are closer to the individual. Examples of values are politeness and obedient. (Schwartz 1992: 9-13, 1994:22)

Values related to *tradition* come from groups in which the individuals belong to. These groups share customs and traditions that are valued by each member. Tradition values can thus be described as respect, commitment and acceptance of these customs and ideas that are given to the individual usually by the culture one lives in but also by

religion. Examples of values are humble and devout. *Security* is the last set of values and it can be defined as the pursuer towards safety, harmony, and stability of society, relationships and oneself. Examples of values are national security, social order and clean. (Schwartz 1992: 9-10, 1994: 22)

In the study, different scores were given to each country with a scale from one to seven. Countries scored seven if that specific value was considered highly important whereas countries that scored one did not put importance in that value. Furthermore Schwartz used a multidimensional scaling procedure in order to better study the correlations between the different values and their dimensions. He conducted an even wider study and finally discovered seven culture level value types which were furthermore summarized into three dimensions, each answering to an important issue in culture. The seven values types were conservatism, intellectual autonomy, affective autonomy, hierarchy, mastery, egalitarian commitment and harmony. (Schwartz 2001)

Conservatism, intellectual autonomy and affective autonomy together form the first of the three dimensions, the embeddedness versus autonomy dimension. This was created by Schwartz in order to answer a basic issue that cultures confront – the relation between an individual and a group. Thus it shares common characteristics with Hofstede's individualism versus collectivism dimension and GLOBE's in-group and institutional collectivism dimensions. Conservatism presents the other pole of the dimension by describing cultures in which an individual is seen mainly as a part of a group participating in a shared way of life, and identifying oneself with the group. In these cultures the emphasis is on the maintenance of status quo and in avoiding actions that might harm the group or its traditional order. The other side of the dimension describes cultures that present the opposite set of values. In these cultures individuals are seen autonomous entities who are entitled to pursue their own interests and desires. The two different value types within this present the two types of autonomy. Intellectual autonomy looks at the intellectual interests such as curiosity and creativity whereas affective autonomy highlights the experiences in life such as pleasure and exciting life. (Schwartz 1999: 26-27)

Hierarchy versus egalitarianism is the second dimension and it is formed by identically named value types. This dimension resembles Hofstede's power dimension and GLOBE's Schwartz stated that this dimension answers to another basic issue that all the societies encounter which is to guarantee responsible behaviour by its members. People in different cultures understand the right and responsible behaviour in other ways. One pole is presented by hierarchy value type which is a culture in which right behaviour

respects the power relations existing in that culture. The power is often distributed unequally and it is seen acceptable by the members of that culture. The opposite side of this dimension is egalitarianism. In these cultures the members are seen as equals who voluntarily cooperate in order to bring welfare to themselves and others. Freedom, honesty and equality are highly valued in these cultures. (Schwartz 1999: 27-28)

The third dimension, mastery versus harmony, comes from the identically named value types. This dimension answers the third basic issue of societies which is the behaviour and relation the members have with the natural and social world. Cultures that present the mastery side of the dimension believe that individuals should master and change the world constantly in order to assert control. This is usually done through active self-assertion, by being ambitious, competitive and daring. The opposite values are presented by harmony value type in which the members of a culture are willing to accept the world as it is. This emphasizes the unity with nature and the fitting into the environment. (Schwartz 1999: 28)

### 3.4. GLOBE study

GLOBE, the research program on Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness, was originally started in order to study leadership effectiveness and organizational culture. The project was started in 1991 and it took a wide view on the existing leaders and their behaviour. All together GLOBE collected and analyzed data from 17000 managers from 951 organizations in 62 societies. The project has been divided into phases that each give new results and insights on the matter. The main phases and the most important ones regarding this study are the first two phases. In the first phase of the study the authors wanted to develop the right research instruments that would be needed in order to assess societal culture and leadership. Furthermore the second phase, based on the results in the first one, created nine dimensions of culture which consisted of nine core attributes of societal and organizational cultures. These dimensions are further presented in the next chapter. GLOBE study has been very successful despite its young age. By the year 2004 more than 100 articles and book chapters had referred to the study. (House et al. 2004: 9, House et al. 2010: 113)

The GLOBE dimensions were created in the second phase of the study. All together scores on a scale from one to seven for 62 societies were given for each dimension. In addition based on these scores the societies were divided into clusters. House et al. (2010: 117) state that the dimensions of GLOBE have turned out to be useful tools also in

international advertising research. The main style in which these dimensions were created was that they were based on earlier cultural studies and combined previous studies on culture. This can be seen in the dimensions as they share common characteristics with several other cultural theories. One of the clearest references is Hofstede's study which is present in several GLOBE dimensions. The authors of GLOBE created all together nine different dimensions that covered all the aspects that GLOBE considered significant in a culture. The nine dimensions were: uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation. The dimensions are presented in table number two. (House et al. 2010: 117-118)

For each dimension GLOBE identified two types of scores, one to describe the practices in a culture and another one to describe the value in a culture. The main difference between these two scores was that the first one showed the actual behaviour in a certain dimension by a certain culture whereas the second one, based on values, showed the desired behaviour in a culture. For this study the behavioural score is more important since it shows the actual actions of a culture. (House et al. 2010: 117-118)

**Table 2.** GLOBE nine dimensions of culture. (House 2010: 118)

<b>Cultural Dimensions</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>Performance Orientation</b>	The extent to which a community encourages innovation, high standards, excellence, and performance improvement
<b>Uncertainty Avoidance</b>	The extent to which a society, organization, or group relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate the unpredictability of future events
<b>In-Group Collectivism</b>	The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families
<b>Power Distance</b>	The extent to which a community accepts and endorses authority, power differences and status privileges
<b>Gender Egalitarianism</b>	The degree to which a collective minimized gender inequality
<b>Humane Orientation</b>	The degree to which and organization or society encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring and kind to others
<b>Institutional Collectivism</b>	The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action
<b>Future Orientation</b>	The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards future-oriented behaviors such as planning and delaying gratification
<b>Assertiveness</b>	The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others

The dimension of *uncertainty avoidance* describes the level to which members of a culture rely on established social norms, rituals and bureaucratic practices and thus they fight the uncertainty. It has been widely studied in social science literature and thus been interpreted in several different ways. It was also present in Hofstede's study. Countries that score high on this dimension often create detailed strategies, plans and procedures and they do not tolerate rule breaking whereas countries that have low scores take things in a more flexible manner with simple processes and adaptable strategies. (House et al. 2004: 602-618, House et al. 2010: 117-118)

Another dimension that shares a common scope with Hofstede's dimension is the one of *power distance*. GLOBE study defines this dimension as the extent to which members of a society expect and agree that power should be divided and authority and status should be endorsed. Countries scoring high in this dimension have hierarchical structures in the society and the communication is mostly from top to bottom. In low power distance countries on the other hand the status is less valued, there is less structure and communication is considered both ways where everyone's opinion is respected. (House et al. 2004: 536, House et al. 2010: 118-119)

The dimensions of *institutional collectivism* and *in-group collectivism* both look at the way the members see the importance of collective behaviour. Institutional collectivism highlights the importance of dividing resources and the rewarding of collective action whereas in-group collectivism emphasizes the level of pride, loyalty and cohesiveness that an individual expresses in groups such as family or work organization. Also both of these dimensions share common ideas with Hofstede's dimension of individualism. However, Hofstede's study concentrated mainly on the issues that in GLOBE study are present in in-group collectivism dimension. Thus countries with higher scores in in-group collectivism are more likely to identify themselves through their families whereas countries with low scores are less interested in identifying themselves through collectives and see themselves as individuals. Another point of view to the collectivism dimension is the institutional one where countries that have a higher score in institutional collectivism are more eager to emphasize group performance and rewards whereas low scored countries are more interested in individual rewards. (House et al. 2004: 453-454, House et al. 2010: 119)

The dimension of *gender egalitarianism* shares common insights with Hofstede's masculinity/femininity dimension. GLOBE defines its dimension in two ways. First it describes the degree to which the gender role differences are being minimized in the society and second the extent to which women in the society should have the same

opportunities as men. Countries that score high on this dimension often have more women in important positions and both genders share a common level of education. Countries that on the opposite score a lower value had fewer women in significant roles in the society and women were also generally less educated than men. (House et al. 2004: 343-344, 359, House et al. 2010: 119-120)

*Assertiveness* is another dimension from the study which takes a closer look at the relationships that the individuals share in a society. More specific, it describes the extent to which the individuals are assertive, confrontational and aggressive in their relationships. Although it is not as clear as in the dimension of gender egalitarianism, also this dimension is developed based on Hofstede's masculinity dimension. Assertiveness takes a closer look on the values in a society. Societies that score high on this dimension value tough, dominant and assertive behaviour whereas lower scores come from societies where cooperation and modesty is valued. In addition high score societies look at peoples' actions more than their being and low score societies tend to have sympathy for the weak. (House et al. 2004: 395, 405-407, House et al. 2010: 120)

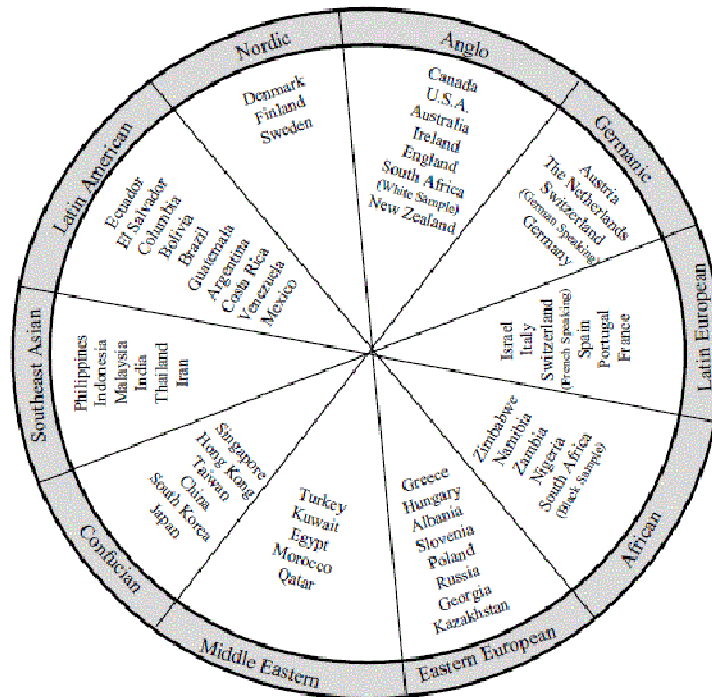
The dimension of *future orientation* is the level to which the members of a society are encouraged and rewarded for future oriented behaviour, such as planning and investing in future. It studies the way societies see time and what are the relationships between the different temporal frames: past, present and future. In this dimension, societies that report high scores are more future oriented. These societies are more eager to save for the future and they see gratification as something that comes with time through long-term success. On the opposite, the societies that score low in this dimension are more willing to spend now and they see gratification as something that should be here and now. (House et al. 2004: 282, 285, 301-302 House et al. 2010: 120-121)

*Performance orientation* is a dimension that shows the level to which a society encourages and rewards its members for innovation, excellence, high standards and performance improvement. This dimension presents a new insight on culture that most of the earlier studies, including Hofstede, have not measured. Countries that score high scores in this dimension value training and development and reward for performance. They emphasize results over people and prefer direct and explicit communication. Countries that have a low score in the dimension, present the opposite angle. They value relationships and harmony and emphasize seniority and experience. In addition ambiguity in communication is valued. (House et al. 2004: 239, 243-245, House et al. 2010: 121)

The last, ninth dimension is the one of *humane orientation*. This dimension describes the degree to which the members of a society are encouraged and rewarded for fair altruistic, friendly, generous and caring behaviour. Thus the dimension takes a closer look at the human nature in a society and whether it is considered good or bad. Societies that have higher scores in this dimension are more humane oriented. These societies value love, kindness and generosity, and they consider others more important than themselves. Low score societies on the opposite, consider self-interest important and see everyone responsible for themselves and for solving their own personal problems. These societies can be described as more egocentric societies. (House et al. 2004: 569-571, House et al. 2010: 121-122)

Both Finland and Italy were also part of the GLOBE study which all together studied in its first and second phase 62 different societies. As stated before to all of these societies the study presented two types of scores for each dimension, a score for society practices thus the way the society is, and a score for society values thus how the society should be, the desired score. As a part of conclusions the study defined country clusters in which it placed the different societies based on the scores they reached. The study formed clusters in order to facilitate the comparison of different countries. When studying culture the acknowledgement of one culture's characteristic is often not enough but instead the research should always compare different cultures. In addition the clusters of GLOBE are also significant for international advertising research. As House et al. state (2010: 124) clusters give information based on which working with different cultures can be lifesaving. Also in advertising processes these clusters can help the companies in their decision making. For example in countries that share a common cluster more standardized advertising can be used. Figure number four presents the different clusters formed in the GLOBE study. (House et al. 2004: 178-179, 190, House et al. 2010: 123-124)





**Figure 4.** Country clusters of GLOBE study.

The division done by GLOBE research formed ten different clusters: Southern and Confucian Asia, Latin America, Nordic, Germanic, Latin, and Eastern Europe, Middle East, Sub-Sahara Africa and Anglo. Italy was categorized in the cluster of Latin Europe whereas Finland was in the cluster of Nordic Europe. Latin Europe cluster consisted of countries that shared an influence by Roman culture. Nordic Europe cluster has its origins in the formation of Scandinavia and the countries in the cluster share common Nordic features of culture

### 3.5. Summary on cultural theories

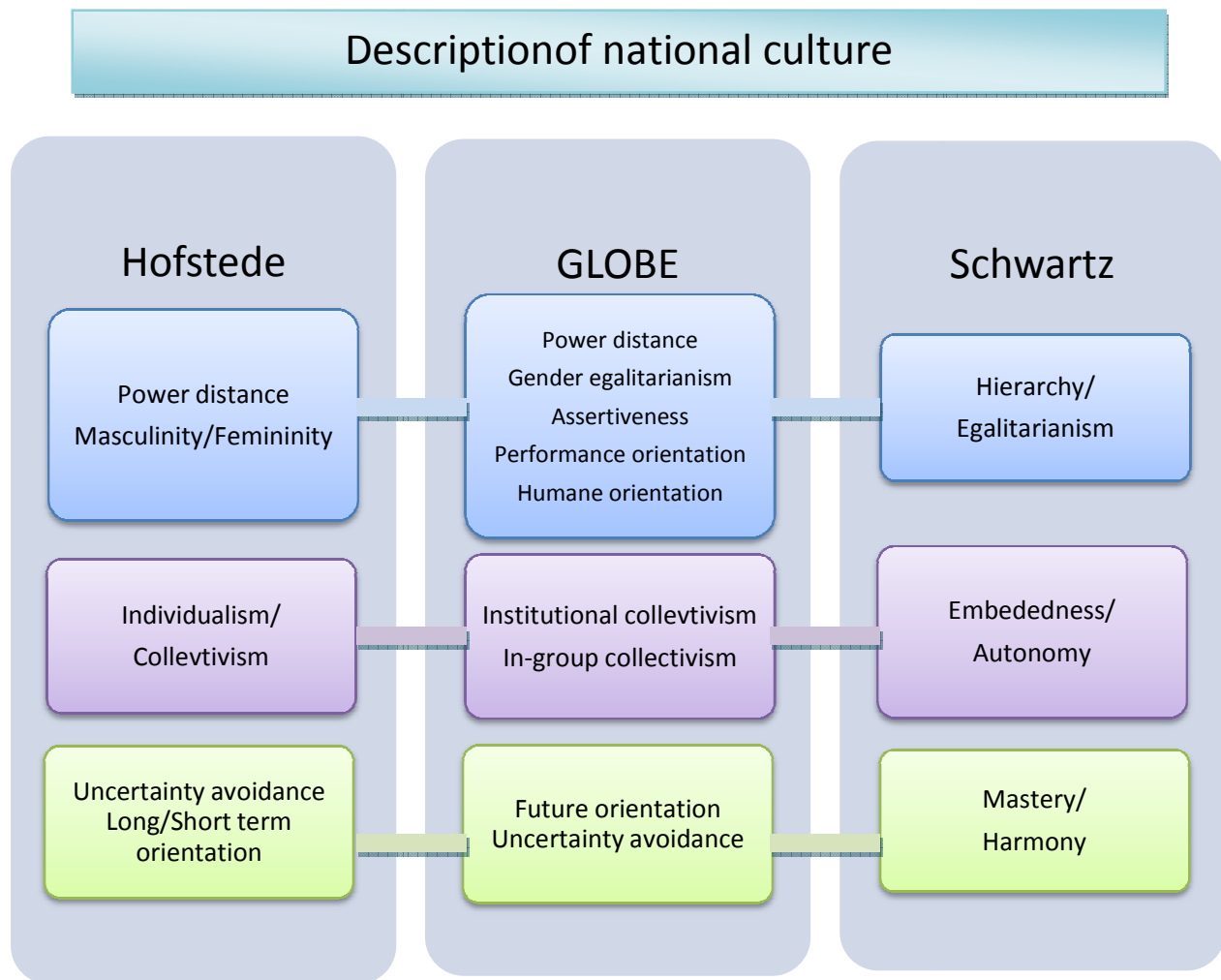
Hofstede, GLOBE, and Schwartz all gave their own insights on what are the dimensions that together form a comprehensive description of a culture. The theories all share common insights and can be compared between each other. Only one theory is often not enough to provide a thorough description of a culture mainly because all theories can be discussed and criticized in their nature. Hofstede's study has reached far most the largest amount of criticism. This is mainly due to the wide use of his theory and the way in which it has turned into the most referred culture theory in the academic literature. Hofstede's study has been criticised thus for several reasons. To start with, academicians state that five dimensions are few to describe properly a culture and some

important dimensions might be missing. In addition the age of the data is questioned since most of it was collected between 1968 and 1972. Hofstede's study also concentrated mainly on work-related behaviour and values and thus the transfer to other areas such as national cultures in general can be misleading. In addition although the study included several countries many important countries and cultures were not part of Hofstede's study. (Okazaki et al. 2007: 505)

Although Hofstede has reached far most criticism, there are also reasons why it has become the most referred culture study. The use of five dimensions has made the theory easy to use and modify based on the study in which it is used. Although five dimensions might be few, they give an insight to culture which furthermore enables for example the comparison between different cultures. In addition, even Hofstede himself recognizes that there might be other dimensions that he did not find. However, Hofstede's study remains one of most thorough study, including both empirical and theoretical data, on culture although it did not include all cultures and countries. Also the fact that Hofstede studied IBM employees did not mean that the values and dimensions would be more related to work than national culture. In fact, the employees still presented different cultures and reflected their answers based on them.

Schwartz's study and the GLOBE study have not reached the same level of criticism that Hofstede's dimensions have. This is mainly because these theories are less used. However the studies have been compared between each other in order to study the similarities and the main differences. The comparisons give interesting insights on all theories and help their use in analyses. First of all the studies can be compared on a general level. For example Hofstede's and Schwartz's studies present an older study period whereas GLOBE study was mainly conducted in the 1990s. In addition whereas Hofstede studied IBM employees, Schwartz studied teachers and students, and GLOBE business managers. This gave a vast viewpoint on different presenters of a culture and affected the creation of dimensions also.

In addition to general level comparison, the dimensions of each study can and should be compared on a more profound level. Figure number five describes the main relationships the different dimensions of each theory share with each other and how they together help to form a description of a national culture. Furthermore both Finland and Italy will be further analysed through this figure.



**Figure 5.** Cultural theories and their relations between each other

The different dimensions from each study were first compared by looking at what these dimensions have in common with each other. By doing this, the dimensions that describe the same kind of aspects of culture were put into same groups. Overall three different groups of dimensions were created. The division was done based on Schwartz's dimensions since it provides a wide overview on different aspects of culture, with the total of only three dimensions. Dimensions from GLOBE and Hofstede's studies were first analyzed by describing what aspects of culture each of them describes and then furthermore matched with Schwartz's dimensions. The following analysis presents these different divisions of dimensions and applies them to Finnish and Italian culture. Both Finland and Italy were a part of all three cultural studies and thus have scores for the different dimensions.

Italy is a Mediterranean country with a population rate of 58 million people. The northern part of the country is a developed industrial zone whereas the south is poorer and agricultural. One of the most important part of the Italian economy is the manufacture of high-quality consumer goods and one of the most important export commodities are textiles and clothing. (World Fact Book a)

Finland is a Scandinavian country with 5.2 million inhabitants. Its economy is highly industrialized and the most important economic sector is manufacturing - principally wood, metals, engineering, telecommunications and electronics industries. Forestry has been a key factor for Finland's economical success in the past. Today however the main export commodities are high-tech products such as mobile phones, Nokia being one of the leading companies in the industry. (World Fact Book b)

The first group of dimensions is formed by Hofstede's power distance, and masculinity/femininity, GLOBE's power distance, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, performance orientation, and humane orientation, and Schwartz's hierarchy/egalitarianism. All these dimensions present different aspects in cultures towards power and equality between individuals. The scores for each dimension for both of the countries can be seen in table number three.

**Table 3.** The scores for Finland and Italy in the first group of dimensions

<b>Cultural study (scale)</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Finland</b>	<b>Italy</b>
Hofstede (1-100)	Power distance	33	50
	Masculinity/Femininity	26	70
Schwartz (1-7)	Hierarchy	2.03	1.69
	Egalitarianism	5.26	5.57
GLOBE (1-7)	Power distance As is/Should be	4.89/2.19	5.43/2.47
	Gender egalitarianism As is/Should be	3.35/4.24	3.24/4.88
	Assertiveness As is/Should be	3.81/3.68	4.07/3.82
	Performance orientation As is/Should be	3.81/6.11	3.58/6.07
	Humane orientation As is/Should be	3.96/5.81	3.63/5.58

The main differences between Finland and Italy are seen in Hofstede's scores. Finland is seen clearly as less hierarchical country with softer feminine values whereas Italy presents a higher power distance and high level of masculinity. However, GLOBE and

Schwartz scores put the countries closer to each other and even give both countries the opposite characteristics. Italy presents a slightly higher score in GLOBE's power distance and assertiveness, but Finland gets the higher score in Schwartz's hierarchy dimension. In addition Finland's scores seem to highlight soft values in humane orientation and femininity, although performance is also quite important. The 'should be' scores of GLOBE for both countries are the closest ones thus the ideas that the two cultures have about an ideal society are similar. As a summary it can be said that both countries value equality and low hierarchy but in Finnish culture it is more clearly already present. Although Schwartz's score for hierarchy results low, Italy's scores related to power still show that the country respects hierarchical differences.

The second group of dimensions is formed by Hofstede's individualism/collectivism dimension, GLOBE's institutional collectivism and in-group collectivism, and Schwartz's embeddedness/autonomy dimension which consists of conservatism, intellectual autonomy, and affective autonomy. All these dimensions share common insights since they describe the relationship individuals have between each other. The scores for both countries are presented in table number four.

**Table 4.** The scores for Finland and Italy in the second group of dimensions.

<b>Cultural study (scale)</b>	<b>Dimension</b>		<b>Finland</b>	<b>Italy</b>
Hofstede (1-100)	Individualism/Collectivism		63	76
Schwartz (1-7)	Embeddedness/Autonomy	Conservatism	3.84	3.28
		Intellectual autonomy	4.62	4.60
		Affective autonomy	3.51	2.95
GLOBE (1-7)	Institutional collectivism As is/Should be		4.63/4.11	3.68/5.13
	In-group collectivism As is/Should be		4.07/5.42	4.94/5.72

In Hofstede's study both Finland and Italy are considered individualistic countries. In GLOBE study Finland results higher scores in institutional collectivism whereas Italy's score is lower. In in-group collectivism however, the countries have closer scores. In Schwartz's study the countries have scores that can also be considered similar. Based on all the scores the countries can be defined mainly individualistic. The countries both

share some characteristics related to collectivism but the scores are mainly all presenting the individualistic side of each dimension.

The third group of dimensions is formed by Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance, and long/short term orientation, GLOBE's future orientation, and uncertainty avoidance, and Schwartz's harmony, and mastery dimension. All these dimensions are related to the way the individuals see themselves in the world and how they behave related to that. The scores for both countries for each of these dimensions are presented in table number five.

**Table 5.** The scores for Finland and Italy in the third group of dimensions.

<b>Cultural study (scale)</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Finland</b>	<b>Italy</b>
Hofstede (1-100)	Uncertainty avoidance	59	75
	Long/Short term orientation	41	34
Schwartz (1-7)	Harmony	4.54	4.80
	Mastery	3.63	4.08
GLOBE (1-7)	Future orientation As is/Should be	4.24/5.07	3.25/5.91
	Uncertainty avoidance As is/Should be	5.02/3.85	3.79/4.47

Hofstede's study presents the countries as high on uncertainty avoidance and short term oriented. Based on Schwartz's study, both countries seem to value harmony over mastery. In GLOBE study, Finland is seen more future oriented than Italy but Italy seems to value future orientation more than Finland. GLOBE study also valued the uncertainty avoidance and these scores are not coherent with Hofstede's. Whereas Hofstede gave Italy a higher score, GLOBE study revealed the opposite. In GLOBE, Finland has a higher score than Italy. However, when looked at the 'should be' scores Italy values more uncertainty avoidance than Finland. The difference between these two studies can thus be explained through the different aspects of the scores of GLOBE.

Overall based on the discussion done, summaries for both countries can be drawn. Finland is a country that is characterized by feminine values and individualism. The culture values harmony which also presents a feminine value. Another feminine value is the high score humane orientation, especially for the 'should be' score. Finnish culture also values performance which can be seen in work and school life.

Italy is a more masculine country which however values also feminine values to some extent. The culture is also characterized by higher power distance thus the people experience some kind of class differences. Like Finnish, also Italian culture is individualistic and it in addition values harmony. Italy also values highly future and humane orientation although these values are not directly seen in the culture.

### 3.6. Summary of the theoretical framework

Chapters two and three described and studied the main theoretical issues of this study. In order to form a clear background for the empirical part both studies related to international advertising and national culture had to be presented. Based on these two chapters a short summary can be drawn before further continuing to the empirical part of this study, and to the testing of these theories.

Issues related to international advertising standardization and adaptation were presented in order to show how the dilemma has been created. Previous studies were presented which all provided valuable advantages and disadvantages of both options. Furthermore consumer response to advertising was studied through several previous studies. Figure two presented the framework created based on the discussion. Theories on national culture concentrated on creating different dimensions of culture for better description of a national culture. The different dimensions of the three cultural theories by Hofstede, Schwartz and GLOBE were presented. Each study provided their own dimensions which were further compared with each other. Based on this comparison figure number five was formed. The theoretical framework for the empirical part of this study can be created by integrating figure number five into figure number two.

Figure number five presented the description of national culture. This national culture has a significant role also in figure number two as it forms a part of the consumer as a reader. Culture is considered as one of the most important parts shaping the consumer on a profound level. Thus its role in the interaction between the consumer and the advertisement should also be significant. Both Italian and Finnish cultures were described in order to see how they affect the way the consumers from both countries respond to advertising. This in fact, will be studied more closely in the empirical part of this study.

## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

When conducting a research, an important phase is the choice of research design. The most relevant choice is done when considering the choice between quantitative and qualitative study. Quantitative study methods are mostly used when the focus is on facts and the emphasis is on testing and verification of an issue. Qualitative study on the other hand is more concentrating on understanding and especially the understanding from respondent's point of view. In addition in qualitative studies information is collected through interviews whereas in quantitative studies questionnaires are used. (Ghauri et al. 2005: 109-111)

This study will be conducted as a qualitative study. Qualitative method was chosen because of the nature of the information that should be collected in the empirical part of the study. Consumer response is a wide and ambiguous concept thus quantitative methods would not be suitable to collect the right kind of data. The study aims to understand the responses of the recipients for certain commercials which requires more in-depth methods. Questionnaires would not be enough in order to really understand the opinions and responses that the chosen participants have regarding the commercials. Thus the choice of qualitative method seems natural and evident.

Furthermore the method to be used is focus groups. Focus groups are a form of qualitative research which shares characteristics with another form, interviewing. Thus focus groups are a form of group interviews which are conducted in an unstructured way within a small group of respondents. (Malhotra 1999: 149) Focus groups were chosen for this study because of the information that can be reached within these discussions. Focus groups are also often used to test advertising messages or concepts. (Daymon & Holloway 2002: 188) As stated before, the consumer response is not an easy variable to study due to its ambiguity, and qualitative, more unstructured method seems to be the most suitable one. Focus groups allow the researcher to change and create new questions while the interview proceeds. This helps the researcher to gain more in-depth information which furthermore helps the process of answering the research problem. Focus groups and overall the data collection process will be presented in more detail in the following chapter.



#### 4.1. Data collection

As stated in the previous chapter focus groups will be used in this study as a source of data. Overall there are several issues to consider when conducting a focus group study. Morgan (1997) identifies five different stages: planning, recruiting, moderating, analysing and reporting. The planning stage is about the preparation before the interview. Focus group interviews should always be carefully planned. In the planning process variables such as location, environment, procedure, and the nature of the group will be chosen.

A focus group is usually formed by six to ten participants. Too small group does not give enough insights to a matter whereas too large group will easily be too noisy and this way difficult to analyse. In addition too many participants can lead to a situation where only some of the participants are discussing and the others remain silent. However, the size of the groups should always be considered carefully in order for it to suit the study they are used for. For this study a focus group of six persons seems suitable. Six participants will give enough insight on the subject but it will also enable a deeper level of discussion which will help the data analysis. In addition to the number of participants, the number of focus groups needs to be considered. Usually three to four focus groups are being organized, in order to gain enough data. In this study however, two focus groups was seen as a suitable number. One group would present Finnish culture whereas the other would present Italian culture. The number of groups was chosen due to the resources available and the nature of this study. One focus group for each culture will give enough data for exploratory study and a possibility to further develop the study in the future. (Daymon & Holloway 2002: 190-192)

In focus groups participants and their characteristics should also be carefully planned. The focus group should either be heterogeneous or homogeneous, depending on which one is the more suitable one for the study. Homogeneous groups are more commonly used. In these groups the participants have something in common. These can be experiences, work positions, age, gender etc. In heterogeneous groups on the other hand the participants all differ from each other. For this study the focus groups will be homogeneous. As in many cases, the groups are formed by participants who have both similar and different characteristics. The similarities ease the communication whereas the differences bring different insights to the discussion. In this study the groups will be formed by university students. Both female and male participants will be chosen in order to study also how gender affects the consumer response. A more detailed

presentation of the participants can be seen in table number six. (Daymon & Holloway 2002: 190-192)

**Table 6.** Description of the participants of the focus groups.

Focus group 1: Finland				Focus group 2: Italy			
Participant	Age	Gender	Field of studies	Participant	Age	Gender	Field of studies
1	24	female	Business	1	24	male	Finance
2	28	male	Business	2	24	female	Language
3	28	male	Business	3	23	female	Management
4	26	female	Business	4	22	male	Economics
5	27	male	Business law	5	24	male	Economics
6	27	female	HRM	6	26	female	Finance

A total of 12 participants were thus chosen based on nationality and national culture, age, and gender. Six participants were chosen to present each culture. The age of the participants varied from 22 to 28 years and they presented different fields of study. However most of participants were business students. The Italian participants were Erasmus exchange students and had stayed in Finland for a maximum time of six months.

Another issue related to the organization of focus groups is the choice of environment. The environment should be neutral but also familiar to some extent. A neutral environment facilitates the discussion and the familiarity of a location helps the participants to feel more relaxed and free to express their opinions. For this study the environment will be a room from the university's library. This was chosen because of the characteristics of the participants. A room at the university will be both neutral and familiar to them. The room was chosen based on the size and the possibility to show the commercials. Thus the room will be big enough to seat all the participants comfortably and there is a screen in order to show the commercials. The same space will be used for both groups in order to create a similar situation which furthermore helps the analysis of the data. (Daymon & Holloway 2002: 194-195, Malhotra 1999: 150-151)

In addition the focus groups should be either recorded or videotaped in order to further analyse the interview even after the actual situation. The focus groups for this study will be videotaped. Videotaping was chosen because of the wider data it provides. By only recording the focus group, the data analysis would be more challenging. It would be more difficult to clearly understand which participant is talking and much of the

information could be lost. Videotaping instead enables the researcher to see even the expressions and nonverbal communication that the participants use. These can be critical facts when looking at the results of the study. For this study the videotaping will be done non-stop for the whole duration of the focus group. One camera will be used and the video camera's position will not be changed during the focus group. This was mainly chosen in order for the participants to get as comfortable as possible when filming thus easing the discussion and communication. (Daymon & Holloway 2002: 194-195, Malhotra 1999: 150-151)

In addition the choices for commercials will be carefully planned. As stated before the advertisements used in this study will be television commercials. The commercials will mainly be chosen based on their level of standardization and adaptation. First a standardized advertisement is chosen. This is done because of the wider availability of standardized commercials, but also in order to find commercials that can be showed to both Finnish and Italian participants to make the analysis more valid. When the standardized commercials will be chosen, an adapted advertising will be looked for. This adapted advertisement will be chosen based on its homogeneity with the standardized advertisement. This will mainly mean the similarity in product category, or a common advertising style used in the advertisements. Altogether ten different commercials will be chosen for both groups.

#### 4.2. Data analysis

The data from focus group interviews will be the main source of information in the empirical part of this study. The data received from the focus groups will be analysed by linking it to the theoretical part presented in this study. No specific programs or tools will be used in the data analysis. Instead the data will be analyzed by the author based on the conclusions and the framework created in the theoretical part. The contents of the discussions will be carefully examined by looking at the data and deciding how it implicates to the study. This requires detailed analysis of the data in order to find the meaning behind it. In practice this means the analysis of the content of the focus groups. (Stewart & Shamdasani 1990: 105)

The data analysis can be divided into different parts. First of all the commercials that are used in the focus group interviews are analysed. This is done in order to better understand why these certain advertisements were chosen and what aspects they bring to the interview. Furthermore the focus groups will be analysed. This is done by looking

at each focus group at a time. The results are presented for each commercial and more importantly the analysis will focus on interaction between the participants and the commercials, and in the creation of meaning. Culture and how it appears in the responses will be looked at carefully. In addition the interaction will be studied by looking at which level of interaction is created between the consumer and the advertisement. The analysis is done based on the different commercials. This means that for example the response to adapted commercials will be compared to the response to standardized ones. This is the most important part of the data analysis since it forms the basis of the conclusions of the study. The different responses and the levels of them that the consumers from different cultures give to different advertisement are carefully analyzed in order to provide information how all these factors effect the process and whether or not the theories should be further used in future studies.

#### 4.3. Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are issues that should be carefully evaluated in terms of quality and credibility of a thesis. Reliability describes the extent to which the findings of a study are consistent. By this is meant that the results of a study should be as identical as possible regardless of who is conducting it. Validity on the other hand looks at the study by evaluating whether or not the study actually measures what it is supposed to measure by looking at the findings of a study. Validity can be evaluated related to several different issues depending mainly on the nature of the study and its methodology. It is especially important when conducting quantitative studies. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009: 156, 326)

In this study reliability and validity issues will be improved through several details. First of all the research process is carefully explained and described in the methodology chapter of this study, in order to make the process transparent. Also the theoretical part of this study improves reliability by explaining which theory is used in the data analysis and interpretation. Reliability and validity will also be relevant with the behaviour of the moderator of the focus groups. First of all the opening question made by the moderator is carefully planned and evaluated in order for it to appear as neutral as possible. An important issue is also the language used in the focus groups. Cultural and linguistic issues are relevant to both reliability and validity of a study since they can affect the understanding between the interviewer and the interviewees. In this study the focus groups will be held in the interviewees' mother tongue. This way the interviewees are able to express themselves better. The moderator of the focus groups is Finnish and

has knowledge of both cultures, Italian and Finnish. Her mother tongue is Finnish but she also speaks fluent Italian. The fact that Italian is not her mother tongue can affect the reliability of the study. However, to improve the reliability and validity issues the focus groups are videotaped and the participants are also asked to write down their comments in order for the moderator to go back to the comments and to be sure there are no misunderstandings.

In addition the location in which the focus groups are organized is neutral in order for it not to affect the results. Wrong location can affect the results significantly if the interviews are conducted for example in crowded places with a lot of noise. As mentioned before, the focus groups of this study will be held in university library's room which is considered neutral and quiet. Reliability and validity are improved also by the level of information the interviewees are given. In this study this means that the participants will not be fully informed on the actual subject of the thesis in order for this not to affect the results. The moderator will inform the interviewees that the thesis is about advertising but the consumer response part of the study will be kept secret. If the participants would be informed that their responses are the main issue in the focus groups, they could change their behaviour on purpose or subconsciously.

The interviewees of the focus groups themselves also affect the issues of validity and reliability. First of all the participants in this study were young adults and university students. This can affect the generalizability of the results since they represent only a certain group of people from that certain culture. Young adults tend to be more international and they travel more, thus the results could differ if the participants would be for example middle-aged. In fact the Italian participants are already abroad since the focus groups are organized in Finland. However the short time they have stayed in Finland has not affected their cultural background. In addition the fields of study that the interviewees were studying can affect their responses. As seen from table six the main field of study was business. This can affect the results since business students might have studied also marketing and advertising. Thus they could see the advertisements from a different point of view than someone who has not studied business.

Another thing affecting the reliability and validity is that most of the participants also knew each other. This can affect the results because it affects the setting of the focus group. Participants that know each other can behave in a different way than they would if they would meet for the first time. However, behaviour in a group where participants are familiar with each other might be positive for the results since they could be more

open to present their ideas. In a group of strangers, the participants could be more reluctant to express themselves. The same issues are valid also regarding to the level of acquaintance with the moderator. Some of the participants knew the focus group moderator before which can also affect the discussion in the group. In addition issues related to the commercials should be considered significant for reliability and validity. Since the commercials are from each country's national television the participants might have seen some commercials before. The responses to commercials that they recall seeing before might be different than they would have been if they saw the commercials for the first time.

All these different issues related to different aspects affect the reliability and validity of this study. Each issue will be considered carefully when conducting the analysis and reporting the findings. Also the transparency will be highlighted throughout the study in order to improve both reliability and validity. This way the results of this study can be considered more significant and generalizable.

## 5.ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis will be conducted in this chapter by first analysing the commercials that were chosen. Each commercial will be presented and analysed, and the justifications why a certain commercial was chosen will be provided. Furthermore the focus groups' results will be presented by describing in more detail the implementation of the groups and the data that was collected. Finally the research findings will be presented based on the analysis on the focus groups and the data collected in them.

### 5.1. Analysing the commercials

As stated before ten different commercials were shown for both focus groups. In total 17 different commercials were chosen out of which three were shown for both groups. Those three were standardized commercials from Pepsi, Kinder, and Volvo. The Pepsi commercial (Appendix 1.) presented a scene in a pub where a young man is sitting next to a beautiful young woman. The woman first rejects the man when he's offering her a drink. A moment after there is a news report stating that an asteroid is approaching earth and that these are the last moments of their life. The reporter suggests no one to be alone in a moment like this. This makes the woman jump on the man and they fall to the floor. Shortly after, the man is seeing arriving to a room where the news report had been filmed. At the end the commercial reveals that the news report was organized by the man himself with the help of his friends. The product, Pepsi, is shown only shortly in the end. Throughout the commercial the language used is English and no subtitles are used. The commercial presented mainly masculine values since it pictured woman in a weaker role.

The commercial by Kinder (Appendix 2.) is advertising their product Bueno. It is also a fully standardized commercial since it is spoken in English and does not include any subtitles. The commercial is directed to women. It shows young women in three different situations; having French manicure in Paris, drying their hair on a yacht, and enjoying a Kinder Bueno while a man is cooking. All these situations suggest the women to break boundaries. The commercial is clearly presenting individualistic and feminine values. At the end of the commercial the product is shown and women are encouraged to raise the bar for indulgence.

Volvo's commercial (Appendix 3.) was also standardized. However, for this commercial Finnish and Italian versions were found. The video was the same for both countries but the audio and text had been translated for both languages. Although these adaptations had been done the commercial could still be considered standardized. The commercial shows a man wearing a black helmet sitting in a Volvo. The Volvo accelerates and the camera shows mannequins acting as two pedestrians walking dogs further away, in the middle of the street. When the Volvo is approaching the pedestrians the driver gets distracted by a naked man running on the side of the street. The driver does not notice the pedestrians with dogs but the car breaks by itself, and the pedestrians are saved. At the end of the commercial the Volvo's pedestrian detection system, used in the commercial is shortly presented and some other information is also given. The commercial presented values such as security, sportive, and it also used humour.

The other standardized commercials were by L'Oreal, Nivea, and Neutrogena. A total of four different standardized commercials by L'Oreal were chosen, two for Finns and two for Italians. The same commercials could not be used for both focus groups because the commercials included some translations in the form of dubbing or subtitles. However, all four commercials can be considered standardized and they presented a very classic way of advertising beauty and hygiene products. The commercials used for Finns were L'Oreal Paris Préférence hair colour and L'Oreal Paris Men Expert Deo. L'Oreal Paris Préférence commercial (Appendix 4.) includes a French hairstylist Christophe Robin who is used as an expert. The commercial presents the colour and its qualities compared to other hair colours. The commercial is spoken in English and it includes subtitles. The target audience for the commercial are women and the value that could be found from the commercial was individualism.

The commercial for L'Oreal Paris Men Expert Deo (Appendix 5.) shows a scene from an airport. Football player Michael Ballack is shown running to the security check where he is being stopped. He's asked to lift arms and turn for the check and the camera concentrates on his dry armpits. The commercial goes on presenting the deodorant and its qualities and in the end Ballack is still shown with the deodorant saying L'Oreal's slogan, because we're worth it. The commercial is dubbed in Finnish and clearly targeted to men. It also appeals to individualistic values.

The commercials by L'Oreal shown to the Italians were L'Oreal Paris Excell 10 hair colour and L'Oreal Paris Men Expert Excell 5 hair colour. Both commercials present a classical advertising style since they both include a celebrity. L'Oreal Paris Excell 10



(Appendix 6.) includes actress Eva Longoria who presents the hair colour and its qualities. At the end of the commercial Longoria looks at the camera and presents L'Oreal's slogan "Perché noi valiamo", because we're worth it. The advertising is thus dubbed in Italian and targeted to women, and it also represents individualistic values.

The other commercial by L'Oreal (Appendix 7.), presented to the Italians includes actor Patrick Dempsey. He's shown arriving to a table where a group of friends is waiting for him. When he sits down the friends claim that something has changed in him but they cannot tell what it is. The friends start guessing and meanwhile the camera goes on showing Dempsey colouring his grey hair. The commercial highlights the natural colour of the product and the easiness of the use. At the end the camera goes back to the table where the friends still have not understood what has changed. The change is not revealed by the end of the commercial and Dempsey states in the end "Un piccolo cambiamento che fa la differenza", a small change to make a difference. The commercial is clearly targeted to men and the Italian version is dubbed. It also appeals to masculine values by highlighting how the colouring of one's hair does not affect the masculinity.

The standardized commercial by Neutrogena (Appendix 8.) was shown to the Finnish participants since it includes Finnish subtitles. The languages spoken are English and Finnish. Also this commercial includes a celebrity, Vanessa Hudgens, who advertises Neutrogena's Spot Stress Control products. Hudgens is speaking directly to the camera about her problems with spots. Shortly after, the product is being presented and its qualities are highlighted. The commercial states that it works in 88 per cent of the cases. Finally Hudgens is shown again and she claims to have now one less thing to stress. The commercial ends with the product and information on where to buy it. The values presented in this commercial are individualism and high uncertainty avoidance. This is seen for example in the way the commercial presents scientific results.

The standardized commercial by Nivea (Appendix 9.) was shown to the Italian participants because it was dubbed in Italian. The commercial shows two young men getting up in different situations but highlighting that they both had a long, tiring night. Both men put on Nivea Risveglio Express Gel Q10 and the morning starts well. At the end of the commercial the product is shown and the final screen includes Nivea's logo and slogan. The commercial represents values such as masculinity and individualism since it shows success.

The adapted commercials were naturally chosen separately for both countries. For Finns the adapted commercials included commercials by McDonalds, Fazer, Helmivaihtoauto, and Bayer. For Italians the adapted commercials were by Lavazza, Kinder, Nivea, and Fiat Fabbrica Italiana. The adapted commercials were chosen in a way that they formed pairs with the standardized commercials in order to facilitate the analysis and comparison. For example Fazer was shown to the Finnish participants together with Kinder Bueno because the both presented the same product group. This way the comparison was enabled which was even used in the discussion in the focus groups.

The commercial by McDonald's (Appendix 10.) is adapted to Finnish audience. It shows scenes on a bus where a group of Finnish ice hockey fans are cheering. In the next scene a man enters the buss and he is wearing Sweden's ice hockey shirt. The group of Finnish fans turn to the newcomer and ask "Mikä toi on?", what is that. The man dressed in Swedish hockey shirts shows a burger and answers "Euron juusto", one euro cheese burger. The crowd is wowed by the answer and the commercial goes on and tells how the one euro cheese burger is back to McDonald's. The commercial ends with a screen with McDonald's logo and slogan i'm lovin' it. The commercial is directly appealing to nationalistic values with the help of humour.

The commercial by Fazer (Appendix 11.) is also adapted to Finnish market. It shows a stem of lingonberry in Finnish Lapland during different seasons by showing the plant surviving in these conditions. When the lingonberry is finally with berries the commercial shows a text "Pohjola vaatii ja antaa", north requires and gives. Shortly after the product, Fazer Lingonberry Milk Parfait chocolate is shown with a phrase "Suklaata pohjolasta", chocolate from the north. The commercial ends with a screen showing the logo of Karl Fazer Nordic Gourmet. The commercial represents values such as harmony and diligence.

Another adapted commercial for Finland is by Delta (Appendix 12.) advertising their selection of used cars. The commercial shows a man presenting on a stage of a circus. He is proudly presenting something by stating that it faced several challenges; the squeeze of a body builder, the crush of an enthusiastic engineer and the rope pulling with an elephant. The man goes on to presenting and behind the curtain a Helmi second hand car is revealed while the crowd applaud. The commercial ends with a screen presenting the logo for Helmivaihtoauto and by stating "Cars you can trust". The final screen shows Delta's logo. The commercial represents values such as reliability.

Commercial for Bayer's product Priorin (Appendix 13), a hair care product, was also adapted to Finland. It includes a Finnish celebrity, actress Irina Björklund who in the beginning of the commercial is shown in beautiful nature. Meanwhile she talks about her roots and how her home country gives her strength and perseverance. The commercial goes on to present the product and how it works. Finally the camera returns to the nature with Björklund and she is pictured holding the product behind her back. The commercial ends by stating Bayer Priorin, and the slogan "Uusi elämä hiuksillesi", new life to your hair. The commercial is appealing to values such as nature and patriotism.

The commercials adapted to Italian audience included one from Lavazza (Appendix 14.), an Italian brand for coffee. The commercial shows a group of men sitting on top of the clouds, in paradise. One of the men has the flu which magically gets healed. They decide to celebrate this with a nice cup of coffee. The coffee is praised and the brand is pointed out. The main characters in the advertisement are celebrities. The advertisement includes also humour and the main concentration is in the dialogue between these different characters.

A commercial by Kinder for their product Kinder Cioccolato (Appendix 15.) is adapted for Italians. It includes a famous female Italian TV-presenter who sits on an aeroplane. A small girl comes to her carrying a koala soft toy. The girl explains how she feeds the koala with milk because the koala is small and needs to grow. The girl herself eats Kinder Cioccolato because she is already a big girl. Also the woman reveals she has eaten Kinder Cioccolato from when she was a little girl. The commercial ends with a slogan saying "Il cioccolato che aiuta a crescere", the chocolate that helps to grow. The commercial is appealing to values such as health by stating that chocolate actually is good for you.

Nivea also adapted their advertising to Italy. The commercial for Nivea's CremaViso Q10 Antifatica (Appendix 16.), facial cream includes members of Italian football team AC Milan. The coach of the team is shown making a presentation for the players about Nivea's product. The commercial goes on to describe the product and its qualities. Finally one of the players is pictured and he comments the product. The commercial ends with a screen showing the logo of Nivea and their slogan. Values presented in the commercial are success and individualism.

Fiat Fabbrica Italiana (Appendix 17.) has also created a fully adapted commercial for Italians. It pictures a father holding a small baby girl and telling her a story. The story

tells about a company producing cars in Italy while expanding throughout the world. This company will assure the future of this little girl and the father says that one day she can pick the colour of the car. The commercial goes on to explain how Fiat Fabbrica Italiana ensures the future of Italians by producing Italian cars to Italians. The commercial clearly appeals to values such as family, future orientation and patriotism.

As stated before, the commercials were chosen in order to form pairs. This was mainly done in order to facilitate the analysis and enable the comparison. The different responses for standardized and adapted commercials that share a common factor such as product can be compared on a more profound level. The pairs that the commercials formed and the common factors they share are presented in table number seven.

**Table 7.** Paired up commercials for focus groups and the presentation of the common factors.

<b>Focus group 1: Finland Standardized / Adapted</b>	<b>Focus group 2: Italy Standardized / Adapted</b>	<b>Common factor</b>
Pepsi / McDonald's	Pepsi / Lavazza	Advertising style: Humour
Kinder Bueno / Fazer	Kinder Bueno / Kinder Cioccolato	Product group: Chocolate
Volvo S60 / Delta	Volvo S60 / Fiat Fabbrica Italiana	Product group: Cars
L'Oreal Préférence / Bayer Priorin	Nivea / Nivea	Product group: Beauty care
L'Oreal / Neutrogena (both standardized)	L'Oreal / L'Oreal (both standardized)	Advertising style: Celebrity

## 5.2. Focus group results

The following chapters will present the results of the focus groups. The results will be presented by describing the focus group discussion through reporting and quotations. The quotations are used in order to make the results more illustrative. They give the possibility to follow the interview on a more profound level, and support the analysis.

### 5.2.1. Focus group 1: Finland

The first focus group interview was conducted with participants presenting Finnish culture. As stated before, six participants were chosen and the choice was based on nationality, age, and gender. All of them also had to be university students. The group was formed by three male and three female students, in order to study also how, if at all, the consumer response differs between men and women. The first focus group with Finnish participants were aged between 24 and 28 years.

The focus group started by short introduction to the subject. However, the exact subject of the study was kept secret in order to avoid it affecting the results. The study was presented as a study on advertising. The focus group was conducted in a way that one commercial was seen at a time. After each commercial the participants were asked to write down their first thoughts and reflections on the commercial. After this the commercials were discussed freely in the group. The moderator started the discussion with a neutral question “What kind of thoughts did this commercial give you?”. Since the commercials were chosen in pairs, they were also shown in the same context. First both commercials were discussed separately but furthermore they were also compared between each other.

For Finnish participants the first pair of commercials shown was from McDonald’s and Pepsi. These commercials were chosen because they both used humour as advertising style. They also advertised a similar product, grocery. The adapted commercial by McDonald’s was shown first. The participants all had clear communication with the advertisement and it was understood. The participants were able to read the advertisement and the message it wanted to give. The participants even recognized that the advertisement was a part of a series of advertisements with the same theme, for the same product.

The commercial by Pepsi was also understood by the participants. The reading of the advertisement was thus successful to some extent. The participants did not comment or seem to pay attention to the language of the commercial. However, the participants stated that the connection with the actual advertisement and the advertised product was not clear. For example one of the participants commented that she recalled seeing the advertisement but she could not connect it to the product. This would suggest that the final goal of the advertisement, the effect on attitude and behaviour might not be successful. When the participants compared the two commercials with each other it was

clear that the humour in the adapted commercial was seen funnier than in the standardized one. One participant commented:

*The first one I find more Finnish, a Finnish advertisement. I could imagine that the humour of the first advertisement would appeal more to Finns.*

However, overall dialogue was created between both commercials and they were both fully understood.

The second pair of commercials was Kinder Bueno and Fazer which shared a common product, chocolate. The standardized commercial by Kinder was shown first. The advertisement received a lot of discussion and communication, and the advertisement was understood which was seen from the comments. Also this time the language of the commercial was not commented. The participants commented for example the following.

*I find it quite feministic. That you can decide not to cook and buy a Bueno instead.*

*...it's like when you buy a Bueno you don't have to be a housewife anymore. You can live your dream.*

*The fact that the advertising is irritating doesn't mean it's not successful; it stays in my head and subconsciously I could go and buy Kinder Bueno.*

These suggest that the advertisement was understood and that it also affected the participants' attitude and even behaviour by stating that the commercial stayed in their minds. The participants clearly stated that based on this commercial they could go and buy the product. Fazer's commercial had also communication with the participants. The advertisement was fully understood by the participants and the discussion was analytical. The commercial was commented for example

*...it's a very Finnish approach; that you work hard and then you achieve something.*

When comparing the commercials the participants referred to target audiences by stating that the two commercials seemed to have different targets. Fazer was seen more directed to Finnish audience whereas Kinder's commercial was thought appealing to Americans.

The following pair of commercials presented a common product group, cars. The standardized commercial was the Volvo commercial whereas adapted commercial was by Delta. Volvo's commercial was shown first and it was the most discussed so far. The dialogue was also very analytical and the participants discussed about Volvo's values. A clear characteristic in the dialogue was that the commercial was more appealing to men. The commercial itself was liked by the participants and they stated that the product and brand were well presented. An interesting point in the dialogue was that the participants thought the commercial was created for the Nordic countries when it actually was standardized more widely. According to the participants, Volvo's commercial would be too daring for other audiences. This was shown in comments such as

*It was made with a Nordic touch, that they put a naked guy running there.*

*It wouldn't work in the US. I mean overall if it would be taken outside the Nordic countries it would probably reach a very negative response.*

Delta's commercial did not reach as good response than Volvo's. The discussion after the commercial mainly concentrated on the quality of it. The participants thought the commercial was very bad and it did not reach understanding from them. The participants commented

*That was Finnish! But I don't know if it is a good or a bad thing.*

*This was very bad, ridiculously bad commercial.*

*Who would even come up with such metaphors? Like I didn't understand the meaning of the elephant.*

The commercial thus was discussed a lot but it clearly did not create understanding or meaning in these participants. Instead it was just seen as a bad commercial. When asked to compare the car commercials the participants found it challenging. However, they all agreed that Volvo's commercial was clearly better than Delta's

The fourth pair of commercials was formed by L'Oreal and Bayer. These commercials were chosen because they both advertised a beauty care product, more specifically a hair care product. The standardized commercial by L'Oreal was shown first. The commercial reached a response from the participants which was shown in the way they understood the commercial. However, the discussion showed that although there was

communication, the commercial was not able to affect participants' on a deeper level. This was shown for example in comments such as

*What hair colour was it? Who remembers? I didn't even remember it was by L'Oreal.*

Bayer's commercial received also a response from the participants. They understood the message of the commercial and analysed it even further. The comments that the participants gave to the commercial were

*...but I can't forget the name of the product, Priorin, it comes so clearly.*

*So in fact it was a good commercial, since you remember what was advertised.*

*...just that I have no idea now what Priorin actually is, I just remember the name.*

Based on the comments the commercial was thus seen successful to some extent by the participants. There was clearly communication between the commercial and the participants but understanding and meaning were not reached. The advertisement thus did not reach all its goals.

Overall, both commercials for the hair care products failed to reach an effective response from the participants. When asked for possible reasons for that, the participants referred to the style and the product. Overall, hair products were seen as difficult to advertise. The participants however suggested the use of humour also in hair care advertising.

In the last pair of commercials both were standardized but they were chosen to present a certain advertising style, the use of celebrities. The commercials chosen were L'Oreal's deodorant and Neutrogena's spot treatment. L'Oreal's commercial was targeted to men whereas Neutrogena targeted more women. These commercials were also chosen in order to better look at the differences between genders in responding to standardized advertising. L'Oreal's commercial was shown first. It reached a response on the participants and the comments were related both to the quality and to the content of the commercial. The comments were for example

*This has been seen so many times. You put a celebrity on it and think it's enough.*



*Everything was put out very clearly. You didn't really need to use your brain. And I mean, overall the product was well integrated in it.*

*...Anyway, it left me with an energetic image.*

The women also commented that the commercial was not targeted to them and for that they didn't feel they got a lot from it. Overall however, the commercial and its message were understood. A clear affect to the attitude was also shown when one of the participants commented the image the commercial left.

The last commercial shown was Neutrogena's which was, as stated before, more targeted to women. This commercial was commented very broadly by the participants both related to the content of the commercial but also to its effect on behaviour. The use of celebrity was for example commented

*They should make it more realistic. I mean have someone with real problems...That is an unconvincing celebrity that can afford to do anything with her face...It didn't appeal to me.*

When asked if the commercial would have been better with an unknown, average person, the participants commented

*Yes, it would work better; I would pay more attention to it.*

*But in a way then (if they used an average person) I wouldn't connect the product to anything.*

Comments related to the commercial's effect on behaviour and attitude stated

*Probably they just try to bring out the product, so that you've seen it in some ad and then when you go to the shelf and go like "Yes, that one I know from somewhere"*

*If you decide to take a skin care product, it's not like you go "Oh yes, this is it".*

Thus Neutrogena's commercial was seen both effective and ineffective. The participants however communicated with the commercial and understood its message. In addition they also suspected that the commercial could have a subconscious effect also on their buying behaviour.

After the discussion the moderator asked the participants which commercial stayed in their minds after seeing all ten of them. Volvo turned out to be the most remembered commercial with Fazer placing second. Overall the focus group continued discussing about advertising. In this discussion several commercials were brought up that were not shown to the participants. They discussed commercials for products such as Mobilat, Burana, DNA and McDonald's, and they had all been adapted to Finnish market. These commercials were clearly remembered by the participants on a deeper level, and even their content or slogans were quoted and recalled. The focus group ended by the moderator thanking the participants, and asking as final question if they had something to add, in which they replied no.

### 5.2.2. Focus group 2: Italy

The second focus group interview was conducted with participants presenting Italian culture. Six participants were again chosen based on same factors that were used for Finnish participants. The participants were Italian, aged between 22 and 26 years, and university students. More specific they were participating in Erasmus exchange programme and had been studying in Finland the last semester. This however was seen more as a positive factor than negative. The surroundings for the focus groups could this way be organized identical for both groups and a short stay in Finland would have not affected their cultural background.

The focus group two was conducted in the same way as focus group one. However, one of the participants was sick and cancelled her participation during the same day. Despite this change, the focus group was conducted. Thus the participants included two female and three male students. The focus group itself included a short presentation and then the viewing of each commercial followed by comments and discussion. Commercials were again showed one at a time but in a way that two commercials formed a pair for comparison. The first commercial shown to the focus group two was the commercial by Pepsi. The discussion on the commercial did not get very deep and the participants mainly commented that they could not see the connection between the product and the commercial. This was commented for example

*I thought it was a beer commercial, when I saw them sitting in the pub; nothing to do with Pepsi.*

The second commercial showed was the commercial by Lavazza. Like Pepsi, also Lavazza's commercial used humour in its advertising. An interesting detail was that the body language that could be seen in the participants for both of these commercials differed completely. Pepsi's commercial was watched more with a frown in their faces whereas as soon as Lavazza's spot was shown they smiled widely. Also the discussion that followed Lavazza's commercial was more enthusiastic and there was clearly more dialogue between the commercial and the participants. The participants were more able to analyse the message of the commercial which was shown for example in comments such as

*For me it seems like they want to connect coffee break with paradise; in a way that it is something relaxing; like to be in a paradise.*

The participants also stated that they liked Lavazza's commercial and recognized that the commercial was part of a series of commercials. When asked to compare Pepsi's and Lavazza's commercials the participants all agreed that Lavazza's commercial appealed to them more. Overall the creation of meaning was seen more in the comments for Lavazza.

The second pair of commercials was formed by two commercials from Kinder. Kinder Cioccolato, the adapted advertisement was shown first and Kinder Bueno second. The Kinder Cioccolato commercial was commented

*I think they shouldn't keep repeating that Kinder chocolate helps you to grow. In fact I don't think a chocolate bar helps you to grow; well maybe you grow wider rather than taller.*

*I see them trying to give us a message that the chocolate is not only for kids.*

*...anyway I think the final effect is not successful.*

Kinder Cioccolato commercial thus was understood by the participant and they were able to read the message. Furthermore meaning was created through the comments that the participants made relating the commercial to their personal lives. However, the participants claimed that it would not affect their buying behaviour.

Kinder Bueno commercial did not reach as much dialogue as Kinder Cioccolato. It was clearly less appealing to the participant and it did not create understanding between the

commercial and the viewer. The participants made comments mainly related to the commercial that showed that they did not understand the message of it. When asked to compare the commercials with each other, the participants also stated that they preferred the one for Kinder Cioccolato

Commercials for beauty care products were shown next and both commercials were by Nivea. The first one was the adapted one for Nivea CremaViso Q10 Antifatica. The participants pointed out that the commercial was targeted for men and this was shown also in the comments. The female participants did not, in fact, find the commercial appealing. Male participants commented the commercial more and created also understanding and meaning out of it. This was shown for example in comments such as

*I've seen them do it several years; now that Milan is playing well with this coach, they want him, to show as a successful man.*

However, direct connection to their attitude and behaviour could not be observed. The other, more standardized commercial by Nivea was shown next. The commercial reached a positive response from the participants. This came out in comments such as

*I like the use of unknown faces; also the fact that they were situations of everyday life.*

*...it gave me a feeling of freshness after a hard night.*

*If you ask me, it (the commercial) wants to say that if you use this cream you'll have a beautiful girl and a cool house.*

The comments show that the participants communicated with the commercial and were able to draw conclusions and understand the message of it. Also meaning was created and it even showed effects on the participants' attitude.

Fourth pair of commercials shared the product category of cars, and commercials by Volvo and Fiat were shown. The standardized commercial by Volvo was shown first. The comments varied between the participants and different levels of understanding were created. However, the discussion in the group created a common understanding and also the meaning was understood.

Fiat's commercial was shown next and it also reached a response from the participants. The commercial was commented for example by

*It transmitted peacefulness, maybe even too much.*

*It suggests that there's a better future...the values are transmitted from father to son.*

*The use of Italy's colours...It also transmits a bit of Italian pride.*

Overall Fiat's commercial was liked by the participants and very few negative comments were made. There was a clear understanding between the commercial and the participants and the commercial created meaning to them. In addition it clearly seemed appealing to a deeper level in the participants than Volvo did. The participants were also able to study the commercial from a fresh viewpoint by connecting it to Fiat's current situation in Italy.

The final pair of commercials was formed by L'Oreal. Like in focus group one, also in this case the commercials were chosen to present the use of celebrity in a standardized commercial. Again, one commercial was targeted to women whereas the other targeted men. Commercial for women was shown first. The commercial reached criticism such as

*It's always the same; I find it unappealing.*

This comment was also brought up in the first focus group by the Finnish participants. Clearly the participants thus are used to seeing standardized beauty care commercials, which affects their response to them. The responses are not effective since the commercials are similar to each other and the consumers are not able to clearly identify the different products. In addition the commercial was commented related to the target audience.

*I could tell that it wasn't made for Italian audience; the lips didn't sync.*

In Italy dubbing is very common and for example TV-shows and movies are very seldom in their original language. However, the fact that this was commented on this specific commercial means that although the participants are used to it, in this case it did not work for them.

The last commercial shown was by L'Oreal. This commercial created communication and the participants were able to understand the commercial and its message. This was seen for example in comments such as

*It's like no man wants to colour their hair; you'll loose your masculinity.*

*They want to show a successful man...*

In fact the commercial was seen targeting directly men and their masculine values. The participants highlighted the fact that in the commercial the friends of the man were not able to tell that he had coloured his hair. This was seen as a good thing. In addition the simple use of the product was seen an important feature of the commercial.

Like in the first focus group, also in this one after the discussion the moderator asked the participants which commercial stayed in their minds after seeing all ten of them. Volvo turned out to be the most remembered commercial also in this case. However, the participants also named Lavazza, Fiat and the last one by L'Oreal. Thus Volvo's commercial was not as clearly successful than with the Finnish participants.

### 5.3. Research findings

Based on the results reported in the previous chapter, this chapter will present the research findings. Overall the focus groups gave a wide source of data that can be used in order to answer the research question. The analysing of the data gives insights on how consumers from different cultures respond to different kinds of advertising and what is actually the role of culture in this. The findings will be presented for each group of commercials at a time.

The first commercials shown for both groups used humour in the advertising style. Thus the success of these commercials can be seen in the way the participants of the focus groups understood the humour and whether or not it was appealing to them. The standardized commercial's, Pepsi's, humour presented masculine values and was more daring than the adapted commercials' humour. Although Italy presents higher masculine values, Pepsi's commercial did not receive an effective response. This was mainly due to the standardization of the commercial instead of the values that it presented. The language being English made it more distant for Italians and it was more challenging to

understand. In fact, although the humour in the adapted commercial by Lavazza was not seen funny, the Italians still preferred it. The message was clearly understood better.

For Finnish participants, Pepsi's commercial did receive a response but the humour in the adapted commercial by McDonald's was seen funnier and more appealing. Finns were able to interpret the message in Pepsi's commercial; they just did not find it appealing to them. The reasons behind this can be connected to the masculine values presented in the commercial which do not present the values in Finnish culture where feminine values are more important. This would mean that the reasons why the commercial was not seen effective can again be drawn to the standardization of it. If it would have been adapted it would have presented different kind of humour. Overall can be said that when humour is used in commercials for both of these countries, in order to receive an effective response, the commercials should be adapted.

The second group of commercials shown shared the same product group, chocolate. The fully standardized commercial for Kinder Bueno clearly presented feminine and individualistic values by encouraging women to 'raise the bar' and live up to their dreams. The commercial received a more effective response from the Finnish participants. The commercial was understood and meaning was created. However, the commercial was not liked by the participants. Nevertheless the adapted commercial was seen as creating a more profound level of meaning and the participants were able to connect it to their cultural identity.

The reasons why Kinder Bueno did not reach an effective response can also be found in the standardization of the commercial. In Finnish culture the equality between men and women is considered self-evident and thus appealing to this value could be seen ineffective. However, as seen in both fully standardized commercials by Pepsi and Kinder, the language was not the main issue with Finnish participants. Both commercials were understood and the participants were able to read the message. The main reasons why the commercials did not receive a deeper response could in fact be found in other issues. However, it is important to point out that the members of the focus group were young adults. The use of English is very familiar to this group of people. In another situation, where the participants would have been for example older, the results could have varied even radically. However, the use of fully standardized commercials in Finland is possible if it matches the target audience. The commercials will most probably be understood even though in order to make a deeper impact, adaptation seems to be needed.

For Italians the commercial for Kinder Buenodid not achieve to create meaning or understanding. The participants did not understand the message of the commercial thus it can be considered unsuccessful. The presumable reasons for this can be found in the standardization of the commercial. Again the language used was English which affected directly to the response by the participants. Overall based on two standardized commercials in English, it can be said that in Italy the standardized commercials should be translated or presented at least with subtitles. The culture is used to dubbing and they seldom see any material in its original language. This has had a clear effect on the culture and made it more difficult to approach with a fully standardized commercial. In fact, the response that the participants gave to Kinder's adapted commercial showed that although it was not liked by them, they clearly understood the message in it.

The commercials for cars also received different responses in the focus groups. However, the fact that Volvo's commercial had been translated to both languages clearly improved the response by the participants. Both groups were able to respond to the commercial and the message was understood. Volvo's commercial presented values such as security and risk, and it also included some humour. The commercial overall resulted successful. However, for Finns the commercial seemed to reach a deeper level of response. This was mainly seen in the way in which the Finnish participants thought the commercial had been created for Nordic countries. They also liked the humour. The Italians also liked the commercial but especially the humour in it was not fully appreciated. The commercial also failed to reach the same kind of response that Fiat's adapted one did. Volvo's commercial however, was named in both groups as one of the most memorable.

The adapted commercials for cars reached very different responses in different groups. For Finnish participants Delta's commercial failed to create meaning and understanding although it was fully adapted. This was mainly due to the implementation of the commercial. The value that the commercial tried to transmit to the consumers was reliability. However, the message was not clear enough and it did not reach the consumers. The value that the participants actually connected with the commercial was inexpensive. As a conclusion it can be said that adaptation does not guarantee the effectiveness of a commercial. Adapted or not, the commercial's main task is to deliver a message and create meaning to consumers. If the implementation process is not done well, even an adapted advertising can fail.

Fiat's adapted commercial on the other hand was seen effective. It presented values such as future orientation, security, and family. It also appealed to Italians' nationalistic



values. This can be seen as a highly adapted commercial since it targeted consumer's cultural values and identity on a very deep level. The participants clearly communicated with the commercial and the message was understood. The participants commented the commercial positively and it clearly made them feel good about it. They also saw the commercial affecting their attitude. Overall, the commercial was liked by the participants and it was also remembered even after the focus group. In Fiat's commercial the adaptation was in fact done very effectively and also the actual implementation of the commercial was successful.

The next group of commercials shared a product group, beauty care. Focus group one was shown L'Oreal's standardized commercial whereas focus group two saw Nivea's. The commercials differed from each other. L'Oreal's commercial was more traditional, presenting the qualities of the product with an expert. The commercial thus did not present clear values or appeal to the participants on a deeper level. This affected the reading process in a way that the participants did in fact understand the message but they did not interact with it more profoundly. Nivea's commercial, shown to Italians, was more creative and it reached to create a connection with the participants. The Italians recognized values such as freshness, and success was pointed out.

Nivea's adapted commercial was criticised by Italians for its narrow target group. However, the participants were able to understand the commercial and also here, success was highlighted. Italy is a culture with masculine values and more hierarchical differences. This explains the use of success in advertising. The fact that the participants connected success with the commercials shows that the reading process was successful. The adapted commercial for Finnish participants by Bayer for Priorin presented values such as nature and patriotism. The participants were able to recognize the values but the implementation of the commercial was again stated unsuccessful. The adaptation of the commercial thus can be seen successful although the commercial did not have an effective interaction with the participants. This also shows that the adaptation of a commercial is not enough if the actual implementation is not appealing to the consumers.

The use of celebrities was shown in the last group of commercials. Especially in Italian culture celebrities are used very often. In Finland on the other hand experts are more commonly used, although the use of celebrities has also increased. The advertising style was seen both effective and ineffective by the participants. Both groups stated that they would prefer to see unknown faces in advertising in order for them to identify with them. However, the connection between a famous person and a product was also seen

significant in order to shape the image that a product presents. Overall, women were keener to identify themselves with the person on the commercial. For men this did not play as important role and they were able to identify themselves also with a celebrity.

The response by Italians to L'Oreal's commercial for hair colour directed to men was interesting. Especially the male participants identified themselves with the person on the commercial by referring to their masculinity. The participants stated that the commercial was good since it showed how you can colour your hair without losing your masculinity. The fact that the commercial reached a more personal level on the participants, made it more effective. For Finnish male participants, the commercial showed did not have such an effect since it did not appeal to a personal level. The commercial concentrated mainly on presenting the product and its qualities.

For women the commercials by L'Oreal and Neutrogena received similar responses in both focus groups. The commercials were understood but it did not reach a personal connection with the participants. The commercials stayed distant for the participants and they did not find them appealing. However, the nature of the product can be seen significant here. Overall also the advertised product was seen affecting the reading process and meaning creation. Participants stated that for certain products they did not create any personal relationship and thus did not expect the commercials for these products to present values of their culture in order to make an effect on a deeper level.

The commercials shown to the participants in both of the focus groups presented different levels of standardization and adaptation. In addition the implementation of them differed widely. Overall based on the two focus groups conducted, culture was very present in the participants' comments. The responses that the participants gave to different commercials were clearly characterized by culture. This was shown both in the responses for standardized as for adapted commercials. The responses to standardized commercials could also be considered successful if the standardized commercial happened to appeal on the participants' cultural background. On the other hand, if the standardized commercial presented other values, it could be rejected by the consumers. Adapted commercials often communicated directly with the participants' cultural background but the implementation of them was seen able to decide whether or not the consumers were affected by them.

## 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The objectives of this study were to create an overview on culture and consumer response to advertising, and to their relationship between each other. The last chapter of the study goes through the whole study by presenting a summary and by making conclusions based on both the theoretical and the empirical part of the study. The conclusions of the study will present theoretical and practical contributions of the study by linking the findings to previous studies and by presenting managerial implications. Suggestions for future studies are also presented in order to evaluate the future of the subject and the different aspects that can be taken related to it.

### 6.1. Summary

This study focused on culture and advertising. It studied culture by questioning its effect on the way the consumers see and experience advertising. In addition the advertising was studied from different viewpoints. The dilemma of standardization and adaptation of international advertising was presented and its' effect on consumer response was studied.

In the theoretical part of the study international advertising studies were presented according to the first objective of the study. These studies first took a look at the internationalization of advertising and furthermore to the way in which it has changed advertising. In addition, standardization and adaptation were studied. Based on the theory, a framework was presented which described the way in which consumers respond to advertising. It concentrated on identifying what factors related to the consumer affect the interaction and how the interaction was formed. Four different stages of interaction were recognized; communication, understanding, meaning, and the effect on attitude and behaviour.

Cultural theories were also studied in the theoretical part of the study in order to answer the second objective set for the study. This was done first by looking at the different definitions of the word culture. Furthermore three different cultural theories were presented. Hofstede's, Schwartz's and GLOBE studies all presented their overview on culture and especially on the different dimensions of culture. Based on these three studies a framework was created in order to connect the different studies with each other by looking at the similarities in them. This way the cultural dimensions were analysed in

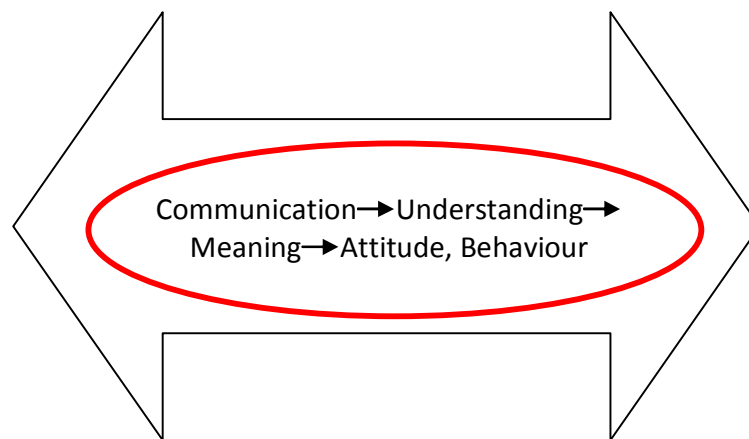
a way that they could be used in the analysis of the empirical part of the study. In addition the two countries present in this study, Finland and Italy were described by looking at each country and culture based on the framework created.

The empirical part of the study studied the advertising in these two countries by answering to the third objective and finally to the research question of the study. It looked at different commercials present in these countries and furthermore the response these commercials got. The study was conducted in focus groups in which the commercials were shown and discussed. The focus groups gave significant data for the study and enabled the analysis and finally the making of the main conclusions of the study. Culture's role was significant in consumer's response to advertising and it affected the different levels of responses.

## 6.2. Conclusions

Consumer response on advertising thus resulted as a complex interaction between the consumer and the advertisement. The results showed how different levels of interaction were formed between these two actors. The findings also confirmed that meaning-based models are more accurate when describing the interaction. In both of the focus groups the consumers were very active in reading the advertisements and they did not just concentrate on getting information as the information-based models would suggest. Instead, the commercials were read and further developed in the participants minds. Thus the consumers should be seen also in the future studies, as readers rather than just information receivers. Furthermore the use of meaning-based models in advertising studies should be encouraged.

Overall the results of this study suggested that culture in fact had a clear effect on consumers' response on advertising. It was present in the comments and discussion that was present in the focus groups. Overall culture was seen significant in all phases of consumer response. The earlier presented phases are shown in figure number six.



**Figure 6.** Culture's effect on consumer response

The different levels of response all showed characteristics that could be connected with culture. The communication with an advertisement was affected by culture since it shaped for example the way in which the participants were able to interact with an advertisement in English. Understanding was also dependent on culture especially related to the level of understanding that the consumers created between them and the advertisements. The participants were able to understand the advertisements on a deeper level when they were more adapted to them and to their culture.

In meaning creation, culture had a significant role since the process was clearly affected by the participants' values. Meaning was created more effectively with advertisements that presented values close to the participants and their culture. The consumers thus reflected the values presented and experienced the advertising on a deeper level. There was also clear evidence that advertising presenting unsuitable values did not reach the level of meaning creation.

The final effect of the advertisement presented in the interaction was the effect on attitude and behaviour of the consumers. This phase is considered important since it describes the practical side of the response. The consumers shaped their attitude or behaviour based on advertisements. Culture was also present in this phase since the effect on consumers' attitude and behaviour was more present in adapted commercials. In these commercials the consumers recognized values and characteristics which they then furthermore connected with the brand and the product.

Overall culture had a significant role in the interaction between the consumer and the advertisement in both of these cultures studied. Thus its importance was confirmed and

the results showed similar findings related to previous studies. The participants in this study reflected clearly their national culture in the way they responded. Other factors related to the consumer were not studied in this study thus their effect can not be evaluated.

Culture's role however, should not be argued but instead it should be taken into account also on a practical level. Culture affects consumers' response on advertising on different levels. Based on the conclusions, managerial implications can and should be drawn. The process of creating an advertisement is complex and it is affected by several issues. The advertisers go through a series of decisions before the advertisement is actually implemented. The conclusions of this study can be present throughout the decision process.

The main effects can be seen in the decisions related to standardization and adaptation. The responses from the consumers were different towards standardized and adapted commercials. Adapted commercials affected consumers on a deeper level. Thus the advertisers should adapt their advertising if they want the advertisements to reach a deeper level of relationship with the consumers. However, if for example the nature of the product does not require a deeper relationship with the consumer, standardized commercials can also be used. Also another issue affecting the decision is the target group. Young adults that participated in this study, form a group that is more homogeneous all over the world. Standardized commercials can thus be used when young people are the target audience.

Standardized commercials however, did reach to get a response from the consumers in some cases. This was mainly when the standardized commercial happened to present values that were also found in that specific culture. Thus it suggested that commercials can be standardized but doing it globally creates obstacles. Instead the advertisers could make few standardized commercials which could be used in specific areas and countries. For example a standardized commercial presenting masculine values could be used globally in high masculine countries and a more feminine commercial could be created for the other countries.

Implementation was also seen significant since the consumers did not respond effectively on commercials that failed in their implementation. Advertisers should thus invest more time and money in the process of copywriting and testing of the commercials. The ideas should be implemented in a way that the message the advertiser wants to share is clear and understood by the consumers.

The results and findings of this study gave an interesting viewpoint to a dilemma that has been discussed for several decades. However, it also created new areas of study that could be studied in order to find new aspects on the issue and to evaluate the congruence of the findings. Suggestions for future studies should thus also be presented.

First of all the target groups of the study could be varied. Especially the age of the participants was seen as one of the affecting factor. Young adults that were the target of this study clearly responded also to standardized commercials. In fact, studying the consumer's response for example with children or an older age group would be interesting in order to see how these age groups receive standardized advertising.

In addition the cultures used in the study should be varied. This study gave an overview on Finnish and Italian cultures and the results can not be generalized to other cultures. By conducting similar studies for different cultures, a more generic framework could be created. An interesting research setting could be for example an Asian country with an European country.

Also the type of advertising could be changed. The results that this study presented were mainly related to television commercials. It would be interesting to study whether or not the same issues rise when studying for example printed advertising or Internet marketing. These forms of advertising present values and overall information in different ways and thus it can affect also the response that consumers give.

Culture was the main variable in this study, shaping the consumers and their ideas. However it would have also been interesting to study the other factors related to the consumers. In the theoretical part of the study, several characteristics related to the consumer response were recognized. For example personal experiences, knowledge or the context were also seen affecting the consumer response. These could be studied in the future studies.

Consumer's response on advertising is overall an interesting subject of study. Especially the meaning-based models and qualitative methods could be more used in future studies. This study showed how advertising's effects on consumers cannot be measured just by variables such as recall or willingness to buy. The consumers and the relationship they form with advertising is a more complex issue which should be studied also in the future.

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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix 1. Pepsi commercial



### Appendix 2. Kinder Bueno commercial



## Appendix 3. Volvo commercial



## Appendix 4. L'Oreal Paris Préférence commercial





### Appendix 5. L'Oreal Paris Men Expert Deo commercial



### Appendix 6. L'Oreal Paris Excell 10 commercial



## Appendix 7. L'Oreal Paris Men Expert Excell 5 commercial



## Appendix 8. Neutrogena commercial





Appendix 9. Nivea Risveglio Express Gel Q10 commercial

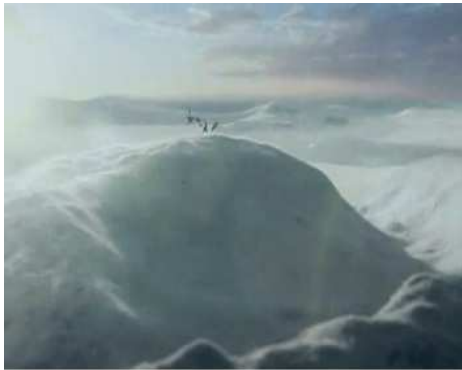


Appendix 10. McDonald's commercial





## Appendix 11. Fazer commercial



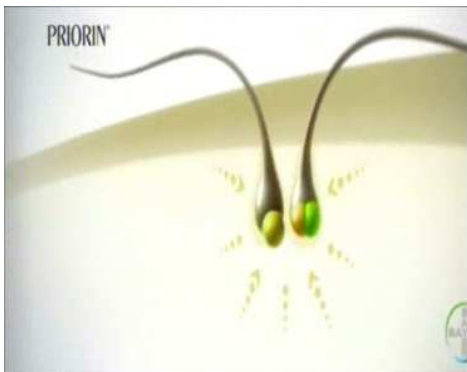
SUKLAATA POHJOLASTA



## Appendix 12. Delta commercial



## Appendix 13. Bayer Priorin commercial



## Appendix 14. Lavazza commercial



Appendix 15. Kinder Cioccolato commercial



Appendix 16. Nivea Crema Viso Q10 Antifatica commercial





## Appendix 17. Fiat Fabbrica Italiana commercial

