

# A Global Look at Consumer Involvement and Use of Products

by  
Judith L. Zaichkowsky  
*Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, and*

James H. Sood  
*The American University, Washington, D.C.*

**The question of selling products and providing services cross culturally is of the utmost importance to multinational companies. This question takes on added significance as continuing international economic concentration has forged an increasing number of world-scale companies. While a number of studies have researched the degree and type of standardisation practiced by multinational companies (e.g. Britt (1974), Sorenson and Weichman (1975), Killough (1978), Aydin and Terpstra (1981) and Hill and Still (1984), very little previous research exists on the extent to which standardisation is perceived by the consumer of products in the international marketplace.**

One of the most controversial articles on global marketing is by Levitt (1983). The main points of his argument suggest that (1) people everywhere want goods of the best quality and reliability at the lowest price; (2) different cultural preferences, tastes, standards are vestiges of the past, the world is becoming homogenised, and (3) common brand names, packaging and communications are great cost advantages over competitors that only sell in narrow segments. Levitt presents no data but provides a good conceptual argument for his reasoning. However, many of Levitt's counterparts disagree with his stand. Noted academicians believe that only a few, if any, products can be safely standardised. No hard evidence exists to show that consumers everywhere are becoming more alike. Rather, much marketing research suggests that people's tastes are diverging as they become better educated and more affluent (cf. Fisher, 1984).

Even the advertising industry is split on this matter. William Philips, Chairman of Ogilvy and Mather, states that global campaigns may be possible on a limited scale for products like De Beers diamonds, Chivas Regal whisky or BMW automobiles. Other agencies maintain that the global programme works for only the most basic products (Fisher, 1984). Recently a survey of 100 advertisers clearly demonstrated that advertisers are divided over whether global marketing is truly effective and practical (*Marketing News*, 16 January 1987).

The implications for the standardisation of international marketing can translate into potential advantages to the firm. The economies of scale could dramatically lower unit costs and prices in production and marketing. It is much easier to manage

one common marketing programme or programmes with only minor adaptations. Additionally, the company could promote the development of consistent and universally recognised company or product images.

With advantages to global marketing, why does controversy and delay in implementation exist? Perhaps one reason is the lack of quantitative studies due to the difficulty in conducting meaningful cross-cultural behaviour research from the consumer's perspective. We do not know what products are likely candidates for global marketing, or if cultures are actually in the process of "homogenisation". Most practitioners involved in this area agree that the biggest hindrance to global marketing is still cultural differences among people (cf. Fisher, 1984).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study is a modest attempt to increase our understanding of the consumers' perspective by looking at consumers' involvement with various common products and services across many countries. By use of the concept of product involvement, the relevance of the products and services to consumer needs, values and interests in different national markets is determined. Such information, along with data on consumption patterns, provides insight into the buying behaviours of the different groups of people. This, in turn, contributes to identifying products and services which might possibly be promoted with similar or standardised efforts.

### **Cross-Cultural Research**

Culture is the broadest environmental factor affecting consumer behaviour because norms, beliefs and customs learned from society lead to patterns of behaviour (Assael, 1984). The more a culture advances, the better the people are able to transcend the limitations of their environment. On the other hand, the more a culture is isolated in its natural environment, the greater the tendency for the people to have cultural fixation since cultural development is not a matter of time but exposure to other cultures (Dawson, 1938). Therefore, we might expect countries in close proximity which have similar physical environments, common language and comparable racial stock to have similar needs, values and interests and hence view products and services alike. Conversely, where differences occur, not only across countries but within large countries such as the US and Canada, we might expect very different views due to the complex environment.

The problems in doing cross-cultural research can be reduced to a few major concerns (Hansen, 1977; Brislin, Lonner and Thorndike, 1973):

- (1) gaining access to the culture;
- (2) obtaining samples of people equivalent across cultures and gathering data in homogeneous facilities;
- (3) writing meaningful questions and translating them correctly (weakness in available measuring techniques).

Due to these problems, very few cross-cultural consumer behaviour studies exist. Some studies compare how two or three cultures view certain products (e.g. Narayama, 1981; Reilly and Rathje, 1985) but not many look across several cultures

(e.g. Plummer, 1977; Tigert, King and Ring, 1980). Clearly, many cultures need to be compared to provide a broader base for deductions about homogenisation of cultures.

### **The Suitability of Involvement to Cross-Cultural Research**

Well conceived paper and pencil instruments offer the cross-cultural researcher certain advantages because the standardised nature of the printed word or the printed stimulus reduces an important source of unwanted variance. One such paper and pencil test well suited to the cross-cultural application is the Personal Involvement Inventory (Zaichkowsky, 1985a).

The relevance of involvement in a cross-cultural context was demonstrated by Tigert, King and Ring (1980) in their investigation of women's fashions across French and English Canada, the US and the Netherlands. The results of their study suggested different shopping patterns and the importance of different product attributes across cultures with different involvement levels and hence different strategic implications for fashion retailers across countries. Low involved consumers looked for low prices and convenience while high involved consumers were far more interested in quality and service.

By measuring the level of involvement for a series of product/service classes in various country markets, knowledge might be gained as to the feasibility of standardising the product and communication variables in the international marketing programmes for these products/services. If some countries score significantly higher than others on overall involvement with a product/service category, then the strategic positioning of that product/service internationally might have to differ. These varying strategic marketing implications due to involvement are succinctly summarised by Harrell (1986).

If it can be determined that consumers in some countries consider a product/service to be high involvement and consumers in other countries consider it to be low involvement, a standardised marketing programme for that product/service might have little chance of success. On the other hand, if consumers across national boundaries consistently consider a product/service to be either low or high involvement, the company might be able to implement a standardised programme. No doubt there would be other factors to consider; however, the relative strength of the involvement score might assist the enquiry into the other factors.

### **Methodology**

Cross-cultural research should be conducted within a tight theoretical framework so that equivalent people are studied and compared. The controlled structural framework for this study is based on the following dimensions recommended by Kassarian and Robertson (1981):

- (1) Demographic — variables such as age, income, education, distribution should be controlled;
- (2) Organisation — this refers to the structure of cultural institutions, including family units and social classes; and
- (3) Normative dimension — this reflects the value systems, including economic and religious philosophies.

In an attempt to meet these conditions, the study was designed so that the sample consisted of approximately 50 students of business administration in their third or fourth year of study in each country. By confining the sample to this group in each country, most of the demographic variables are controlled, i.e. most respondents should be in their early twenties, single, without children, and with comparable education levels. Since the sample consists entirely of students attending a university, the organisational dimension of drawing from similar social classes within countries should be met. The normative dimension, which includes values and economic philosophies, should be similar across countries since the respondents are all students preparing for careers in business.

Questionnaires were mailed to professors of marketing in 15 different countries for data collection during class time. No attempt was made to select "typical" students from each country. The researchers acknowledge that there may be differences within countries across universities, but the convenience selection was important in obtaining collaboration with our colleagues and homogeneity in questionnaire administration, thus overcoming two major problems in cross-cultural research.

The questionnaires were made into booklets. First, the instructions were given, then the order of product/service presentation was randomised across subjects to control for any order effect due to fatigue or learning in responding to the questions. It took the subjects approximately ten to 15 minutes to participate. After being collected, the questionnaires were sent back to the initiating researchers for analysis.

### **Product/Service Selection**

The selection of the products/services to be studied was based on factors relevant to the sample and relevant to marketing across countries. First, the products/services could be used equally across countries and considered potentially "global". Secondly, the products and services should be relevant to the student sample and used by both sexes. Third, a variety of both products and services should be included in order to provide a wide range of choices, and finally the products/services should be available in all countries. The selected products/services were: 1) beer; 2) blue jeans; 3) hair shampoo; 4) soft drinks; 5) stereo sets; 6) air travel; 7) going to the cinema, and 8) eating at a restaurant.

### **Independent Variables**

The independent variables in this study were the 15 countries. Responses were received from Argentina, Austria, Australia, Barbados, Canada, Chile, China, Columbia, England, Finland, France, Mexico, Sweden, United States and Yugoslavia. Hence five continents were covered in data collection.

### **Dependent Variables**

To overcome the third problem of writing meaningful questions and translating in cross-cultural research, the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) was used to measure the respondents' involvement level with the goods and services. The PII is made up of 20 bipolar adjectives, each measured on seven points, which can be summed and used across different stimuli to measure a person's involve-

ment with the object in question. The scale ranges from a low score of 20 to a high score of 140. The PII has been developed, defined and tested for content validity of the scale items, the stability of internally reliable items over time, the criterion related validity (the ability of the scale to discriminate among different products for the same people), and the theoretical value of the scale to discriminate on self-reported behaviour (Zaichkowsky, 1985a).

Data were collected in the simplest, most objective manner possible to avoid problems of questionnaire wording. The questionnaires were prepared in English because the meanings of the semantic differentials of the PII might not be maintained if translated into other languages. This required the responding students to have a reasonable fluency in the English language. However, it is assumed that this will have little bias effect on the responses. In any event, this problem could not have been avoided and provides the researchers with the opportunity to test the reliability of the scale on respondents where English is a second language.

The second dependent variable was the frequency of use of the product or service over a suitable time frame. For example, consumption of beer and soft drinks was measured weekly while air travel was measured over a one year period. It was important to collect data on the level of use to separate out the non-users of each product/service to compare involvement levels better across countries.

### Results

Completed questionnaires were received from 15 countries. Reasonable size samples ( $n = 22$  to  $60$ ) were obtained from all countries except Argentina ( $n = 10$ ) and Barbados ( $n = 11$ ). These two countries were eliminated from the analysis which compares countries due to their small sample sizes. Also, eliminating these subjects helped control for age. The average age from Argentina and Barbados was 29.6 and 27.1, respectively, indicating these respondents were much older. The rest of the students (80 per cent) were between the ages of 20 to 25. Slightly more males were sampled than females (330 versus 262). Ninety-five per cent of the sample was single. Most respondents were of the Catholic religion (44 per cent), followed by Protestant (26 per cent) and atheist (15 per cent). Thus, it is assumed that the sample selection meets the demographic dimension of the structural framework. Since the respondents are all college/university business students, it is assumed that the selection also met the organisational and normative dimensions for the reasons stated previously.

The PII proved to be a reliable measuring instrument across the fifteen national cultures tested. The Cronbach Alpha, which measures the consistency of each student's responses to the twenty items regarding a product/service, ranged from 0.87 to 0.99 over the eight products/services in the 15 countries. Thus, PII is a reliable measurement instrument. The fact that PII is reliable across different cultures, where English is spoken as a second language, adds support to the use of this instrument for cross-cultural consumer behaviour research.

### Differences in Product/Service Use Across Countries

The researchers thought it interesting to look first at differences among average levels of product/service use across countries (see Table I). To test for dif-

	Canada	United States	Finland	Yugoslavia	Sweden	China	Austria	Columbia	Australia	Chile	England	Mexico	France	ANOVA F Value
1. Air travel (trips per year)	2.2	3.9	2.9	0.3	3.1	0.1	0.6	2.6	0.7	0.3	0.9	3.5	3.1	31.9
2. Beer (servings per week)	2.3	2.5	2.5	0.9	2.6	0.8	2.3	2.2	0.7	0.4	3.7	2.1	0.6	7.9
3. Blue jeans (wearings per month)	5.3	5.1	3.1	3.4	2.9	2.5	3.8	2.8	5.2	3.9	5.3	4.0	3.6	8.6
4. Eating at a restaurant (times per month)	2.9	3.3	2.7	2.2	3.4	0.8	2.9	3.0	2.7	0.7	2.4	3.1	2.8	14.2
5. Hair shampoo (use per week)	5.3	5.5	3.3	2.2	3.6	0.7	3.0	3.5	3.7	3.1	3.1	5.3	2.6	40.2
6. Going to the cinema (times per month)	2.0	2.2*	2.2	2.5	2.2	3.0	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.4	2.7	5.1
7. Soft drinks (servings per week)	2.2	3.7	2.0	3.6	2.6	2.8	3.0	3.8	2.5	3.0	2.7	3.1	2.6	10.4
8. Stereo sets (use per week)	5.3	5.6	3.9	5.1	5.8	3.5	3.7	3.9	5.2	5.3	5.8	5.6	5.6	6.0

Table I.  
Average Use of  
Products and Services  
across Countries

ferences in levels of product/service use across countries, the data were analysed at intervals and a one-way analysis of variance was conducted for each product/service category using the country as levels. The differences in use between each pair of countries were analysed using the Scheffe's Multiple Range Test.

#### *Product Consumption*

The respondents from Chile and France reported the lowest consumption levels of beer (0.4 and 0.6 bottles per week) while England reported the highest level (3.7 bottles per week). The overall test showed significant differences due to a country,  $p < 0.001$ . The differences between pairs of countries as detected by Scheffe's multiple range test showed our respondents from England (3.7) consumed more beer than our respondents from Chile (0.4), France (0.6), Australia (0.7), China (0.8), Yugoslavia (0.9), Mexico (2.1), Columbia (2.2), Canada (2.3) and Austria (2.3) during a weekly period. No other pairs of countries had significantly different consumption levels.

Consumption of soft drinks was also measured on a weekly basis. Finnish subjects reported the lowest level of soft drink consumption, averaging about two servings per week, while respondents from Columbia reported the highest level of soft drink consumption, averaging at least four servings per week. The overall test was significant,  $p < 0.001$ , with several countries differing from each other. The Columbia sample had higher consumption levels of soft drinks than Finland (2.0), Canada (2.2), Australia (2.5) and France (2.6). The United States (3.7) drank more soft drinks per week than Finland, Canada and Australia. Yugoslavia (3.6) had higher consumption levels than Finland and Canada. The Mexican students (3.1) drank more soft drinks per week than the Finnish students. Therefore, many differences were detected among pairs of countries in weekly consumption of soft drinks.

The use of hair shampoo was also quite different across the countries. The North American countries of Canada, the United States and Mexico all reported using hair shampoo at least five or more times per week, indicating almost daily usage of the product. China is at the other extreme with 30 per cent of the sample not even using the product, and the average reported use of shampoo is about once a week. Relatively low usage patterns were also reported in Yugoslavia (2.2 times per week) and France (2.6 times per week). The overall test was highly significant,  $p < 0.001$ . On a between country analysis, the respondents from the United States and Canada use hair shampoo more often than the respondents from China (0.7), Yugoslavia (2.2), France (2.6), Austria (3.0), Chile (3.1), England (3.1), Finland (3.3) and Columbia (3.5). Mexico showed the same differences between countries, with the exception of not being different from the Columbia sample. So although there appears to be a mean difference between Mexico (5.3) and Columbia (3.5), the overlap in variation of use was also great.

Continuing to look at the differences between pairs of countries, the analyses showed the Australian (3.7) sample and the Swedish (3.6) sample used shampoo more frequently than China, Yugoslavia and France. England, Finland and Columbia respondents also used shampoo more frequently than China and Yugoslavia. Finally, respondents from Chile and Austria used shampoo more frequently than our

China sample. In summary, the most variation in product use between countries was found with the product category of hair shampoo.

For the product category of blue jeans, a significant overall variation in use patterns is revealed,  $p < 0.001$ . Most of this variation was due to the China sample wearing jeans far less frequently (2.5 times a month) than respondents from Mexico (4.0), United States (5.1), Australia (5.2), England (5.3) and Canada (5.3). The respondents from Columbia (2.8) wore jeans less often than our respondents from Australia and Canada. It is important to note that the product use time frame could have been improved upon for blue jeans. The top category for use was 6 or more wearings per month and in retrospect this probably contributed to a ceiling effect for use.

For use of stereo sets, the overall test was significant,  $p < 0.001$ . However, most of this variation was due to the respondents from China (3.5) using stereos less than respondents from Mexico (5.6), United States (5.6), France (5.6), England (5.8) and Sweden (5.8 times a week).

#### *Use of Services*

Great variations were found among the respondents' use of air travel over a one-year period,  $p < 0.001$ . On a between country comparison, the US (3.9) and Mexican (3.5) students took more plane trips per year than the students from China (0.1), Yugoslavia (0.3), Chile (0.3), Austria (0.6), Australia (0.7), England (0.9), Canada (2.2) and Columbia (2.6). Additionally, the US students also out-travelled the Finnish (2.9). The French (3.1), Swedish (3.1) and Finnish students took more trips than the Chinese, Yugoslavians, Chileans, Austrians, and Australians. The French also out-travelled the English. The Columbian sample reported more air trips than the Chinese, Yugoslavian and Chilean respondents. Finally, the Canadian sample reported more airline trips than the Chinese sample.

Going to the cinema displayed an overall significant variation among countries,  $p < 0.001$ . However, the only country significantly different from the others was China. The Chinese sample reported, on average, going to the cinema at least three times a month. This was significantly greater than cinema-going behaviour reported from Canada, England, United States, Australia, Finland and Sweden. These countries all averaged going to the cinema about twice a month. Therefore, cinema-going behaviour is quite consistent across our sample, with only the Chinese reporting more cinema-going than any other country.

Variations were found among countries in their use of restaurants over a one month period,  $p < 0.001$ . On a between country comparison, the Chileans (0.7) ate in restaurants less than the Swedes (3.4), the US (3.3), Mexico (3.1), Columbia (3.0), Austria (2.9), Canada (2.9) and France (2.8). The Chinese sample reported eating in restaurants 0.8 times a month and, in addition to the above countries, Finland (2.7) and Australia (2.7) were also significantly more frequent restaurant diners than the Chinese. The Yugoslavian sample reported eating in restaurants 2.2 times a month and this was significantly less than Sweden, US, Mexico and Columbia. Australia, at 2.7 visits a month, also reported significantly less restaurant dining than Sweden. Hence, eating out at restaurants is a fairly common occurrence among most countries, with the exception of the Chinese and the Chileans. Both of these samples reported eating at restaurants less than once a month.



Table II.  
Average PII Levels and  
the Percent of the  
Sample for  
Product/Service Users

	1 Canada n = 60	2 United States n = 46	3 Finland n = 45	4 Yugoslavia n = 50	5 Sweden n = 37	6 China n = 50	7 Barbados n = 11	8 Austria n = 48	9 Columbia n = 49	10 Australia n = 46	11 Chile n = 22	12 England n = 34	13 Mexico n = 47	14 Argentina n = 10	15 France n = 41
1. Air travel	109* 68%	116 98%	106 87%	105 24%	99 86%	107 6%	112 90%	105 35%	101 38%	104 54%	113 23%	110 47%	106 91%	102 40%	104 85%
2. Beer	88 60%	94 61%	90 82%	85 56%	100 81%	106 60%	82 37%	95 56%	82 76%	83 28%	82 41%	97 82%	87 60%	90 90%	82 32%
3. Blue jeans	99 98%	99 100%	86 80%	100 82%	85 84%	96 62%	99 73%	101 92%	87 94%	98 93%	100 91%	97 94%	99 94%	101 70%	96 85%
4. Eating at a restaurant	99 97%	103 100%	105 96%	93 86%	103 100%	94 66%	85 82%	108 88%	98 98%	105 98%	97 73%	100 91%	103 96%	88 90%	104 100%
5. Hair shampoo	101 100%	107 100%	98 100%	111 100%	95 100%	106 70%	109 100%	101 96%	109 98%	103 100%	108 100%	101 100%	106 98%	109 100%	96 100%
6. Going to the cinema	101 80%	98 87%	105 93%	102 98%	103 92%	113 94%	97 73%	102 92%	98 96%	102 89%	105 95%	103 91%	92 91%	104 100%	113 98%
7. Soft drinks	76 67%	87 96%	82 82%	110 100%	76 89%	108 86%	93 91%	96 88%	94 96%	77 83%	83 95%	86 85%	83 96%	85 80%	85 85%
8. Stereo sets	111 97%	111 100%	106 96%	112 96%	112 97%	116 96%	102 11%	109 79%	105 98%	112 100%	106 100%	113 100%	110 98%	104 90%	109 100%

\* Underneath the PII level for users is the percent of the sample reporting regular use of the product/service.

In summary, one finds variations among countries in the way the selected sample of business students consume common products and services in the marketplace. Since product use is sometimes related to involvement, i.e. the more you are involved with a product, the more likely you are to use it (Zaichkowsky, 1986b), the researchers wanted to examine the effect of product use before looking at involvement.

#### *Differences in Involvement among Regular Product Users*

The involvement scores for regular users of each product/service category over all countries are listed in Table II. Hence the involvement scores for subjects who reported not using the product were dropped from this section.

The PII levels for users of beer ranged from a low of 82 in Columbia to a high of 106 in China. The overall test was significant,  $p < 0.001$ . However, using the Scheffe's multiple range test, no two countries were significantly different from each other at the  $p < 0.05$  level. Since the overall test did show differences, countries of similar backgrounds were grouped and the analysis was rerun. Canada, the United States and Mexico were grouped to represent North America; Finland, Sweden and Austria were grouped as the Northern European Countries; and Columbia and Chile were grouped as our South American Countries. The new overall test detected differences between China and the South American countries of Columbia and Chile (106 versus 82). This indicates that among regular users of beer, the Chinese view this beverage with higher involvement than the South American sample which has relatively lower involvement with the product. For other pairs of countries, there was sufficient variation within each country that no differences in involvement levels could be detected at the  $p = 0.05$  level.

For users of soft drinks the results were different. Average PII levels ranged from a low of 76 in Canada and Sweden, to a high of 110 in Yugoslavia. The overall test was significant,  $p < 0.001$ . This was mainly due to Yugoslavia (110) and China (108) being more involved with soft drinks than Sweden (76), Canada (76), Australia (77), Finland (82), and Mexico (83). Yugoslavia (110) was also significantly more involved with soft drinks than Chile (83), France (85), England (86) and the US (87). Why these two communist countries are so involved with soft drinks is an interesting question.

The next product is the personal care product of shampoo. Almost all the sample regularly used shampoo, with the exception of China. The PII score on shampoo ranged from a high of 111 in Yugoslavia to a low of 95 in Sweden. The overall analysis picked up significant differences,  $p < 0.001$ ; however, no significant differences in involvement with shampoo were found between any of the countries at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the analysis was rerun using the same regional grouping of countries. Once Sweden was regrouped with Austria and Finland, significant differences in product involvement were found between Yugoslavia and France (111 versus 96). It is interesting to note that there was no significant difference in level of use of this product (2.2 versus 2.6 times per week) between these two countries. In fact, the Yugoslavian sample used the product less than most other countries, but was more involved with the product. Perhaps good shampoo is a scarce commodity in Yugoslavia.



Blue jeans and stereo sets, which were thought by the researchers to represent typical Western young adult products, are the final two product categories examined. The highest involvement score for blue jeans was from Austria (101) and the lowest was from Sweden (85). The test across all countries was significant,  $p < 0.001$ ; however, no two countries had different PII levels as tested by the Scheffe's multiple range test. Analysis by regional grouping also showed no significant differences in involvement levels between any two countries for blue jeans at the  $p = 0.05$  level. Hence, the overall significance could not be traced back to differences between specific countries. Similar results were obtained for stereos as the overall test showed no differences among countries. In general, stereos were a relatively high involvement product to the sample as the average PII was over 105. Perhaps these two product categories have undergone the "homogenisation" process across countries.

#### *Services*

Three services or activities that might be used regularly by the respondents were chosen for study: air travel, eating at restaurants and going to the cinema. For regular air travellers, the US sample had the highest involvement (116) and Sweden had the lowest involvement (99). The overall test was significant,  $p < 0.001$  with only the two countries mentioned above being significantly different from each other.

Going to the cinema was found to be most involving for subjects in France (113) and China (113) and least involving for respondents in Mexico (92). The overall test for the cinema was significant,  $p < 0.001$ , and showed that the students from France and China were significantly more involved in going to the cinema than were students from Mexico. No differences were found between any of the other countries.

Involvement scores for eating at restaurants ranged from 93 for Yugoslavia to 108 for Austria. However, no two countries were significantly different from each other, indicating similar involvement levels for restaurants among regular users.

#### *Overall Variation Due to Country*

Besides looking at the differences between countries, an interesting question is how much overall variation in involvement and use of products is accounted for by country. To determine this, the  $\omega^2$  or omega squared (the analysis of variance version of  $R^2$ ) was computed and the results are listed in Table III. According to Cohen (1977), a "large" effect in experimental research is represented by a value of 0.15 or greater, medium effects are 0.06 and small effects are 0.01. Since these data do not represent a true experimental design, this labelling of magnitude of effects may be open to some interpretation. The product/service categories with the greatest variation in use due to country are restaurants (22 per cent), air travel (31 per cent) and hair shampoo (45 per cent). Variation in use of air travel may be correlated to economic conditions, whereas variation in use of hair shampoo may be due to the occurrence of shower facilities in the home which may also be due to economic conditions. Other product/service categories showed medium effects in variation of product use due to country.

The variation due to country, in involvement levels, among regular users of the product/service is also shown in Table III. Fairly large effects for country were

found for soft drinks (20 per cent) and going to the cinema (12 per cent) and a fairly small effect (one per cent) was found for stereos. All other product/service categories had a medium effect due to country on involvement levels.

In Canada and Australia, soft drinks are a low involving product category, but in China and Yugoslavia they are a relatively high involvement product. Therefore, brand image may be important in the former countries while product differences (real or imagined) may be important in the latter cases. Stereos, on the other hand, have very little variation in involvement due to country. With this product, similar marketing appeals might work well across different countries.

Product/Service	Product Use (Total Sample) $\omega^2$	Involvement (Users Only) $\omega^2$
Air travel	31%	6%
Beer	13%	7%
Blue jeans	14%	5%
Hair shampoo	45%	4%
Going to the cinema	8%	12%
Going to restaurants	22%	4%
Soft drinks	17%	20%
Stereo sets	10%	1%

**Table III.**  
Variation in Product/  
Service Use and  
Involvement Due  
to Country

#### Demographic Factors

Data were also collected on sex and religious affiliation of the respondents. Differences were found between males and females with respect to involvement levels of beer and hair shampoo. Males were more involved with beer than females (82 versus 57),  $t(591) = 9.9$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Females were more involved with hair shampoo than males (110 versus 94),  $t(591) = 9.8$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

Differences in product use between males and females were also examined. Again, a relationship between gender and product use was found for beer and hair shampoo. Men consumed more beer than females ( $X^2 = 119.6$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and they also shampooed more often than the females ( $X^2 = 19.4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This result is interesting and helps to explain why the correlation between product use and involvement is so low for hair shampoo ( $r = 0.15$ ). Women are far more *involved* with shampoo than men, but do not shampoo as often. The relationship between gender and beer consumption may also affect some of our results. Specifically, high product use of beer was found in England and 80 per cent of the sample there was male. Conversely, the consumption of beer was relatively low in Australia and 60 per cent of the sample was female. Overall, the correlation between involvement and product use is high for beer ( $r = 0.71$ ). All other products and services were used equally and perceived equally involving by men and women.

The final demographic factor examined was religion. Only two groups, Catholics ( $n = 259$ ) and Protestants ( $n = 152$ ) had sufficient numbers for comparisons.

Looking at the PII scores between Catholics and Protestants, the only area with significant differences was soft drinks. Catholics were more involved with soft drinks than Protestants (87 versus 75),  $t(409) = 4.51$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The reasoning for this finding is not obvious as many countries with high Catholic populations were not heavy soft drink users, e.g. Mexico, Austria and France. No differences between the two religions were found on any other product/service category.

### Discussion and Summary

The objective of this study was to provide some empirical data on consumers' use and involvement of "global" products across different cultures. A controlled sample allowed us to compare across cultures and overcome the major problems of cross-cultural research. The focus was on whether or not equivalent people in different cultures viewed products and services the same or differently. The intention was not to answer complex questions about multinational marketing strategies, but to provide some insight into consumers' perceptions and behaviours that might be of assistance to those formulating such strategies.

Consumers with similar involvement levels should have similar motivational behaviours towards the product. For example, they should equally seek out information, perceive differences among brands and have favourite brands (Zaichkowsky, 1985a). Where little variation in involvement levels for products across countries is found, perhaps similar strategies are in order. Where differences exist, perhaps strategies should reflect those differences. For countries demonstrating low-involvement with the product, brand image may be all important. For countries revealing high-involvement, the better strategy might be more product attribute differentiation and premium pricing.

For products such as soft drinks or services such as going to the cinema, where a substantial variation was found in involvement, perhaps more segmented strategies are better. For example, the Chinese are highly involved cinema goers, averaging at least three trips a month to the cinema. Reasons for this avid interest and activity are said to be rooted in their desire for knowledge about the western world. Television is common in urban China (cf. Kirpalani and Kuan, 1986), but the type of programming carried on the national television stations is domestic in nature. One of the best ways to get information about the dress, customs and language of abroad is the big screen, and Chinese line up in the afternoon for early evening shows that they are eager to attend. The French sample was also very involved with cinema-going activity but did not attend significantly more films than other countries. The correlation between involvement and use for French cinema goers was 0.26 compared to 0.58 for the Chinese sample. This may indicate that totally different marketing strategies are needed for the French and Chinese sample compared to the rest of our countries. Since the French are highly involved, they may not place great emphasis on the cost of seeing the film, but focus on the differences among the film available. Price discounts in France and China may not be needed to entice consumers. Rather, these countries may be targets for quality improvements in cinemas and films, charging premium prices.

Beer is viewed similarly across cultures with only the Chinese sample being significantly more involved than the South American sample. Yet, on average,

the Chinese sample consumed less beer than other countries. Since involvement is high and consumption is low, perhaps there is some insight to be gained by looking at product availability.

The last product, hair shampoo, showed great differences in level of use across countries but not much difference in involvement. One does not find much support for Dichter's (1962) observation that in Catholic and Latin countries, to overindulge in bathing is considered improper. Mexico, with 92 per cent of the sample declared Catholic, reported almost daily shampooing. Perhaps, since this country is in close proximity to the US and Canada, similar views and use of the product have developed.

#### *Limitations*

The purpose of this study was not to provide specific marketing strategies for the products/services investigated, but rather to give some insight as to how certain products and services are used and viewed globally. While this has been accomplished, it is not inferred that the subsamples are representative of any market segment from these countries. Empirical data show that among regular product users, these equivalent subjects overlap in their degree of involvement and motivation towards products and services. Such overlap may support the position of the proponents of global marketing. Yet, on the other side of the argument, the reader may focus on the situations where definite differences were found and conclude that the marketer must be careful with some products/services in some markets.

This small sample study was limited to certain products and services. No attempt is being made to generalise to any other products or services. Nor can the respondents to our study be considered necessarily representative of other social groups within the same country. Hence, although this sample was highly involved in blue jeans, it is unlikely all respondents in a country would react similarly. However, we have controlled for the dimensions suggested by Kassarian and Robertson (1981) for cross-cultural research and are confident our findings are valid.

#### **Acknowledgements**

This study would not have been possible without the co-operation and assistance of the following people: Pedro Mario Vindez, University of Santa Fé, Santa Fé, Argentina; Hans Muhlbacher, Universitat Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria; John Rossiter, New South Wales Institute of Technology, Broadway, NSW, Australia; John Mayers, University of West Indies, Barbados, West Indies; Andres Ibanez, Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile, Santiago, Chile; Wang Fu Cheng, Beijing Commercial College, Beijing, China; Carlos Lopez, Universidad de Los Andes, Bogota, Columbia; Gordon Foxall, Cranfield Institute of Technology, Cranfield, Bedford, England; Meeri Saarsalmi, Helsinki School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland; Élyette Roux, École Supérieure des Sciences Économiques et Commerciales (ESSEC), Cergy, France; Juan Jose Ling Chong Universidad Anahuac, Lomos Anahuac, Mexico; Marie Bergholm, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, Sweden; and Mihael Kline, Univerza Edvarda Kardelja Ljubljani, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia. Additionally, the authors would like to thank Dan Small and Tom Tazelaar for their careful attention to keypunching the vast amount of data.

**References**

- Assael, H. (1984), *Consumer Behavior and Marketing Action*, 2nd ed., Kent Publishing, Boston, Mass.
- Aydin, N. and Terpstra, V. (1981), 'Marketing Know-How Transfers by MNC's: A Case Study in Turkey', *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. XII No. 3, pp. 35-48.
- Brislin, R., Lonner, W. and Thorndike, R. (1973), *Cross Cultural Research Methods*, John Wiley and Sons.
- Britt, S.H. (1974), 'Standardizing Marketing for the International Market', *Columbia Journal of World Business*, Winter, pp. 39-45.
- Cohen, J. (1977), *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*, Academic Press, New York.
- Dawson, C. (1938), *Progress and Religion: An Historical Inquiry*, Sheed and Ward, New York, pp. 58-73.
- Dichter, E. (1962), 'The World Consumer', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 40 No. 4, July-August, pp. 113-22.
- 'Differences, Confusion Slow Global Marketing Bandwagon', *Marketing News*, 16 January 1987, p. 1.
- Fisher, A.B. (1984), 'The Ad Biz Gloms onto 'Global' ', *Fortune*, 12 November, pp. 77-9.
- Hansen, F. (1977), 'Managerial Implications of Cross-Cultural Studies', in Woodside, A., Sheth, J. and Bennett, P. (Eds.), *Consumer and Industrial Buying Behavior*, North Holland, New York, pp. 387-94.
- Harrell, G.D. (1986), *Consumer Behavior*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego, pp. 136-42.
- Hill, J.S. and Still, R.R. (1984), 'Adapting Products to LDC Tastes', *Harvard Business Review*, March-April, pp. 92-101.
- Kassarjian, H. and Robertson, T. (1981), *Perspectives in Consumer Behavior*, 3rd ed., Scott Foresman, Chicago, pp. 480-3.
- Kirpalani, V.H. and Kuan, X. (1986), 'Effective International Market Potential Assessment: China' in Wallendorf, M. and Anderson, P. (Eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, pp. 398-402.
- Killough, J. (1978), 'Improved Payoffs from Transnational Advertising', *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, pp. 102-10.
- Levitt, T. (1983), 'The Globalization of Markets', *Harvard Business Review*, May-June pp. 92-102.
- Narayana, C.L. (1981), 'Aggregate Images of American and Japanese Products: Implications and International Marketing', *Columbia Journal of World Business*, Summer, pp. 31-5.
- Plummer, J.T. (1977), 'Consumer Focus in Cross-National Research', *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 6 No. 2, Spring, pp. 5-15.
- Reilly, M.D. and Rathje, W.L. (1985), 'Consumption and Status Across Cultural Boundaries: Non Reactive Evidence', in Hirshman, E. and Holbrook, M. (Eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 12, pp. 129-32.
- Sorenson, R. and Weichmann, U.E. (1975), 'How Multinationals View Marketing Standardization', *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, pp. 38-54.
- Tigert, D.J., King, C.W. and Ring, L. (1980), 'Fashion Involvement: A Cross Cultural Comparative Analysis', in Olsen, J. (Ed.), *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 7, pp. 17-21.
- Zaichkowsky, J.L. (1985a), 'Measuring the Involvement Construct', *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, December, pp. 341-52.
- Zaichkowsky, J.L. (1985b), 'Familiarity: Product Use, Expertise or Involvement?', in Holbrook, M. and Hirshman, E. (Eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 12, Association for Consumer Research, pp. 296-9.