

Culture & Personality: Directional influence on Consumer Switching

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the directional influence of Culture and Personality, together, on consumer switching. Culture and Personality in isolation will have a definitive effect on consumer switching but in unison their influence on consumer switching will be totally different and will depend on their direction. We prepared a matrix to show directional influence of Personality & Culture to influence consumer switching. In each cell of Matrix we show if personality/culture influences are opposing or act in unison in terms of Consumer Switching. In our research paper we project this directional influence on the phenomenon of consumer switching.

Keywords

Consumer Switching Behavior, Culture, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, Personality, OCEAN, MBTI

1. Introduction

Culture is defined here as “the configuration of learned behavior and results of behavior whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society” (Linton, 1945, p. 32). In addition, cultural values are normative beliefs that individuals have about how they are expected to behave by their culture (Yau, 1994). Customer loyalty is the key to long-term success for businesses. But even satisfied customers tend to seek variety by occasionally switching to a new service provider (see also Kahn, 1995). Culture plays an important role in influencing consumers' switching intentions. Lin and Matilla (2006) examined the role of culture as moderator in influencing consumers' switching intentions of different personalities of consumers. The study results indicated that Taiwanese consumers are more likely to switch restaurant providers and to exhibit exploratory behaviors than their U.S. counterparts, because of differences in their cultural values.

Whereas, Personality refers to the set of invisible characteristics and practices that lie behind a relatively stable pattern of behavior in response to ideas, objects, or people in the environment (Daft, 2011). Sung and Kim, (2010) explained personality is the general tendency to behave consistently across various situations. Personality is more of an intrinsic characteristic whereas Culture a societal phenomenon. Apart from demographic factors such as age and income, as well as individual factors such as Personality can also affect switching. Previously, Culture and Personality have been studied individually and independently but here we study and suggest their interplay in terms of consumer brand switching.

The main objective of this study is to identify the effect of culture and personality in unison and its directional influence on consumer switching by developing a framework through which the hypotheses can be tested for causal relationship. Verification of the hypotheses using empirical data is beyond the scope of this conceptual stage.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Switching Behavior

CSB is the way customers shift from one supplier/service provider to another. In other words, it can be defined as the level of propensity of customers to switch from one product or service provider to another in a given industry or purchase situation. Previous research laid emphasis on switching intentions and switching behavior mostly through Consumer Characteristics, Firms marketing strategy, service experience and perception of consumers, but switching from a cultural perspective is an area unexplored. Since a society's culture influences the values of its members which in turn shape their underlying behavior, it is very important to study the effect of Culture on consumer switching.

2.3 Culture and its Dimensions

Societal culture, as discussed by Hofstede (1991), refers to a set of shared values, beliefs, assumptions and practices that shape and guide members' attitudes and behavior in the society. Accordingly, culture is defined “as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.” For this reason, Service parameters developed in one country or culture cannot be simply translated into another without considering cultural adaptation. Hence, culture is viewed as a significant factor that affects consumer switching behavior. It is apparent that every culture has developed with its own history, language, and religions creating identities that have been influenced by very different experiences. These experiences clearly affect a country's perspective on the world. Cultures have shown a definite effect on Consumer Switching pattern and its implications.

2.3 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

After conducting research in over fifty countries, Hofstede (1980) developed his cultural dimensions model, which provides a framework for cross-cultural communication. It comprises of the following:

- 1) Power distance (PD). Power distance represents the extent of adherence to formal authority channels and is the degree to which the lesser powerful accept the prevailing distribution of power. High power distance

cultures have members who are much more comfortable with centralized power than members of low power distance cultures.

- 2) Individualism (IDV)/Collectivism. In individualistic society's people take care only of their own selves. In collective societies people feel as though they belong to a strong group and always try to protect it. People with high individualism view self and immediate family as relatively more important than the collective.
- 3) Masculinity/ Femininity. In masculine cultures, winning is important and in feminine cultures, the welfare of disadvantaged members is taken care of.
- 4) Uncertainty Avoidance (UA). Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations and try to avoid such situations.
- 5) Long term/Short term Orientation. It is self-explanatory. Long-term oriented societies attach more importance to the future. They foster pragmatic values oriented towards rewards, including persistence, saving and capacity for adaptation. For short term oriented societies, values promoted are related to the past and the present, including steadiness, and respect for tradition.
- 6) Indulgence vs. restraint (IND). This dimension is essentially a measure of happiness; whether or not simple joys are fulfilled. And if individuals are allowed to indulge and have fun or or supposed to restraint themselves according pre-defined rules of society.

2.3.1 Power distance (PD).

With regards to power distance index (PDI), empirical researches have shown that consumers from higher PDI countries are less likely to trust service providers and have higher privacy concerns than do the consumers from low PDI countries (Gefen and Heart, 2006; Bellman et al, 2004). According to Cateora et al (2008), those cultures that score low in power distance (PD) indices tend to be innovative and more likely to accept new innovations/offering. This is because they tend to develop higher initial trust towards others more readily than do the less individualistic countries. Based on the above discussion it can be hypothesized that Low power index leads to more individualistic culture and favored consumer switching; having this, in mind, we propose the following proposition.

2.3.2 Uncertainty Avoidance (UA)

Uncertainty Avoidance index (UAI) is "a society's tolerance for ambiguity," in which people embrace or avert an event of something unexpected, unknown, or away from the status quo. Societies that score a high degree in this index opt for stiff codes of behavior, guidelines, laws, and generally rely on absolute Truth, or the belief. A lower degree in this index shows more acceptance of differing thoughts/ideas, and hence high levels of switching.

2.3.3 Individualism (IDV)/Collectivism

In less individualistic cultures, social factors like social pressure and social expectations can be an important positive influence on consumer behavior. Individuals from cultures high in individualism, have a higher comfort (or trust) with switching activities than individuals from cultures exhibiting the opposite levels. Hence we propose,

2.3.4 Long term/Short term Orientation

This dimension associates the connection of the past with the current and future actions/challenges. A lower degree of this index (short-term) indicates that traditions are honored and kept, while steadfastness is valued, and hence less likely to switch. Whereas, societies with a high degree in this index (long-term) views adaptation and circumstantial, pragmatic problem-solving as a necessity, so more likely to switch.

2.3.5 Masculinity/ Femininity

A masculine society will give preference to achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success." Contrary to values of cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life, and hence more likely to switch.

2.3.6 Indulgence vs. Restraint (IND)

Indulgence is defined as "a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun." Its counterpart is defined as "a society that controls gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms." An indulgent Society is more likely to be variety seekers and change loving individuals and hence more likely switchers.

2.4 Personality

Personality is the unique, relatively enduring internal and external aspects of a person's character that influence behavior in different situations (Schultz and Schultz, 2009). It also refers to the set of invisible characteristics and practices that lie behind a relatively stable pattern of behavior in response to ideas, objects, or people in the environment (Daft, 2011). Sung and Kim, (2010) explained personality is the general tendency to behave consistently across various situations and can be broadly classified into five stable and enduring dimensions, referred to as the Big Five: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Culture. Literature on personality traits is vast. From 4,000 words and characters many researchers have identified several important factors to measure personality (Tupes and Christal, 1961; Norman, 1963; Costa and McCare, 1985; Goldberg, 1990; Benet and Walter, 1995; Ashton et al., 2004).

2.4.1 Big Five Factor/ OCEAN

Openness- Openness is associated with cognitive ability. It is associated with moderate intellect and enjoyment of new experience.

Conscientiousness- It is associated with moderate level of efficiency with which a person goes about doing his routine tasks. Conscientious people are good planners.

Extraversion- Extravert people like to interact with external world, and are best suited to deal with environment and other people.

Agreeableness- Agreeableness is the parameter by which we can judge a person: how much he or she is co-operative, easy going, empathetic and friendly in nature. Agreeable people are ready to do what other people want. Agreeable people are unselfish and they have concern for other people. Agreeable people tend to form cohesive structure.

Neuroticism- These people are stressed easily. When things are so wrong they are unable to handle their impulse and desires. They generally make efforts to see things done right.

2.4.2 Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

The MBTI was constructed by Katharine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers. It is based on the conceptual theory proposed by Carl Jung (Jung & Gustav, 1971) who had speculated that humans experience the world using four principal psychological functions – sensation, intuition, feeling, and thinking – and that one of these four functions is dominant for a person most of the time. (Daniel et al, 2017) The MBTI was constructed for normal populations and emphasizes the value of naturally occurring differences. (Pearman & Albritton, 1997). The underlying assumption of the MBTI is that we all have specific preferences in the way we construe our experiences, and these preferences underlie our interests, needs, values, and motivation." (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2009)

The four scales used in the MBTI have some correlation with four of the Big Five personality traits, which are a more commonly accepted framework. (McCrae & Costa, 1989) The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is based on Carl Jung's theory of psychological type. It indicates your personality preferences in four dimensions: Where you focus your attention – Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I), the way you take in information – Sensing (S) or Intuition (N)

At the heart of Myers Briggs theory are four preferences. If you prefer to deal with:

- People and things (Extraversion or "E"), or ideas and information (Introversion or "I").
- Facts and reality (Sensing or "S"), or possibilities and potential (Intuition or "N").
- Logic and truth (Thinking or "T"), or values and relationships (Feeling or "F").
- A lifestyle that is well-structured (Judgment or "J"), or one that goes with the flow (Perception or "P").

The identification and description of the 16 distinctive personality types is a result from the interactions among these preferences:

Favorite world: Do you prefer to focus on the outer world or on your own inner world? This is called Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I).

Information: Do you prefer to focus on the basic information you take in or do you prefer to interpret and add meaning? This is called Sensing (S) or Intuition (N).

Decisions: When making decisions, do you prefer to first look at logic and consistency or first look at the people and special circumstances? This is called Thinking (T) or Feeling (F).

Structure: In dealing with the outside world, do you prefer to get things decided or do you prefer to stay open to new information and options? This is called Judging (J) or Perceiving (P). When you put these four letters together, you get a personality type code. Having four pairs to choose from means there are sixteen Myers Briggs personality types.

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Big Five factor and MBTI (Myer Briggs personality type indicators) as instrument to study these personality traits of an individual are two important, most popular and reliable tools to judge personality and cognitive style of a person. Similarly, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions are the most used theory of a Societies Culture. Here in our study we are using these, to predict their directional influence. We Prepare a Matrix with Dimensions of Peronality and Culture and in each cell we show if personality/culture influences are opposing or act in unison in relation to consumer switching. Those hypotheses where Personality and cultural dimensions are not likely to be supported is when only personality / culture are considered in isolation.

Culture \ Personality	Power Distance	Uncertainty avoidance	Individuality/ Collectivism	Long term/ Short term	Masculinity/ Feminine	Indulgence/ Restrained
Extraversion/ Introversion (E/I)	Unrelated	Unrelated	Unrelated	Unrelated	Unrelated	Unrelated
Sensing/ Intuition (S/N)	Unrelated	UA & N: SD	S & Col.: SD	N & ST: SD	Unrelated	I & N: SD
Thinking/ Feeling (T/F)	F & PD: NSD	UA & F: SD	F & Col.: SD	T & LT/ ST: Go Together	Unrelated	R & T: SD; I & F: SD
Judgment/ Perception (J/P)	High PD & High P: NSD; Low PD & High P: SD	High UA & P: SD	P & Col.: SD	P & LT: SD	Unrelated	Unrelated
Agreeableness (A)	High PD & A: Malleable; Low PD & High A: SD	UA to dominate A	I to dominate A	Unrelated	M to dominate A	I to dominate A
Openness to Experience (OTE)	Low PD & High OTE: SD	Low UA & High OTE: SD	High I & OTE: SD	LT & OTE: SD	M & OTE: SD	High I & OTE: SD
Systematic / Conscientiousness (S/C)	Low PD & High S: NSD	Low UA & High S: NSD	High I & High S: NSD	High LT & High S: SD	High M & High S: NSD	High R & High S: SD
Neurotic (N)	Unrelated	SD	High I & High N: SD	Low LT & High N: SD	Unrelated	High I & N: SD

Figure: Matrix showing Directional Influence of Personality and Culture in terms of consumer brand switching.
SD: Same direction
NSD: Not in same direction.

Extraversion and Introversion (E/I) - The first pair of styles is concerned with the direction of your energy. If you prefer to direct your energy to deal with people, things, situations, or "the outer world", then your preference is for Extraversion. If you prefer to direct your energy to deal with ideas, information, explanations or beliefs, or "the inner world", then your preference is for Introversion. On the other hand, Extrovert people are friendly, talkative and they like the presence of others (Rothman and Coetzer, 2003). It represents personality characteristics as warmth, gregariousness, excitement seeking and energetic (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Goldberg, 1990; Watson and Clark, 1997). They are not interested to do boring and monotonous work. They are excitement seeking in nature (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Feist (1998) concluded that introverted people are more proficient on creative work. Extraversion has a positive connection with new experience, especially in an organizational setting (Furnham & Bachtiar, 2008; Wolfradt & Pretz, 2001). Since Extraversion /Introversion is merely considered to be direction of energy and is an Intrinsic factor, cultural dimension's direction will not have any relation to it. Based on above arguments, we propose following hypothesis:

H1: Extraversion/ Introversion are not related to any of Cultural Dimensions and will not act together to influence Consume Switching.

Sensing and Intuition (S/N) - The second pair concerns the type of information/things that you process. If you prefer to deal with facts, what you know, to have clarity, or to describe what you see, then your preference is for Sensing. If you prefer to deal with ideas, look into the unknown, to generate new possibilities or to anticipate what isn't obvious, then your preference is for Intuition. The letter N is used for intuition because 'I' has already been allocated to Introversion. Based on above arguments, relating it to various cultural dimensions, we propose following hypothesis:

H2a: Sensing/ Intuition and Power Distance are not related to any of Cultural Dimensions and hence will not act together to influence Consume Switching.

H2b: Sensing and Uncertainty Avoidance will be in same direction and will lead to Consume Switching.

H2c: Sensing and Collectivism in same direction will lead to Consume Switching.

H2d: Introversion and Short term Orientation in same direction will lead to Consume Switching.

H2e: Sensing/ Intuition and Masculinity/ Femininity are not related in terms of Consumer Switching.

H2f: Intuition and Indulgence in same direction and will lead to Consume Switching.

Thinking and Feeling (T/F) - The third pair reflects your style of decision-making. If you prefer to decide on the basis of objective logic, using an analytic and detached approach, then your preference is for Thinking. If you prefer to decide using values - i.e. on the basis of what or who you believe is important - then your preference is for Feeling. Based on above arguments, relating it to various cultural dimensions, we propose following hypothesis:

H3a: Feeling and Power Distance will not be in same direction in terms of Consume Switching.

H3b: Feeling and Uncertainty Avoidance will be in same direction in terms of Consume Switching.

H3c: Feeling and Collectivism in same direction will lead to Consume Switching.

H3d: Thinking and Long term Orientation in same direction will lead to Consume Switching.

H3e: Feeling / Thinking and Masculinity/ Femininity are not related in terms of Consumer Switching.

H3f: Indulgence/ Feeling and Thinking/ Restraint in same direction will lead to Consume Switching.

Judgment and Perception (J/P) - The final pair describes the type of lifestyle you adopt. If you prefer your life to be planned and well-structured then your preference is for Judging. This is not to be confused with 'Judgmental', which is quite different. If you prefer to go with the flow, to maintain flexibility and respond to things as they arise, then your preference is for Perception. Based on above arguments, relating it to various cultural dimensions, we propose following hypothesis:

H4a: High Perception and High Power Distance will not be in same direction, whereas Low Power Distance & High Perception in same direction, in terms of Consume Switching.

H4b: High Perception and High Uncertainty Avoidance will be in same direction in terms of Consume Switching.

H4c: Perception and Collectivism in same direction will lead to Consume Switching.

H4d: Perception and Long term Orientation in same direction will lead to Consume Switching.

H4e: Judgment / Perception and Masculinity/ Femininity are not related in terms of Consumer Switching.

H4f: Judgment / Perception and Thinking/ Restraint are not related in terms of Consumer Switching.

Agreeableness (A): Agreeable people assume that most of the people around them are fair, honest and have good intentions. They have a strong sense of morality. A person who has high morality doesn't like to manipulate information and he has courage to unveil the truth behind a fact (Costa jr. et al., 1991). Agreeable people consider the opinion or suggestion of others (McCrae & Costa, 1997; Barrick et al., 2003). It doesn't have the strongest influence

on enhancing creativity (King et. al., 1996; Feist, 1998). Past studies have identified a negative association between agreeableness and innovation or creativity (George & Zhou, 2001; Gelade, 1997 and Patterson, 1999). Based on above arguments, relating it to various cultural dimensions, we propose following hypothesis:

H5a: High Agreeableness and High Power Distance can go either ways and will prone to be influenced in terms of Consume Switching, whereas Low Power Distance and High Agreeableness will lead to high Switching.

H5b: Uncertainty Avoidance will dominate over Agreeableness for directional influence in terms of Consumer Switching.

H5c: Individualism will dominate over Agreeableness for directional influence in terms of Consume Switching.

H5d: Agreeableness and Masculinity/ Femininity are not related in terms of Consumer Switching.

H5e: Masculinity will dominate over Agreeableness for directional influence in terms of Consume Switching.

H5f: Indulgence will dominate over Agreeableness for directional influence in terms of Consume Switching.

Openness to Experience (OTE): Open people are more inclined to involve in new things (Hogan et al., 1994; John & Srivastava, 1999) and they don't follow and believe in old and traditional values (McCrae & Costa 1987; McCrae & Costa, 1997 and Feist, 1998). This attribute helps a person to try new offerings. They have a lot of intellectual curiosity and imagination, which helps them to think about problems and solutions beyond the conventional set of norms. This type of divergent thinking has strong correlation with creative works (McCrae, 1987; Wolfradt and Pretz, 2001). Openness is one of the most important factors for a person to do innovative work (Patterson, 2002; Batey & Furnham, 2006; Furnham, 1999; Gelade, 1997; Harrison et. al, 2006; King et al, 1996; McCrae, 1987; Wolfradt & Pretz, 2001). Based on above arguments, relating it to various cultural dimensions, we propose following hypothesis:

H6a: High Openness to Experience and Low Power Distance will be in same direction in terms of consumer switching.

H6b: High Openness to Experience and Low Uncertainty Avoidance will be in same direction in terms of consumer switching.

H6c: Openness to Experience and High Individualism in same direction will lead to Consume Switching.

H6d: Openness to Experience and Low Long term Orientation in same direction will lead to Consume Switching.

H6e: Openness to Experience and Masculinity in same direction will lead to Consume Switching.

H6f: Openness to Experience and High Indulgence in same direction will lead to Consume Switching.

Conscientiousness/ Systematic (C/S): Conscientious people are well-organized, tidy and neat to complete their work. They have strong will power to complete their work despite boredom and other distraction (Costa Jr. et al., 1991). They are order line in nature and follow a set of rules and regulations at the time of their work (Barrick & Mount, 1993). A voluminous research has demonstrated that conscientiousness is negatively related to creativity (Barron & Harrington, 1981; Gelade, 1997; Harrison et al, 2006; Runco, 2004). Conscientiousness people are methodical, ordered and dutiful in nature and they are less interested and not suitable for innovative work (Robertson et. al., 2000). Individuals with the highest score on agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism are less creative in nature (Abdullah et. al., 2016, Olakitan, 2011). Based on above arguments, relating it to various cultural dimensions, we propose following hypothesis:

H7a: High Conscientiousness and Low Power Distance will not be in same direction in terms of consumer switching.

H7b: High Conscientiousness to Low Uncertainty Avoidance will not be in same direction in terms of consumer switching.

H7c: High Conscientiousness and High Individualism will not be in same direction in terms of consumer switching.

H7d: High Conscientiousness and High Long term Orientation will be in same direction in terms of consumer switching.

H7e: High Conscientiousness and High Masculinity will not be in same direction in terms of consumer switching.

H7f: High Conscientiousness and High Restraint will not be in same direction in terms of consumer switching.

Neuroticism: Neurotic people are nervous and they have fear, sadness and anger. Neurotic person is self-conscious. Self-conscious people always consider about what others think of them. If any types of failure happen, they easily get depressed (Piedmont, 1998; Judge, Frez, Bono and Thoresen, 2002). The person with the lowest score in this scale is calm when faced with difficulties (Foulkrod et al., 2010). They are vulnerable in nature, means they are panicked, confused and helpless if they face any hostile situation. They are a risk-averse type of person (Bass, 1985, P.173). An artist, who is less neurotic in nature are less creative than who has high scores in neuroticism (Feist, 1998). Low neuroticism makes a person less creative in nature (Matthews, 1989). There are few other studies that suggest the negative correlation between neuroticism and creativity (Dollinger et al., 2004; Martindale and Dailey, 1996). Based on above arguments, relating it to various cultural dimensions, we propose following hypothesis:

H8a: Neuroticism and Power Distance are not related in terms of consumer switching.

H8b: Neuroticism and Uncertainty Avoidance will be in same direction in terms of consumer switching
H8c: High Neuroticism and High Individualism will be in same direction in terms of consumer switching.
H8d: High Neuroticism and Low Long term Orientation will be in same direction in terms of consumer switching.
H8e: Neuroticism and Masculinity/ Feminism are not related in terms of consumer switching.
H8f: High Neuroticism and High Indulgence will be in same direction in terms of consumer switching.

4. Methodology

Our study follows an exploratory research design through Focused Literature Review to identify the unexplored research gap in literature. We performed an extensive literature review to develop a conceptual framework which can be further employed to empirically test and support the findings. In the next version of this paper, i.e. the verification stage, data will be collected from cities of selected country(s). Structured questionnaire-based survey would be developed. Then, we plan to send it through Google link (online) and manual distribution. The questionnaire consists of two parts: part one is helping to get the biography and their experience in consumer switching; Part two of the questionnaire asks for responses on the key constructs of the research variables of Culture, Personality and Consumer Switching. Data will be examined using structural equations modeling (SEM) which is basically a combination of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and linear regression, to find out the causal relationship between the factors considered and consumers' switching Intentions in product/ services.

5. Conclusion

In this paper through literature review, we have identified directional influence of Personality and Culture on consumer switching behavior. . We are using Big-Five factors and MBTI (Myer Briggs personality type indicators) for Personality and Hofstede's Cultural dimensions of societal culture. We prepared a matrix to show directional influence of Personality & Culture to influence consumer switching. In each cell of Matrix we show if personality/culture influences are opposing or act in unison in term of Consumer Switching and how it will effect switching. For some interactions of Personality and Culture the direction was found to be same, for others not, and on some occasions it was found to be even Unrelatble. It is proposed that Consumer switching is going to be influenced by on the directional interaction of personality and culture And hence, it is concluded that different market strategies can be developed by marketing firms and consumer business' to tackle personality and cultural interactions of global consumers dimensions to discourage switching, and to understand the difference in their switching patterns. We give a hypothetical and conceptual framework here and will get back after we are done with data collection and results. The proposed hypotheses will be verified through empirical data in the next version.

6. Limitations of Study

The study considers MBTI scale, Big five factors to judge the cognitive styles and personality of consumer as dimensions/ traits and Hofstede's Cultural Dimension to judge their influence on Consumer Switching decision. On one hand MBTI, Big five factors and Hofstede's are popular and reliable to judge personality, cognitive style and societal culture of a person, but on the other hand, it is required to consider, whether these personalities and cognitive style measurements only are sufficient to make directional relations. Other than these, these directional influence will depend also on affluence (Premium/ Low-End) of the consumer and on involvement of products (High/Low).

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