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# Cosmopolitanism, individual-level values and cultural-level values: A cross-cultural study

Mark Cleveland [a,*], Seçil Erdoğan [a], Gülay Arıkan [b], Tuğça Poyraz [b]

[a] The University of Western Ontario, Canada
[b] Department of Sociology at Hacettepe University, 06800 Beytepe, Ankara, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Cosmopolitanism (COS) is an important consumer characteristic for international market segmentation. To date, no empirical studies investigate how COS relates to consumer values. This research, involving samples of Canadians and Turks, focuses on the associations of individual- and cultural-level values to COS dispositions, and compares these relationships cross-culturally. The findings support the cross-cultural applicability of these constructs. While some of the COS-values relationships are consistent across the two cultures, others differ. Overall, COS is much more strongly associated with Schwartz's individual and cultural level values than with either Hofstede's cultural dimensions or demographics.



## 1. Introduction

As corporations globalize, the key challenge for managers is to institute an effective marketing orientation across a composite of cultures (Nakata and Sivakumar, 2001). International market segmentation is "…particularly challenging in global markets where cultural and economic differences influence customer preferences and characteristics" (Bolton and Myers, 2003, p. 123). This challenge becomes more difficult due to the intensification of multiculturalism within and across borders, and the amplification of cultural flows across borders via media and other mechanisms (Cleveland and Chang, 2009). The interconnectedness between economies, cultures, and individuals obscures the traditional boundaries between home and away. One corollary is that a proportion of individuals worldwide develop bicultural identities: one based in local traditions combined with an identity connected to an emerging global culture (Arnett, 2002; Kurasawa, 2004).

Researchers and practitioners acknowledge the existence of consumer segments transcending borders (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007; Merz, He and Alden, 2008), yet empirical studies are scarce (Bolton and Myers, 2003). Beyond classifications derived from economic and demographic variables, the international segmentation literature has tended to focus on general attitudinal constructs relating to domestic and foreign product biases (e.g., consumer ethnocentrism, patriotism, animosity), as well as product-category and/or country-specific attitudinal constructs (e.g., country of origin). Few studies have researched positive dispositions towards globalization, and/or foreign cultures/countries/products (Riefler and Diamantopoulos, 2009). The fact is that with globalization, consumers around the world are progressively encountering different cultures and consumption patterns, either directly or indirectly through media and marketing. This exposure should lead to greater awareness and receptivity towards differing cultures as well as augment cultural flexibility (Nijssen and Douglas, 2008), which in turn should bring about "a positive stance towards products and services originating from foreign countries" (Riefler and Diamontopoulos, 2009, p. 407).

Cosmopolitanism (from the Greek *kosmopolitês*, meaning citizen of the world) is a concept drawn from the fields of anthropology and social psychology, with growing applications in marketing and management. The application of cosmopolitanism (COS) has been widespread yet mainly theoretical or qualitative (e.g., Thompson and Tambyah, 1999; Skrbis, Kendall, and Woodward, 2004). The few existing studies (e.g., Cleveland, Laroche, and Papadopoulos, 2009; Nijssen and Douglas, 2008) concentrate on outcomes rather than causes of COS. To date no research focuses on individual/cultural values as possible antecedents. This research squarely addresses this knowledge gap, and assesses these relationships within two distinctive countries, Canada and Turkey. The objectives are (1) to verify the cross-cultural applicability of the COS construct, (2) to examine the relationships of Schwartz's (1992) motivational/cultural values and Hofstede's (1991) national cultural dimensions to COS, and, (3) to assess the consistency of these relationships cross-culturally.

* Corresponding author. Marketing, Aubrey Dan Program in Management and Organizational Studies, Social Science Centre Room 3216, The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada N6A 5C2. Tel.: +1 519 661 2111x81464; fax: +1 519 850 2386.
*E-mail addresses:* mclevela@uwo.ca (M. Cleveland), serdogan@uwo.ca (S. Erdoğan), arikang@hacettepe.edu.tr (G. Arıkan), tpoyraz@hacettepe.edu.tr (T. Poyraz).

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## 2. Literature background

### 2.1. Cosmopolitanism

Early literature defines cosmopolitans as "…those intellectuals who are at home in the cultures of other people as well as their own" (Konrad, 1984, p. 208–209). Hannerz (1992) describes cosmopolitans as individuals who regularly travel and interact with people elsewhere, and who "…provide points of entry into other territorial cultures" (p. 251). Competing theories account for the underlying nature of cosmopolitanism. Some researchers discuss COS as a learnable skill, other view COS as a personality trait, while still others allude to predisposition at birth (Thompson and Tambyah, 1999; Cannon and Yaprak, 2002). Subsequently, no definition for cosmopolitanism has achieved consensus. Social scientists now agree that COS, having been loosely applied to describe people that move about in the world, should instead be used to refer to a specific set of attitudes, beliefs and traits, most of all, "an ethos of cultural openness" (Kurasawa, 2004, p. 240). COS consists of "a willingness to engage with the other, an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent cultural experiences" (Hannerz, 1992, p. 252). Combined with this attitude is a sense of competence towards the alternative culture(s). The concepts of pluralism and COS are opposites. Pluralists draw boundaries between communities and view COS as threatening traditional cultural limits. Cosmopolitans favor wider, loose and multiple cultural narratives. Cosmopolitans hold universal aspirations and are less apt to hold allegiance to any particular community (Yeğenoğlu, 2005). As the world integrates, it is conceivable that some individuals are more global than local in their orientation and identity.

Three archetypal cosmopolitan populations are the global business elite, refugees and expatriates (Skrbis et al., 2004). Yet, all-pervading global forces (e.g., satellite television, the Internet) have now made it possible for a wider variety of individuals to inculcate COS values and exhibit COS traits, even without venturing outside one's own country (Hannerz, 1992; Craig and Douglas, 2006). Being a member of the elite is no longer a precondition for COS. Cleveland et al. (2009) find that COS is independent of income in all eight countries investigated. In addition, cosmopolitans should not be confounded with tourists. Unlike the prototypical tourist, the cosmopolitan feels equally at home when abroad. Tourist behaviors are often the opposite of cosmopolitan behaviors. Thompson and Tambyah's (1999) expatriates consciously eschew stereotypical tourist behaviors.

In one of the few international COS studies, Cleveland et al. (2009) find that mean COS levels vary across cultural groups. In general, females outscore males on COS, and education and age positively and negatively relate to COS, respectively; these relationships are however not consistent across all countries.

### 2.2. Research context

The local cultural environment likely abets or hinders cosmopolitanism (Cleveland et al., 2009). The two focal countries embody distinct value orientations. Canada exemplifies a modern society underscored with liberal values, whereas Turkey represents transitional countries in which the modern and traditional worlds coexist. Largely influenced by the two founding colonial nations of France and Britain, and today by the far more populous American neighbor, Canadian society emphasizes individualism and independence. Canada has a long history of being a migrant-attracting country, and movements from one country to another, along with internal migration further generate individualism (Triandis, 1994). In Canada, self-expression, self-esteem and personal achievements are standard values; personal needs and rights have priority. From a highly secular and multicultural nation, most Canadians are nominally religious, with Christians forming the largest group.

Turkey's location astride two continents bestows a unique culture blending Eastern and Western elements. On the one hand, the people of this Muslim country maintain strong cultural links to the Middle East, and continue to have a deep respect for their rich historical legacy. Traditional Turkish society emphasizes interdependence, sharing, and helpfulness. On the other hand, uniquely among large Muslim nations, Turkey is democratic and constitutionally secular, and is currently negotiating for EU membership. Globalization and modernization impart a degree of individualism, and Turkish social psychologists (e.g., Göregenli, 1997) are drawing attention to the coexistence of individualistic and collectivistic attributes in the changing environment. Turkey exemplifies the societal changes occurring in developing countries.

### 2.3. Hypothesized relationships

Hofstede (1980) defines culture as the collective mental programming of people. Cross-cultural researchers describe culture in terms of value dimensions that are guiding principles, important life goals or standards which determine social attitudes and ideologies as well as social behavior (Triandis, 1994). It is conceivable that COS dispositions tap into deeply rooted value systems. Measuring culture is thorny (Ng, Lee and Soutar, 2007). This research employs two frameworks for comparing individual- and/or cultural-level values: Hofstede's and Schwartz's.

#### 2.3.1. Hofstede's dimensions

The most cited cultural paradigm is that of Hofstede (1980, 1991), containing five dimensions of culture posited to be universally operant in varying degrees across countries. Along these dimensions, the two focal countries differ substantially.

Considered to be the most prominent facet of cultural variation (Triandis, 1994), individualism (IDV) takes in the relative importance of the group in society. With collectivism (low IDV), priority is given to in-group goals over personal goals, and this value prevails in more traditional societies (Hofstede, 1991). High IDV characterizes Western societies, whereby self-enhancement holds precedence over social obligations, and people are freer to make their own choices and to explore other perspectives and identities. Under collectivism, the emphasis is on the maintenance and respect of local traditions and norms. COS should therefore be more pronounced within individualistic cultures.

Canada and Turkey occupy different ends of the IDV spectrum. Turkey is a conservative culture emphasizing dependency on the internal group, preserving social order via hierarchic roles, and giving priority to group goals over individual ones (Pasa, Kabasakal and Bodur, 2001; Triandis, 1994). Canada is a post-industrial country with an emphasis on individual autonomy and goals, and independence (Triandis, 1994). With an IDV score of 37, ranking 28th out of 53 countries/regions (Hofstede, 1991) Turkey places on the collectivist side of the median. Canada ranks among the most individualistic countries (scoring 80, tied for fourth highest).

Power distance (PD) is concerned with the distribution of power. High PD societies endorse high levels of inequality and expect obedience from lower-ranking members. Individualistic cultures tend to be low on PD, while collectivistic cultures rank high on this aspect. When people are socialized to be assertive (low PD) rather than obedient (high PD), they are more apt to challenge customary practices and to embrace new perspectives, such as exploring other cultures. High PD associates with traditional notions of dominance and rigidity. These aspects should impede susceptibility to COS. Turkey ranks high on PD (66, tied for 18th place), whereas Canada (scoring 39, ranking 39th) is towards the lower end of the spectrum.

Masculinity (MAS) "expresses the degree to which the dominant values in society are masculine" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 46), such as ambition, competition, assertiveness and the acquisition of money and things. Low MAS cultures embody feminine values (modesty, nurturing, helping others, and improving the quality of life) and more fluid sex roles. COS is likely fostered within relationship-oriented, low MAS