

# The Influence Of Cultural Diversity On Marketing Communication: A Case Of Africans And Indians In Durban, South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper investigates the cultural diversity between Africans and Indians in Durban, South Africa, based on marketing communication. While cross-cultural marketing research has been concentrated on Western and Eastern societies, there is a lack of such research in Africa. The study examines the cultural values of Africans and Indians based on the individualism-collectivism cultural dimension, adapted to account for marketing communication-specific cultural values (MCSCV). The study was a quantitative study which used judgmental sampling technique to recruit subjects and analysed data using the t-test. Surveys were completed by 283 African and 92 Indian respondents at the main shopping malls in two of Durban's renowned African and Indian townships viz. Umlazi and Chatsworth, respectively. The findings of the study revealed that Indian respondents showed more individualistic tendencies toward marketing communication, as compared to their African counterparts. The study highlights that target markets' indigenous cultural values may not necessarily serve as predictors for market segmentation. The study further shows that directing stereotypical marketing communication strategies toward culturally homogeneous markets based on indigenous cultural dispositions, without investigating the compatibility of both cultural contexts, can be deleterious. The paper builds on current thinking in cross-cultural marketing literature and develops an orientation of MCSCV.*

**Keywords:** Marketing Communication; Cultural Diversity; Individualism; Collectivism; Africans; Indians

## INTRODUCTION

The years following the apartheid era of the South African *rainbow* nation have received unprecedented attention (Ijabadeniyi and Ijabadeniyi, 2014) particularly due to increasing sociocultural trends among the nation's culturally diverse groups (Soontiens and De Jager, 2008). The existence of culturally diverse groups in South Africa coupled with the global relevance of the South African market as well as the implications of the aforementioned on global and local marketing communication, make it imperative for marketing practitioners to understand the influence of consumers' diverse cultural dispositions on marketing communication (Simpson and Dore, 2007). Cultural diversity in South Africa stems from many factors including; racial, ethnic and linguistic differences (McKaiser, 2012). Diversity is also prevalent due to the sociopolitical framework, levels of education, urbanisation, authority system and social class structure (Bhaktawar and Burger 2010). The ethnic classification of the South African population as well as the sociopolitical and cultural segregation of the past play a historical role in the makeup of the South African culture. The South African ethnic population consists of Africans (79.2%), Whites (8.9%), Coloured (8.9%) and Indian/Asian (2.5%) (Stats SA, 2012). Africans and Indians are indigenously collectivists in nature, although Hofstede's cross-national study negate the collectivist disposition of Africans; albeit non-African respondents participated in the study, moreover, the study confirms the

Indian cultural orientation, based on data collected from people of Indian descent (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010).

Cultural diversity has been described as the existence of diverse cultural symbols, heroes, rituals and values (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). While marketing practitioners utilise diverse communication strategies to disseminate marketing information, consumers' diverse cultural dispositions play a role in the perceptions of marketing communication. In the discussions of Oyserman (2011), one vital issue has been the influential role of cultural contexts on the manifestation of culture. More so, exposure to foreign cultures reveals the prominence of cultural diversity, as perceptions of stimuli are a reflection of beliefs, values and customs. On the other hand, Schiffman, Kanuk and Wisenblit (2010) maintained that culture's influence on consumer behaviour is so strong that it cannot be separated from behaviour. The diversity in consumer behaviour and its influence on marketing communication necessitates the investigation of the former on the latter (Solomon, 2013). This makes the understanding of the implications of consumers' culturally diverse dispositions toward marketing communication vital, especially considering the proliferation of the forces of globalisation and media, and its role in transmitting culturally diverse behaviour (Usunier and Lee, 2013).

The cultural diversity in South Africa's multicultural market makes the investigation of African and Indian consumers' diverse cultural dispositions toward marketing communication relevant. While the spirit of Ubuntu; the South African version of collectivism, has been advocated in South Africa (Theron and Theron, 2010), religion, language, and lifestyle induced diversity is here to stay (Du Plessis and Rousseau, 2007). These trends further increases the tendency for diverse interpretations of stimuli, which therefore calls for a situation-specific assessment of culturally sensitive behaviour (Foscht *et al.*, 2008).

The objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To investigate the applicability of indigenous cultural dispositions to marketing communication
2. To determine whether a significant relationship exists between the MCSCV of Africans and Indians.

The paper reports on data collected from 283 African and 92 Indian respondents and is organised in five sections which starts with the introduction. The subsequent sections present the theoretical background, review of literature, methodology used for data collection and analysis, discussion of findings, recommendations for future research and conclusion of the study. In this paper, an effort is made to investigate the cultural dispositions of Africans and Indians toward marketing communication using the individualism-collectivism constructs, adapted to test MCSCV.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The domination of the forces of globalisation and exposure to Western values have made it imperative for marketing practitioners to integrate culturally sensitive variations in marketing communication strategies. However, the use of reliable cultural parameters is instrumental for a successful implementation of such strategies. While many cultural dimensions have been proposed, Hofstede's five dimensions of culture, namely; Individualism-Collectivism (IC), Power Distance, Masculinity-Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-Short Term Orientation have gained widespread popularity in literature (de Mooij, 2011). The IC cultural dimension has proven exceptional in explaining underlying country and individual levels of culture (Oyserman, 2011). Although many other authors have revised the IC cultural dimension, the underlying principle of the dimension still remain reliable.

The IC cultural dimension is a continuum that portrays the extent to which people prioritise personal interests over in-group interests. Individualists by nature are prone to activities that portray personal independence while collectivists show preference for in-group activities that portray interdependence and fulfil communal obligations. In other words, activities that enhance harmony and peace with community members are prioritised in collectivistic societies (Shulruf, Hattie and Dixon, 2011). The IC continuum has proven useful in classifying societies as either individualist (e.g. The US) or collectivist (e.g. China) (de Mooij and Hofstede, 2011).

However, the unidimensionality of the IC constructs makes the investigation of potential multidimensional consumer behaviour daunting. Multidimensional consumer behaviour is gaining momentum due to the proliferation of global flows (Craig *et al.*, 2009). Craig *et al.* identified five main global flows viz. “(1) flows of image and communication (2) flows of tourists, migrants and foreign students (3) flows of political ideas and ideologies (4) flows of technology and know-how and (5) flows of capital and money”. The authors maintain that consumers’ preferences and lifestyle in the West are transferred across the world through these flows, the media being a major agent of the transfer. The foregoing has implications for culturally sensitive behaviour and marketing practitioners world over.

This paper views culture as a multidimensional construct and acknowledges the influence of motivational factors on consumers’ exhibition of individualistic, collectivistic or overlapping cultural dispositions, in different situations. This study resonates with two of the motivational factors identified by Triandis, McCusker and Hui (as cited in Freeman and Bordia 2001) viz. “Family Integrity” (expressed in this study as preference for advertisements that stress family benefits) and “Independence” (evidenced by independent opinions about advertisements, choice of media and preference for advertisements that show personal achievements). The present paper makes a contribution to this growing body of research on the multidimensionality of culturally sensitive attributes to marketing communication.

It is noteworthy to mention the relationship between contextualised marketing communication and the IC constructs. The former is classified into; high-context and low-context communication. While high-context communication; which portrays implicit cues is more persuasive to collectivists, individualists are prone to low-context communication, which is predominantly conveyed with explicit cues. Members of collectivist societies are therefore predisposed to implicit communication in that inherent cues resulting from in-group activities are shared within the society, whereas people in individualistic societies are prone to explicit communication as less meaning to contextualised cues is embedded in the society, since in-group interactions are presumed to be minimal (de Mooij, 2011).

Despite the relationship between the IC constructs and context-based marketing communication, there are still unexplored areas in cross-cultural marketing literature. Although past literature established a linear association between the aforementioned cultural dimensions and reiterates that cultural values are contextually defined, there is still a lack of consensus on the model to adopt when targeting indigenously homogeneous groups in a culturally diverse market such as South Africa. While Africans and Indians (Vaheed, Deshai and Waetjen, 2010) are indigenously categorised as collectivists, their indigenous cultural values could differ from their MCSCV. Therefore, it would be necessary to examine the influence of the indigenous collectivistic dispositions of Africans and Indians on their perceptions of marketing communication. More so, increasing global flows, which are proliferated by the media, are changing consumers’ lifestyle and preferences (Gupta, 2011). The applicability of the collectivistic tendencies of Africans and Indians toward marketing communication therefore requires an investigation given the increase in global trends.

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H1:** Africans and Indians will show more collectivistic, rather than individualistic tendencies toward marketing communication.

**H2:** Africans and Indians differ significantly based MCSCV.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The ability to understand the implications of culture on marketing communication requires the integration of culture into the different facets of the consumer behaviour model. While Ghemawat and Reiche (2011) maintained that cultural values are integrating due to global trends; a phenomenon that compels people to relinquish their cultural values for Western values, de Mooij (2011) argued that improved global mobility would rather motivate consumers to preserve their cultural values. Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010) reiterated that culturally sensitive consumer behaviour is a crucial phenomenon marketing practitioners need to address, as the influence of

the interplay between the media and global trends on the proliferation of cultural values decreases the intercultural adaptability and global competitiveness of marketing strategies.

The competitiveness of markets offers more choices to the consumer, which requires marketing practitioners to provide value-added offerings (Kahn, 2013), implying that consumers be treated as individual entities, given the diversity of preferences across cultures (Liu, Volcic and Gallois 2010). de Mooij (2011) maintained that although we live in a global world, a global consumer is a mirage, as people define themselves by their differences. Standardised global advertising strategies are therefore not applicable to cultural sensitive market segments, which justifies the use of customised marketing strategies. The individualistic and collectivistic cultural dimension as well as the high-context and low-context cultural orientations remain one of the reliable tools for testing the cultural sensitivity of marketing strategies (Solomon, 2013).

### **Is Culture Still Relevant to Consumer Behaviour?**

An understanding of the relevance of culture to consumer behaviour is critical for creating sustained competitive advantage (Quester, Pettigrew and Hawkins, 2011). de Mooij and Hofstede (2011) argued that the majority of consumer behaviour is culture related, which is evidenced by the culturally sensitive meanings consumers ascribe to brands, irrespective of intended positioning. A case in point is the study conducted by Foscht *et al.*, (2008) where it was reported that consumers across selected cultures attributed various personalities to the Red Bull brand. While the Red Bull brand is positioned as an ‘energy drink’, various brand personalities viz. “excitement, sincerity, competence, sophistication and ruggedness” were attributed to the brand across six countries (Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Singapore, the UK, and the USA), categorised along various cultural dimensions. Some scholars such as Liu, Volcic and Gallois (2010) maintained that culturally coherent consumers view stimuli through culturally programmed lens.

The discussions of Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010) reminded us that culture includes almost everything that influences peoples’ thoughts and behaviour. The authors further maintained that culture can be thought of as an invisible teacher, which consumers revert to for guidelines. The foregoing makes consumers sometimes unaware of reactions to stimuli, due to the vulnerability of consumer behaviour to culture. The study of consumer behaviour is therefore deemed incomplete without a cultural analysis (Solomon, 2010).

### *Cultural Diversity and Marketing Communication*

The adaptability of marketing communication to prevailing cultural variations determines the effectiveness of marketing communication (Solomon, 2013). Basically, the individualism and collectivism cultural dimensions and context-specific cultural frameworks are recognised as underlying models of cultural variations. There are two major categories of the context-specific frameworks viz. high-context and low-context. More so, one of the prominent cross-cultural experts, Geert Hofstede, established the connectedness between context-specific cultures and the individualism-collectivism constructs (de Mooij, 2011). The relationship between the IC constructs and context-specific cultural frameworks are discussed further.

### Individualism vs. Collectivism

Individualists are independent, prioritise personal interest over in-group interests and tend to visualise people’s behaviour based on personal experience. As a result, individualists are prone to be opinion leaders (Jandt, 2010). On the other hand, collectivists are interdependent, prioritise in-group interests over personal interest and tend to generalise behaviour based on information derived from the group. By implication, collectivists are likely to take interests in and respond to advertising appeals emphasising activities related to the family and the community (de Mooij, 2011). Similarities or differences in behaviour could be analysed theoretically using the IC continuum as the majority of people fall somewhere in between the continuum (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel, 2010).

- Individualism: Advertising appeals conveying explicit cues and meanings portraying personal and individual benefits rather than in-group benefits appeal mostly to consumers in individualistic societies. Hence, there is a correlation between individualistic cultures and communication in low-context cultures.

Also, consumers in individualistic societies tend to exhibit masculine and long-term orientation values, high optimum stimulation levels and rank low in “uncertainty avoidance” (de Mooij, 2011).

- Collectivism: Consumers in collectivistic societies have preferences for relationship building and brands positioned as trustworthy. Moreover, consumers embrace advertising cues emphasising in-group activities and comprehend implicit advertising appeals as meanings are embedded in social and community interactions. This implies that collectivists tend toward high-context communication cultures. By implication, feminist, high uncertainty avoidance and short-term orientation values are prominent in collectivistic culture (de Mooij and Hofstede, 2011).

### High vs. Low Context Cultures

The cultural context in which communication occurs serves as the most fundamental component of human interactions. The cultural context of human communication can be divided into two: high and low context cultures (Neulipep, 2009).

- High-context cultures: These are cultures in which acceptable modes of behaviour, values and customs are deeply rooted in the people. Communication amongst members of the society is somewhat easy. In addition, it is believed that communal cues are shared by cultural groups and as such, community members have a common ground (Blythe, 2008).
- Low-context cultures: People in low-context cultures are flexible and open to innovative ideas. The environment has no connection with communication between people as the majority of information is conveyed explicitly. Values, beliefs, attitudes and modes of behaviour differ amongst members of the society (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005).

### Individualism-Collectivism and High-Low Context Cultures

Taken together, individualist cultures embrace low-context communication whereas collectivist cultures relate more to high-context communication messages. In other words, explicit marketing communication cues are more effective in individualistic societies than in collectivistic societies, as communication between members is implicit. As such, marketing communication strategies should be adapted to suit target consumers’ dominant cultural frames. These cues could be imbibed in company logos and symbols as well as cues, plots, stories and wording used in marketing communication strategies (de Mooij, 2011).

However, acculturated values and global trends are believed to be responsible for inconsistent culturally sensitive behaviour, due to changing cultural dispositions (Quester *et al.*, 2011). In spite of this phenomenon, the influence of culture on the receptiveness of marketing communication strategies cannot be overemphasised. While Kalliny *et al.* (2011) argued that culturally sensitive consumer behaviour remains prevalent, irrespective of the proliferation of westernised values, this paper acknowledges the possibility of an overlap between the foregoing.

### *The Interplay Between Prevailing African and Indian Cultural Values*

South Africa’s multicultural market is a good platform for marketing practitioners to gain experience in approaching culturally diverse consumers. This South African experience is relevant for penetrating global markets and gaining understanding on the potential pitfalls of ignoring cultural differences (Du Plessis and Rousseau, 2007). Although some scholars such as Ghemawat and Reiche (2011) argued that cultural influences on consumer behaviour are fading away in westernised societies, the applicability of this notion in the South African context is unfounded.

The underlying cultural disposition of South Africans in general is centered on the tenets of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is derived from the following phrase: “*umuntu ngu muntu nga bantu*” which means: “A person is a person through other people”. The values of Ubuntu are centered on striving toward living in harmony with community members. The South African people generally view themselves as belonging together and inseparable from the community. A person is perceived by community members as ideal, if they possess Ubuntu values (Broodryk, 2006). The African culture in general is characterised by diverse attributes. These attributes comprise ethnocentrism,

traditionalism and communalism. Community members learn to be compliant with the *modus operandi* as adherence to communal laws attracts rewards (Mufane, 2003). Cultural cues such as collectivism, reverence for elders, loyalty and obligation to families' social and economic needs are to be found in Africa (Beugre and Offodile, 2001). However, modern values, which are characterised by the spirit of competition and individualism, negate Ubuntu values (Oyedele and Minor, 2012).

While Hofstede's cross-national study revealed that the South African culture is individualistic (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010), the applicability of Hofstede's study to Africans is unknown as the findings for South Africa were based on data obtained from White respondents. Although, the authors maintained that the existence of a common culture is society-specific, they also highlighted the inapplicability of such a notion in modern societies. The individualistic tendencies of the South African culture is therefore not justifiable.

South Africa is largely dominated by Africans, characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity. Africans are predominantly divided into four major ethnic groups (comprising sub-groups) and speak nine out of the eleven official languages in South Africa. The sub-groups accounting for the largest population are the Zulus and Xhosas. The KwaZulu-Natal province is mostly dominated by the Zulu people (Bhaktawar and Burger, 2010). The existence of diverse cultural practices amongst Africans is not a mirage. Diverse artifacts, beliefs, rituals and customs are evident amongst sub-ethnic groups (Simpson and Dore, 2007). While cross-cultural research is understudied in Africa, scholars such as Oyedele and Minor (2012) have identified collectivistic dispositions amongst Africans, which is evidenced by the strong integration among community members in African societies.

This integration is portrayed in the preference for in-group activities over personal activities and attachment to shared values, beliefs, customs and family (Burgess, Harris and Mattes, 2002). The foregoing is not far-fetched due to the values fostered by Ubuntu (Mufane, 2003). Although the media portray individualistic cues to a considerable extent (Van Eeden and Du Preez, 2005), this paper supports the argument that the African culture tends toward collectivism. However, it will suffice to say that the influence of the global culture as well as the migration of Indians into South Africa, may have interfered with the collectivistic tendency of the African culture.

The migration of Indians between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa has to a large extent turned the cultural tide in the already multicultural nation (Naidoo, 2008). The first generation of Indians in South Africa were referred to as "indentured or passenger Indians" due to the contract they signed with their British colonial masters, as they were colonised into the country to work in a sugarcane farm managed by the British rule. However, many indentured Indians migrated back to India due to unfavourable terms of the indenture, cultural shock and inability to acculturate into the South African society. Although some persevered the hardship and pioneered the war that led to the nationalisation of many indentured Indians into South African Indians (Vaheed *et al.*, 2010).

Hofstede's cross-national study on people of Indian origin reveal that India ranked low on the individualism index, which translates to a high score on the collectivism index (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). The collectivistic tendencies of the Indian culture is also justified by the importance placed on communal values and respect for the local community (Vaheed *et al.*, 2010). The law of Karma which means "what goes around comes around" is considered one of the dominant cultural values amongst Indians. Other cultural dispositions are underpinned by the law of Karma as well as preference for in-group activities (Kopalle, Lehmann and Farley, 2010). Despite the fact that Africans and Indians differ racially, the possibility of a point of convergence in the manifestations of their cultural dispositions is not unlikely. The foregoing stance stems from the degree of similarity between the values fostered by Ubuntu and the law of Karma, which reiterates the collectivistic tendencies of African and Indian cultures. Although the artifacts underpinning African and Indian cultural values differ, the convergence in the sociocultural structure of their beliefs could have implications for marketing communication.

**Table 1.** Highlights of some cross-cultural marketing communication studies

| <b>Authors</b>  | <b>Target population</b>         | <b>Findings</b>   |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Oyedele and Minor (2012) Semiotic content analysis            | Nigeria and South Africa         | A common attribute portrayed in Nigerian advertisements is hedonism; pleasure-seeking consumer buying behaviour and conformity to Western values. Whereas South African advertisements tend to emphasise equality amongst all races.  |
| Chang (2012) Content analysis                                 | America and Asia                 | The study showed that more emotional and interdependent narrative cues, plots and stories appear in Asia than in America.   |
| Hetsroni (2011) Content analysis                              | America and Israel               | The report showcased that even though American and Israeli cultures are diverse, there is a significant reduction in the violent content of advertisements and insignificant difference between both countries in terms of the use of violent plots, scenes, stories and pictures in television advertisements. |
| Kalliny <i>et al.</i> , (2011) Content analysis               | The Arab world and United States | The study showed that marketing communication strategies reflect inherent cultural values of host countries.  |
| Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver (2010) Brand and cultural analyses | New Zealand                      | The study revealed that consumers use brands to facilitate cultural meanings, family structure and national identities. It also pointed out the influence of beliefs and preference of family members on attitudes toward local and national brands.  |

## METHODOLOGY

This study used quantitative methods to collect data. A non-probability judgmental sampling technique and mall intercept survey method were used to recruit respondents who participated in the study. The reliability of the questionnaire used for the survey was ensured by conducting a factor analysis on the responses obtained during the pilot study. The study used descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse data.

### Sample

The study targeted Africans and Indians in Umlazi and Chatsworth, Durban, South Africa respectively. The sample size was 375. The major criterion used in selecting the units of analysis for this study was based on the composition of Africans and Indians in Durban's total population. While Africans account for 68.3% of Durban's total population, Indians account for 19.90% (Lehohla, 2011). A total of 308 questionnaires were administered to Africans at the two main shopping centres in Umlazi, whilst 92 questionnaires were administered to Indians at the main shopping centre in Chatsworth. The achieved sample size for Africans and Indians was 283 and 92 respectively.

### Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire for this study took the form of close-ended, multiple choice and scaled-response questions. The questionnaire comprised items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The Likert scale, developed by Rensis Likert, enhances the ability of respondents to express their degree of agreement with measures (Sekaran, 2013). Amongst other measures, the questionnaire was designed to obtain data on demographics and MCSCV. The MCSCV measures were based on eight items from the family and peer individualism-collectivism measures developed by Freeman and Bordia (2001), and the items were modified to account for marketing communication.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Demographics

Data was collected from 375 African and Indian respondents of which a significant proportion (81%) of males were Africans while only 19% were Indians. From all the females that participated in the survey, 66% were Africans while 34% were Indians. The results further show that majority of the respondents were male, and there were more African males than Indian males and more Indian females than African females. In addition, 66% of

African respondents were between 18 and 24 years old, whilst 32% of the Indian respondents were over 45 years. This study uncovers relevant insights for Generation Y cohort as a significant proportion (73%) of respondents were between 18 and 31 years old. The shopping patterns, purchasing power and value seeking behaviour of the Generation Y market segment are changing rapidly. More so, the cohort is a successor of the most technologically-savvy era ever witnessed, which increases the attractiveness of the segment (Shaw and Fairhurst, 2008). While the Generation Y cohort is the first generation of the South African post-apartheid era (Bevan-Dye, Garnett and de Klerk, 2011), the findings of this study are instrumental for providing insights into the development of future marketing communication strategies targeted at this cohort.

**Table 2.** Demographics of Respondents

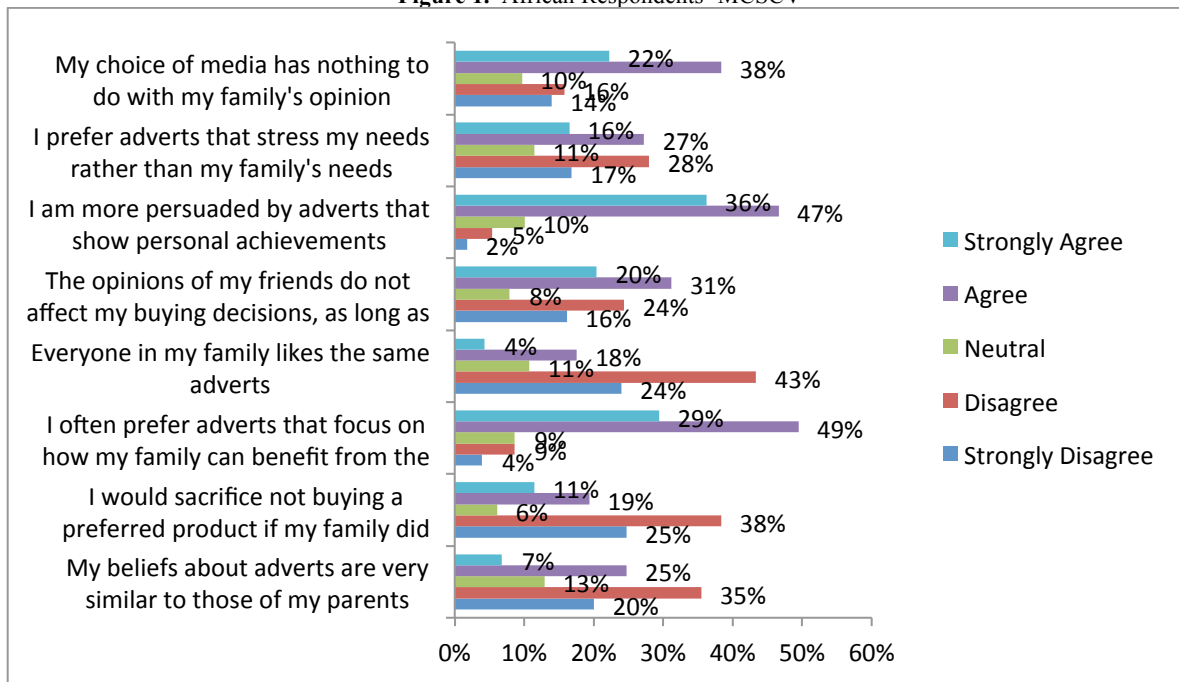
| <b>Gender</b> | <b>Africans</b> | <b>Indians</b> | <b>Total</b>  |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Male          | 81%             | 19%            | <b>100%</b>   |
| Female        | 66%             | 34%            | <b>100%</b>   |
| <b>Age</b>    | <b>Africans</b> | <b>Indians</b> | <b>Total</b>  |
| 18 – 24       | 65.59%          | 27.08%         | <b>55.73%</b> |
| 25 – 31       | 17.92%          | 14.58%         | <b>17.07%</b> |
| 32 – 38       | 7.53%           | 14.58%         | <b>9.33%</b>  |
| 39 – 45       | 5.02%           | 11.46%         | <b>6.67%</b>  |
| Over 45       | 3.94%           | 32.29%         | <b>11.20%</b> |

### **African Respondents' MCSCV**

While Africans are said to be collectivists by nature, their collectivistic tendencies do not influence their MCSCV. However the study reveal that one dominant collectivistic measure stood out, as 78% of respondents showed preference for advertisements that portray 'how family members can collectively benefit from advertised products'. Also, a little below half of the respondents, 43% of the respondents, showed preference for advertisements that stress personal needs over family needs. More so, 88% are more persuaded by advertisements that show personal achievement while 54% opined that their buying decisions are based on the conviction of advertisements rather than the opinions of their peers. The results further show that only 19% concurred that 'everyone in their family likes the same advertisements' while 81% prefer advertisements that portray 'how family members can collectively benefit from advertised products'. The collectivistic disposition of Africans toward marketing communication is evidenced by these views, although, individualistic rather than collectivistic tendencies are more pronounced. While Beugre and Offodile (2001) highlighted that the major collectivistic cue among Africans is obligation to families' social and economic needs, the dominant individualistic MCSCV portrayed by Africans are not unsupported, considering the arguments of Bakir (2012), which maintained that cultural values are converging due to increasing global trends.



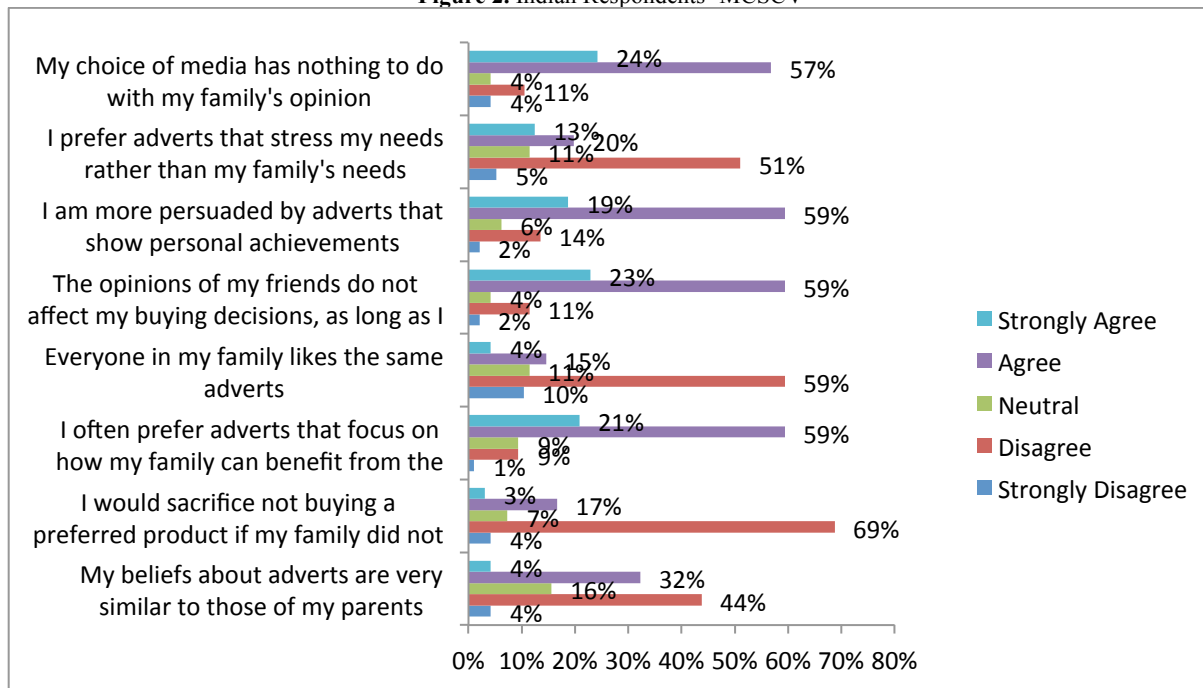
Figure 1. African Respondents' MCSCV



Indian Respondents' MCSCV

Indians showed more individualistic tendencies toward marketing communication compared to their African counterparts. While 81% concurred that their ‘choice of media has nothing to do with their family’s opinion’, 33% prefer advertisements that stress individual needs over family needs. In addition, 78% are more persuaded by advertisements that portray personal achievements. A significant proportion (82%) concurred that the opinions of their friends do not influence their buying decisions as long as advertisements are convincing and only 19% agreed that everyone in their family likes the same advertisements. However, the majority (80%) prefer advertisements that portray how family members can collectively benefit from advertised products, which is the dominant collectivistic trait portrayed. This collectivistic trait resonates with the views of Vaheed *et al.*, (2010), which maintained that the Indian culture is collectivistic in nature, in that Indians share common interests and show respect for the local community. There appears to be overlapping IC tendencies among Indians, given that 20% maintained that they ‘would sacrifice not buying a preferred product if their family did not like the advert’ and 36% concurred that ‘their beliefs about advertisements are very similar to those of their parents’. This is not unfounded, considering that a vast majority of Generation Y cohort were represented in the study. The findings therefore serve as a cursor for marketing strategies targeted at the group.

Figure 2. Indian Respondents' MCSCV



Overall, the findings highlight that the majority of Indian respondents scored higher on the individualism measures than on the collectivism measures as compared to their African counterparts. It can be concluded that the factors responsible for the individualistic tendencies of African respondents toward marketing communication are similar to those of Indians, given the vast representation of Generation Y cohorts in the study. More so, the individualistic and collectivistic traits portrayed by both Africans and Indians take a cue from the motivational factors identified by Triandis *et al.*, (as cited in Freeman and Bordia 2001); “Family Integrity” (expressed in this study as preference for advertisements that stress family benefits) and “Independence” (evidenced by independent opinions on advertisements and choice of media as well as preference for advertisements that show personal achievements), while not ignoring the proliferation of global flows (Craig *et al.*, 2009). This phenomenon has implications for marketing communication. For instance, Coca-Cola is spearheading this move with its ‘share a coke’ campaign which introduced personalised image on its small to medium sized cans and collective image on big sized bottles (Thain and Bradley, 2014), portraying individualistic and collectivistic cues respectively.

**H1:** Africans and Indians will show more collectivistic, rather than individualistic tendencies toward marketing communication

The mean scores generated for both Africans and Indians do not support H1. As shown in Table 3, both races showed more individualistic tendencies toward marketing communication, although, Indians showed more individualistic tendencies toward marketing communication than Africans. However, both races scored low on item C7: IND, the item which measured respondents’ preference for advertisements that portray personal needs rather than family needs. Furthermore, both respondents deviated significantly from the mean as they scored high on item C3: COL which relates to the statement; ‘I often prefer advertisements that focus on how my family can benefit from the advertised product’.

In addition, while both races showed more individualistic than collectivistic tendencies toward marketing communication, one item on collectivism, relating to respondents’ obligation to family needs stood out. Also, both African and Indian respondents are more obligated to family needs than personal needs. This shows that family collectivism is an underlying factor on respondents cultural disposition to marketing communication, regardless of the evident individualistic tendencies portrayed. Family collectivism is therefore a dominant theme amongst both races.

This point of convergence presents cost-saving potential for marketing practitioners targeting both groups, as advertisements portraying this point of convergence could appeal to the groups. However, while Oyserman (2011) argued the manifestations of cultural values are influenced by contexts, caution is advised when designing advertising strategies targeted at both groups, especially across various age groups, as preferences vary with age groups, considering that the majority of respondents fall within the Generation Y cohort.

**Table 3.** Comparison of MCSCV

| Items   | Africans |          | Indians  |          |
|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|         | Mean     | SD       | Mean     | SD       |
| C1: COL | 2.62724  | 1.242579 | 2.885417 | 1.044986 |
| C2: COL | 2.544803 | 1.350713 | 2.458333 | 0.928118 |
| C3: COL | 3.917563 | 1.037262 | 3.895833 | 0.876346 |
| C4: COL | 2.34767  | 1.149407 | 2.427083 | 1.002573 |
| C5: IND | 3.154122 | 1.414688 | 3.895833 | 0.95674  |
| C6: IND | 4.100358 | 0.911931 | 3.791667 | 0.972427 |
| C7: IND | 2.985663 | 1.375456 | 2.833333 | 1.184698 |
| C8: IND | 3.390681 | 1.357653 | 3.822917 | 1.104963 |

Note: Scale 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree

## H2: Africans and Indians differ significantly based MCSCV

Although Africans and Indians showed more individualistic tendencies toward marketing, their MCSCV differ significantly. This is evidenced by the p-value which is equal to 0.03988088 and less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ) at the 95% level of significance. The data therefore supports *H2* at this level of significance.

**Table 4.** T-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

|                              | Indians     | Africans    |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Mean                         | 3,251302083 | 3,133512545 |
| Variance                     | 0,204439076 | 0,242789236 |
| Observations                 | 92          | 283         |
| Pooled Variance              | 0,233021769 |             |
| Hypothesized Mean Difference | 0           |             |
| Df                           | 373         |             |
| t Stat                       | 2,062198929 |             |
| P(T<=t) one-tail             | 0,01994044  |             |
| t Critical one-tail          | 1,648949026 |             |
| P(T<=t) two-tail             | 0.03988088  |             |
| t Critical two-tail          | 1,966344224 |             |

While it is evident that both races are indigenously collectivists, phenomena such as globalisation, value-convergence, exposure to foreign cultures, particularly the role of the media in learning and formation of values, societal and institutional expectations, which leads to acculturation (Bakir, 2012), could have significant influence on the individualistic tendencies Africans and Indians showed toward marketing communication. Therefore, advertisements targeted at Africans and Indians should portray individualistic cues, regardless of their indigenous collectivistic dispositions. However, since family collectivism stood out for both races, efforts should be geared toward incorporating both individualistic and family collectivistic cues in advertisements targeted at these groups, keeping in mind the dominant individualistic tendencies of Indians toward marketing communication, as compared to their African counterparts.

The manifestation of a significant relationship between cultural values implies their existence. This study therefore maintains a divergent stance to one of the views of (Ghemawat and Reiche, 2011) which claimed that “national culture shapes behaviour”. National cultures may not necessarily serve as pointers to all forms of behaviour, especially consumer behaviour toward marketing communication strategies in multicultural societies where communal norms and practices are prevalent. As such, caution is advised when determining local and cross-border positioning of brands and marketing strategies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This study yields many key implications for marketing literature and practice. The study introduced MCSCV based on the IC constructs. Following the results of the study, this work proposed that consumers' underlying cultural values and norms conflict with their cultural outlook towards marketing communication. While not ignoring the influence of economic factors on consumers' divergent values toward marketing communication, the role played by consumers' acculturated values and the globalised marketing environment in this divergence should not be disregarded. By investigating the influence of cultural diversity on marketing communication, this study proposed that culturally diverse consumer behaviour is subjective and should be measured in contexts. Where possible, experiments should be conducted on trial versions of proposed advertisements.

While it is important to customise marketing communication strategies for ethnic-specific segment markets, it is equally important for marketing practitioners to develop strategies based on the knowledge of prevailing attributes of segment markets. An investigation of prevailing cultural cues in ethnic segments should therefore precede the development of marketing communication strategies. As such, marketing practitioners should acknowledge the changing needs of consumers by customising strategies based on prevailing cues in target markets. The study further recommends that studies be conducted on social media related MCSCV, based on prevailing market segmentation variables. In addition, future research could test the adaptability of other cultural frameworks not included in this study on MCSCV and their influence on consumer behaviour. While the study uncovers interesting insights for Generation Y cohort, the manifestations of overlapping cultural dispositions among the cohort should not be rendered unfounded.

## CONCLUSION

Consumer behaviour towards marketing communication has a cultural undertone. This study has shown that multicultural marketing is here to stay. The responsibility lies with marketing practitioners to ensure the adaptability of marketing communication strategies to segment markets' changing cultural values. The culturally diverse nature of the South African market and the rapidly increasing competition in the domestic and global marketing environment make it imperative for marketing practitioners to redress multicultural misunderstanding through culturally sensitive marketing communication strategies. The realisation of the dangers of equating consumers' cultural disposition to life in general with marketing communication-specific cultural values is paramount. The awareness of consumers' diverse cultural values and the compatibility of marketing strategies with prevailing cues in segment markets can yield sustainable competitive advantage in the global marketing arena, especially in a multicultural market such as South Africa.

The findings of this paper are part of the results of a larger academic study conducted at the Durban University of Technology, South Africa.

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