



UNIVERSITÀ POLITECNICA DELLE MARCHE  
FACOLTÀ DI ECONOMIA “GIORGIO FUÀ”

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Corso di Laurea Magistrale in International Economics and Commerce

**CULTURAL SENSITIVITY FOR EFFECTIVE  
INTERNATIONAL MARKETING  
COMMUNICATION:  
a cross-cultural analysis of the Girolomoni brand**

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Anno Accademico 2021 – 2022

*“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head.  
If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”*

Nelson Mandela

To my daughter Ginevra,  
to encourage her to be curious  
about the world, stand up for her beliefs  
and work hard to make her dreams come true.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>PART I – LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
<b>CHAPTER 1. CULTURAL AWARENESS AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS.....</b>	
<b>1.1 GLOBALIZATION CALLS FOR CULTURAL SENSITIVITY .....</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1.1 The world is not yet a global village.....	10
1.1.2 Culture is a major player in the international business arena.....	14
<b>1.2 CULTURE DETERMINES THE WAY WE RESPOND TO THE WORLD .....</b>	<b>20</b>
1.2.1 A concept which is hard to define.....	20
1.2.2 Cultural values can be mapped and national cultures compared.....	23
1.2.3 Hofstede’s model is one of the most popular models of national culture .....	25
<b>1.3 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR VARIES ACROSS CULTURES .....</b>	<b>31</b>
1.3.1 Consumer behavior is largely influenced by culture .....	31
1.3.2 Hofstede provides a tool to predict and explain consumption behavior across countries.....	32
1.3.3 Culture can explain buying motives and behavior when other factors cannot.....	42

<b>CHAPTER 2. LEVERAGE CULTURE TO MARKET EFFECTIVELY AT A GLOBAL LEVEL .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>2.1 STANDARDIZATION MAY REDUCE COSTS BUT MAY HINDER THE EFFECTIVENESS OFFERED BY ADAPTATION.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>2.2 EFFECTIVE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS ACROSS CULTURES .....</b>	<b>49</b>
2.2.1 Consumers buy not only products but also meanings .....	49
2.2.2 Communication Styles and Advertising Forms.....	53
2.2.3 Media .....	62
2.2.4 Visual in advertising and Website design .....	65
2.2.5 Packaging.....	68
2.2.6 Advertising Appeals.....	69
2.2.6.1 Country-Of-Origin appeal.....	78
<b>PART II – CASE STUDY OF THE ITALIAN BRAND GIROLOMONI</b>	
<b>CHAPTER 3. COMPANY DESCRIPTION .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>3.1 THE GIROLOMONI AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE AND ECOSYSTEM.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>3.2 BRAND HISTORY, MISSION AND VALUES .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>3.3 GIROLOMONI IN THE WORLD .....</b>	<b>88</b>
3.3.1 Girolomoni in the world: general overview .....	88
3.3.2 International marketing strategy .....	89
<b>CHAPTER 4. CROSS-CULTURAL MARKETING COMMUNICATION ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>4.1 AIM AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>4.2 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>95</b>
4.2.1 Italy .....	95

4.2.1.1 Description of the national cultural dimensions.....	95
4.2.1.2 Analysis of the communication.....	96
4.2.2 Spain .....	109
4.2.2.1 Description of the national cultural dimensions.....	109
4.2.2.2 Analysis of the communication.....	110
4.2.3 Japan .....	119
4.2.3.1 Description of the national cultural dimensions.....	119
4.2.3.2 Analysis of the communication.....	120
4.2.4 South Korea.....	134
4.2.4.1 Description of the national cultural dimensions.....	134
4.2.4.2 Analysis of the communication.....	135
4.2.5 New Zealand .....	143
4.2.5.1 Description of the national cultural dimensions.....	143
4.2.5.2 Analysis of the communication.....	144
4.2.6 Australia.....	155
4.2.6.1 Description of the national cultural dimensions.....	155
4.2.6.2 Analysis of the communication.....	156
<b>CHAPTER 5. IMPLICATIONS AND POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS ...</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND FURTHER OBSERVATIONS.....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>5.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE COMPANY.....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....</b>	<b>204</b>

## **ABSTRACT**

Saper interagire e comunicare in modo efficace con culture diverse dalla propria è essenziale per quelle aziende che hanno intravisto nuove opportunità di mercato e mirano a strategie di successo sul panorama internazionale. In un mondo sempre più interconnesso, caratterizzato da economie sempre più interdipendenti e culture in contatto, comprendere le implicazioni che ne derivano in termini di marketing internazionale diventa di primaria importanza. Studiando il ruolo della cultura nel business internazionale, lo scopo di questa tesi è quello di determinare in che modo sia possibile raggiungere l'efficacia nella comunicazione di marketing rivolta a mercati di culture diverse, cercando di fornire una prospettiva piuttosto pratica. Nello specifico, la prima parte mira a trovare nella letteratura le risposte alle seguenti domande: viste le relazioni e l'interconnessione tra diversi paesi rafforzate dal processo di globalizzazione, le differenze culturali sono diventate trascurabili o, al contrario, incidono in maniera significativa nel business internazionale e nel comportamento d'acquisto dei consumatori? In che modo è dunque possibile costruire delle strategie di comunicazione internazionale che possano rivolgersi efficacemente a consumatori di culture diverse? Le risposte trovate a tali quesiti sottolineano che, in primo luogo, i valori culturali influiscono considerevolmente sul comportamento e sulle motivazioni di acquisto dei

consumatori e che le variabili culturali svolgono un ruolo estremamente importante nel business internazionale, potendo persino determinare successi o fallimenti dell'azienda nei mercati esteri. Alla luce di ciò, l'impiego di sensibilità culturale che faccia leva sui valori culturali dei consumatori locali risulta contribuire in modo cruciale all'efficacia della comunicazione di marketing nei relativi paesi. Sulla base di questi risultati, la seconda parte della tesi mostra un approccio più pratico al tema con un'analisi condotta sul brand di pasta e prodotti biologici Girolomoni che studia la comunicazione adottata per promuovere questo brand in alcuni paesi (Italia, Spagna, Giappone, Corea del Sud, Nuova Zelanda e Australia), per definirne il grado di coerenza con la cultura locale corrispondente e individuare eventuali margini di miglioramento che possano renderla più efficace nei vari mercati selezionati. L'analisi, che impiega il modello delle dimensioni culturali di Hofstede, da un lato evidenzia che la comunicazione del brand varia da paese a paese, e dall'altro fa emergere diversi livelli di coerenza della stessa con la cultura locale corrispondente: alto in Giappone e Australia, intermedio in Italia, Spagna e Nuova Zelanda e basso in Corea. Si suggerisce alla Cooperativa Girolomoni, e a qualsiasi azienda operi su mercati internazionali, di includere nelle proprie strategie di comunicazione future un approccio culturale sulla base di quello illustrato, contribuendo così ad una maggiore efficacia delle stesse e al raggiungimento degli obiettivi definiti per i vari mercati esteri.

## INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is of strategic importance to market businesses' products and services successfully and stand out from competitors, since markets involve people, who need to be addressed in a way they can understand. When passing from the domestic to the international business environment, communicating effectively across foreign markets may be deemed quite challenging for companies, as not only linguistic but also cultural aspects are involved. At the same time, nowadays globalization offers enormous opportunities for firms to expand internationally (Dass & Vinnakota, 2019). As a result of the strong ties between countries deriving from an increasingly interconnected world, there is a view according to which globalization leads to homogenization making "cultural preferences and national traits superficial and 'vestiges of the past'" (Theocharous, 2015, p.1256): but is it really so? In light of the above, by investigating the current role of culture in international business, this thesis aims to define how to communicate brands and products effectively to markets sharing different cultures, adopting a quite practical perspective. In particular, the first part of this thesis relies on findings from previous studies to discuss the implications of culture in international business and understand how to market effectively across different countries thus providing answers to the

following questions: have cultural differences become negligible in such an interconnected world or do they play a significant role in global business and in determining consumer behavior? How can effectiveness be reached in marketing communication so as to build communication strategies that can successfully address local consumers of foreign markets, despite their different cultures? On the basis of the literature review, the second part of this thesis shows a more practical approach to the topic, by discussing a case study analysis which stems from the desire to understand how to apply in practice a cultural approach to a company's international marketing communication and, therefore, how marketing managers can help companies build effective brand communication across countries so as to improve the way they approach and address consumers of different cultures. In this regard, the thesis illustrates a cross-cultural marketing communication analysis conducted using the Hofstede model of cultural dimensions on the Girolomoni brand, an Italian brand of organic food products. The analysis aims to investigate the degree of consistency of the brand communication adopted in some selected countries (i.e. Italy, Spain, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia) with the corresponding local culture and see if there is room for improvement to communicate the brand more effectively in each market. Moreover, some possible suggestions are provided at the end of the analysis that can help improve the effectiveness of Girolomoni future marketing communication strategies in its foreign markets.

## **PART I – LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **CULTURAL AWARENESS AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS**

##### **1.1 GLOBALIZATION CALLS FOR CULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

###### 1.1.1 The world is not yet a global village

Someone could travel for work and be able to attend two business meetings in two different countries in the same day. Before leaving the country, they could have breakfast in their apartment in Italy without being aware of the long journey from Brazil made by the coffee they are sipping or without knowing that the shirt they are wearing could have been manufactured in Thailand, distributed by a French company and delivered by an Indian courier migrated from his country looking for job opportunities abroad. These very simple daily-life examples have seemingly nothing in common, but they are actually the expression of the same phenomenon called globalization, which is more topical than ever and can be seen in different areas, including the political, economic and socio-cultural ones.

Indeed, in the past few decades technology has made rapid advancements in transport and telecommunications, leading to the development of the Internet and e-commerce, thus enabling businesses to rely on wider markets to serve and

resources for production at greater distances. In addition, improvements in communication have made movement of people much easier. Moreover, international investments, as well as multinational enterprises and trade of goods and services, have experienced a steady growth as a result of the globalization trend along with “liberalization policies and the removal of regulatory obstacles to economic activities” (United Nations, 2012). A wide range of definitions can be used to describe the word *globalization*. One of these highlights the tight interconnection between countries as part of this process and it is the one provided by Kolb (2018) from the Peterson Institute for International Economics, according to which this word describes “the growing interdependence of the world’s economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, and information”. Regardless of many possible definitions and opposing views people may have on this issue, what seems to hold true is the fact that national economies have become more interconnected and interdependent than ever and, as a result, also world’s cultures have increasingly come into contact, thus making their peculiarities manifest. There are different opinions about the origins of globalization; however, according to O’Rourke & Williamson (2002), there is abundant evidence suggesting that “a very big globalisation bang took place in the 1820s”. Among various facets of globalization, there is the convergence of income, media, and technology (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002). One may assume

that the higher the level of globalization, the fewer the differences among countries and the more people's preferences will converge. However, despite the fact that people are surrounded by foreign cultures to a greater extent than in the past because of travel, media and commerce, globalization of the marketplace does not necessarily lead to cultural homogenization. Actually, entering the heart of the matter, there is evidence of the resilience of cultural values; therefore "the world is not yet a global village and in all likelihood is not going to become one" (Hollis, 2009). As explained by de Mooij (2015), although there may be global brands or products, "there are no global people with global motivations for products and brands". For example, convergence of technology does not mean that people's values and habits converge. Statistical analysis regarding technological products shows that technology reinforces the differences and, combined with an increase in wealth, brings divergence in behavior since the new technology will be used to do the things people usually do, but with more efficiency. This has important implications in international business, since in spite of the cost efficiencies that standardized global advertising may offer, these savings may not outweigh the benefit derived from local engagement. Therefore, firms operating or wanting to expand their business in foreign markets may have to develop a cultural sensitivity that will help them understand and match their marketing strategy with local cultural values, on the basis of which people make decisions and behave, so as to accommodate a diverse audience of consumers. In

this sense, globalization has underlined the importance of knowing how to do business in different cultures for marketing managers. If globalization is a process that cannot be avoided, then the same will occur with cross-culturalization. Indeed, although differences between national markets are decreasing or, in some case, disappearing, cultural differences between nations and regions are, in fact, even stronger. As a result, in order to win in international markets, managers need to know cultural differences at national, local and ethnical level (Tian & Dan, 2012). Among various meanings attributed to cultural sensitivity, one of them refers to both the awareness of cross-cultural business practices and the ability to deal with cultural differences (Shapiro et al., 2008). Johnson et al. (2006) state that many international business failures have been attributed to a lack of cross-cultural competence (CC) which, in international business, they define as: “an individual’s effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes in order to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad” (p.530). Aside from terminology, what is relevant to emphasize for the purposes of this thesis is that research suggests that cultural sensitivity plays an important role in the relationships between firms across cultural boundaries, and even more so in such a dynamic global business environment where, if one aims at achieving successful results, culturally skilled workers are needed more than ever. Indeed, the more they develop cultural sensitivity, the more exchange partners are able to reach a common understanding

(Shapiro et al., 2008). Therefore, before diving into cross-cultural differences and effective marketing strategies, it is worth understanding what evidence suggests with regard to the importance of cultural awareness in business relations, also by looking at some studies and real examples in which cultural aspects seemed to have played a major role.

#### 1.1.2 Culture is a major player in the international business arena

There may be many different reasons for the end of a business relationship or unsuccessful negotiations between firms, such as for example missed payments, late deliveries, problems related to communication, trust or misunderstandings, as well as cultural clashes. This can be true for firms within the same country or in the international business context. In the latter situation, since the magnitude of cultural differences is greater, communication breakdown usually increases geometrically and therefore, it is even more necessary to be aware of cultural environments. The fact that one company is successful in its home country does not necessarily mean that it will be equally successful in applying its technical expertise in a different culture (Ferraro & Briody, 2012). At the same time, adaptation skills may be more important than years of international experience in foreign markets (Shapiro et al., 2008). According to Dass and Vinnakota (2019), when firms in the host country fail to understand the requirements of the national

culture, also their brand fails. Referring to American businesspeople, Ferraro and Briody (2012) state that, in order to address the challenges of a world that is always more interdependent, it is necessary to better understand how cultural variables affect global businesses. They also highlight that research has shown that “failures in the global business setting—including partnerships and joint ventures—most frequently result from an inability to understand and adapt to foreign ways of thinking and acting rather than from technical or professional incompetence” (p.9). Moreover, as they point out, literature reports cases of business miscues in the international context, which turned out to be costly in terms of money and/or reputation. Indeed, companies should be aware that cross-cultural advertising mistakes can translate into a loss of revenue and product credibility. For those brands which are not in line with local cultures, it can even be hard to thrive (de Mooij, 2015). Even famous brands might have experienced difficulties in some countries because of cultural differences, especially when these were underestimated or not taken into consideration. On the other hand, acknowledging these differences, the role they play also in business and the importance of implementing a marketing strategy consistent with local cultural values may contribute to successful results in international markets. Some cultural clashes in international marketing can be more evident than others, such as for example those occurring in advertisements. Just to mention two examples from two luxury brands, one could be the case of the French brand Dior and the other

of the Italian brand Dolce & Gabbana. As described by Maiorescu-Murphy (2021) in her analysis, in 2019 an online controversy emerged after the release of an ad for the Dior's perfume *Sauvage*, focusing on wilderness and Native American elements and featuring Johnny Depp who, at the end of the ad, is heard to say "We are the land. The new *Sauvage* - le parfum Dior". The firm was accused of borrowing Native American symbolism for the promotion and selling of a product. The ad was withdrawn and, to face allegations of cultural appropriation, the company stated that the advertisement had been created in collaboration with the Americans for Indian Opportunity. The abovementioned study also reports that, although the causes are still unknown, the company saw a 18% decrease in perfumes and cosmetics in 2020. According to the authors:

while a company's stance on the Native culture it uses may not be offensive per se (as revealed in a product or marketing campaign), the very commodification of symbolism is viewed as detrimental to the marginalized community it borrows from.

(Maiorescu-Murphy, 2021, p.2)

Talking about the Italian luxury brand, the title of the article *Dolce & Gabbana sees sales slowdown in China after ad backlash* by Cristoferi (2019) is very representative of possible unpleasant implications that may result from cultural clashes in the business environment. A 2018 advertising campaign showing a Chinese woman struggling to eat pizza and spaghetti with chopsticks forced the

brand's founders to apologize "for delivering offensive messages due to *cultural misunderstandings* (BBC 2018), again confirming the importance of gaining local knowledge" (Froese et al., 2019, p.251). According to Cristoferi's article written in August 2019, sales in the country were expected to fall in that fiscal year after a slowdown in 2018-2019, suggesting that the brand was still struggling after the fallout deriving from the controversial advertising campaign. Unlike sales increase in the Americas and stability in other countries, the Asia-Pacific market decreased from 25% to 22% of total turnover. We should not exclude, however, that many different reasons might have contributed to some extent to sales in that region at that time. In any case, D&G was forced to cancel a marquee show in Shanghai "after an online uproar over its latest fashion advertisements", highlighting that "the incident underscores the risks for global brands in China, where influential online citizens respond to perceived cultural slights and can have an impact on firms seeking to lure big-spending shoppers" ("Dolce & Gabbana Cancels Shanghai Show," 2018). From a study conducted by Dass and Vinnakota (2019) on cross-cultural mistakes by renowned brands, it emerged that among top multinationals which faced cross-cultural severe issues when entering host countries, there were brands like KFC, Coca-Cola, IKEA. They underline how essential is to understand cultures for the creation of the marketing mix. For example, as they describe, the Swedish multinational company IKEA had some troubles to satisfy the US market and they suffered a big failure since they decided

to implement their same strategy to the new country they were entering. Indeed, US consumers showed different preferences with respect to the Swedish ones, in particular they looked for larger furniture and curtains, as well as more comfortable sofa sets. On the other hand, the problem Pepsi encountered when approaching the Chinese market was linked to a linguistic aspect. Pepsi's slogan, when translated into Chinese, meant "Pepsi bringing their ancestor back from the death" instead of the original version "Pepsi brings Back to Life". In addition to illustrate cross-cultural mistakes, Dass and Vinnakota (2019)'s study also mentions some brands that obtained successful results in the international business context, as well as the reasons behind their success. One is the case of McDonald's whose successful performance in the global market is well known; its brand consistency across countries goes together with marketing adjustments they make based on local needs. Adaptation is a strategy also embraced by Coca-Cola, a company showing adjustment and customization in every region. Actually, as de Mooij (2015) reports, in 2000 Coca-Cola company decided to make changes to its standardized marketing programs and get closer to local markets. She also adds that "Coca-Cola's CEO Douglas Daft was quoted in 2000 as saying: 'We kept standardising our practices, while local sensitivity had become absolutely essential to success'" (p.12).

However, it is worth clarifying that it is not the aim of this work to collect or give a detailed description of cultural clashes that may have occurred in real business

cases, let alone analyze brands' possible mistakes in foreign markets. What is relevant, instead, is to grasp the critical role that culture may play in international business, and therefore, the importance that cultural sensitivity takes on for firms in all aspects of their business activities, including in mergers and acquisitions, in dealing with global teams, as well as in the development and implementation of marketing strategies in foreign countries. As the study by Dass and Vinnakota (2019) underlines, working according to the host nation's culture turns out to be essential. Therefore, if it is important that marketers acknowledge the critical role of culture for decision-making in the international marketing context, they should first understand what culture really means and in which way cultural differences can be identified and classified, with the aim to deal with these differences in consumer behavior and marketing strategies. This will be the main focus discussed hereinafter.

## **1.2 CULTURE DETERMINES THE WAY WE RESPOND TO THE WORLD**

### 1.2.1 A concept which is hard to define

Providing a definition of *culture* that could be accurate and comprehensive enough is not an easy task. Actually, many different definitions have been attempted; some of them focus more on specific aspects, while others do on other facets which are encompassed under this term. This suggests that the notion *culture* has an interdisciplinary nature. To start with, this word can be used to refer to concepts like philosophy, art, drama and classical music, among others. However, Ferraro and Briody (2012) give a more anthropologic definition by describing culture as “*Everything that people have, think, and do as members of their society. . . . When people think, ideas, values, attitudes, and beliefs are present. When people do, they behave in certain socially prescribed ways*” (pp.10-11). Hofstede et al. (2010) refer to it as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others.” (p.6). Gullestrup’s definition ends with a phrase casting light on possible implications deriving from the fact that not all people share the same culture:

Culture is the philosophy of life, the values, norms and rules, and actual behavior . . . which are taken over by man from the past generations, and which man wants to bring forward to the next generation . . . and which in one way or another separate

individuals belonging to the culture from individuals belonging to other cultures (Gullestrup, 2002, p.2).

In this regard, different cultures lead to different ways through which we approach the world, because:

Culture . . . determines the way we respond to the world around us. Both nature and nurture play a role in ensuring that local culture has a continued influence on our lives. Our genes ensure continuity of physical and personality traits across generations within an ethnic group, while culture . . . shapes our minds, our values and our priorities. (Hollis, 2009).

Among many different descriptions proposed on culture and its structure, one has been provided by Browaeys and Price (2011), who explain the three layers which can be detected in each culture. The first is an outer layer, which can be immediately noticed when dealing with a different culture for the first time and can be referred to as the “behavioural” or “explicit” level. This may include language, architecture, eating, rituals, i.e. those aspects which can be easily observed in terms of behaviors. It is worth mentioning that this level also encompasses communication styles. As to the second layer, every culture is characterized by its own system of norms and values and “together, these form the national characteristics of a culture, and act as its framework of reference” (p.10). At the core of culture, there is the third layer which is the innermost one and

includes “assumption and beliefs”. In explaining that there are different levels of abstraction in both international and domestic cultures, Bennett (1998) makes a further distinction between “cultures at a high level of abstraction” and those “at a lower level of abstraction”. The former refer to national groups, and therefore national cultures, such as U.S. American and Japanese, as well as pan-national ethnic groups (e.g. Arab). The latter, instead, include more specific groups like ethnicities (e.g. in the United States there are African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino American, among others). Individuals belonging to these more specific groups “may share many of the broad national culture patterns while differing significantly in the more specific patterns of their respective ethnicities” (Bennett, 1998, p.3).

People’s values derive from their own personality, from society and its institutions and from culture. What really makes a culture different from another is the ranking individuals attribute to different values. While within the same culture the majority of people agree upon the values that they consider important, between cultures large differences can be found (Baker et al., 2004).

The next paragraph will illustrate some of the most well-known frameworks through which it is possible to understand value differences across countries and their implications on consumer behavior and communication, with a special focus on the model of national culture developed by Hofstede.

### 1.2.2 Cultural values can be mapped and national cultures compared

The importance of understanding systematic cultural differences has been underlined by international business scholars for a long time (Shapiro et al., 2008). Still, how can culture be conceptualized and how can national cultures be compared and correlated with various aspects of international business?

As de Mooij (1997) points out, if consumer behavior is mostly influenced by culture, as will be better explored in the following paragraphs, a tool for mapping values of national culture is required so that global companies can analyze cultural patterns and “differentiate strategies according to well defined culture clusters” (p.682), instead of implementing the same strategy to countries where it does not fit. Indeed, differences across nations in terms of cultural values have been measured and classified into dimensions of national culture (de Mooij, 2015); therefore, comparisons between countries can now be performed based on dimensional scales and culture can be quantified (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002).

One of the most popular models of cultural dimensions is the one developed by Geert Hofstede, who is known worldwide for his contribution in the field of culture and management and whose theories are often applied in cross-cultural research. His studies on how cultural differences affect management enabled him to develop his model. To this aim, Hofstede made a study by re-analyzing a database of scores from attitude surveys among the multinational IBM employees working in 64 countries, which had been created to explore some work-related

issues (Browaeys & Price, 2011). According to de Mooij (2018), he was among the first researchers who used factor analysis and made cross-country diversity measurable by means of scores. There are five dimensions, namely *individualism/collectivism*, *uncertainty avoidance*, *power distance*, *long-/short-term orientation* and *masculinity/femininity*; later the sixth dimension called *indulgence/restraint* was added. Each cultural dimension is measured on an index, i.e. a scale from 0 to 100, and scores are available for 85 countries (de Mooij, 2015); the greater the difference in terms of scores between two countries, the more these two countries will differ from each other in that particular dimension. Cultural dimensions reflect differences across nations in terms of buying motives for products and services, the use of the media, consumer's dependence on brands, as well as the adoption of new technology. Hofstede's model can be applied in both the international retailing management and statistical analyses of cross-national consumption differences (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002). In addition to the Hofstede's model, there are other frameworks such as the one developed by the psychologist Shalom Schwartz, whose work's purpose is about societal functioning of human beings. Seven different value types were found, which can be viewed as the following dimensions: *embeddedness/intellectual and affective autonomy*, *hierarchy/egalitarianism* and *mastery/harmony* (de Mooij, 2017). Another example is GLOBE, which is the most recent large-scale dimensional model. From this framework nine cultural dimensions with labels similar to those

of Hofstede were derived: *power distance, uncertainty avoidance, assertiveness, future orientation, two types of collectivism, performance orientation, humane orientation and gender orientation*. However, there is a major difference between the two models: for the GLOBE, a theory was first developed from existing ideas, while the Hofstede's cultural dimensions are empirical, since they do not derive from prior theory but from a database (de Mooij, 2018). Moreover, while Hofstede's dimensions have been calibrated by making a comparison with other studies and correlating country scores with various manifestations of human behavior (including consumer behavior), for GLOBE and Schwartz model this kind of such validation remains limited to social issues (de Mooij, 2017).

For the purposes of the business case analysis which will be presented in the second part of this thesis, the framework that will be used to do a marketing communication analysis in different countries is the one designed by Hofstede. Therefore, in order to better understand how countries can be compared on the basis of their cultural differences, the Hofstede's cultural dimensions will be illustrated in a little more details in the paragraph.

### 1.2.3 Hofstede's model is one of the most popular models of national culture

Making culture measurable and national cultures comparable by means of dimensions and scores provides marketers and firms, and not only them, with an

additional tool which may enable them to understand possible differences between countries that go beyond the most well-known and explored variables such as the economic, political, legal, environmental and social factors. In some cases, despite the fact that they might be more difficult to detect or classify, cultural differences may be able to explain some phenomena in terms of human behavior, and therefore consumer behavior, that could not be solely attributable to the abovementioned factors. Hence, the importance of being able to identify and leverage these differences should be acknowledged so as to develop marketing strategies consistent with the cultural value system shared by members of the target market, thus enhancing their effectiveness.

Among several cultural frameworks, the Hofstede's model has been favored by scholars from many different disciplines, including international business and cross-cultural psychology. Clarity in measuring culture, high coverage of evaluated countries, as well as extensive national samples are among the main reasons of its popularity (Ur Rahman et al., 2021).

A brief description for each of the six dimensions developed by Hofstede is provided hereinafter.

#### *Individualism/Collectivism*

This dimension is referred to by de Mooij (2018) as the most important one to understand differences in communication. People from individualistic cultures

look after themselves and their immediate family only; in these cultures, identity is in the person and people prefer to differentiate themselves from others and are “I” conscious. They are also encouraged by intellectual autonomy to pursue their own ideas independently. On the other hand, those from collectivist cultures belong to groups which look after them in exchange for loyalty; in this case, identity is based on the social networks they belong to and people are “we” conscious. Although to varying degrees and manifestations, all of Asia, Africa and Latin America are collectivistic, while Anglo-Saxon countries and northern European countries are individualistic (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002; de Mooij, 2018).

#### *Uncertainty Avoidance*

According to the definition provided by de Mooij and Hofstede (2002), “Uncertainty Avoidance is the extent to which individuals feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid them” (p.64). In cultures that score low (weak) in this dimension, people think that there should be as few rules as possible. There is also a strong belief in the generalist and common sense, and less ritual behaviors. Moreover, individuals do not feel conflict and competition as threatening and they tend to be more innovative and entrepreneurial. On the other hand, in cultures of strong uncertainty avoidance, people try to deal with ambiguity or uncertainty by introducing rules and prescribing behavior. Formality

is needed to structure life and belief in experts is important as well. Moreover, people tend to be better groomed and the importance of purity in food is significant. As far as health is concerned, in high uncertainty avoidance cultures people use more medication and focus more on purity of food and drink, while low uncertainty avoidance cultures have a more active attitude since they focus more on fitness and sports (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002; de Mooij, 2018).

#### *Power Distance*

This dimension is defined as “the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept the fact that power is distributed unequally” (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002, p.63). Individuals belonging to small power distance cultures usually try to look less powerful and also younger than they actually are; they focus on equality of opportunities and rights. Moreover, independence plays an important role; indeed, children are raised and encouraged to become independent when still young. On the other hand, people in large power distance cultures believe that everyone has their rightful place in a social hierarchy and, therefore, they comply with duties and rules deriving from their roles. Respect for the elderly and dependence are major values, especially in relationships between individuals belonging to different places in the hierarchical distribution, e.g. parents-children, bosses-subordinates and governments-citizens. Also, social status is important to show power and, as a result, appearance (through clothes and shoes, for example)

plays a significant role in defining people's social position. Generally speaking, African, Asian, as well as Latin American countries are characterized by a high score in this dimension, as opposed to low scores for northern European and Anglo-Saxon countries (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002; de Mooij, 2018).

#### *Long-/Short-Term Orientation*

It is defined as “the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic, future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historic or short-term perspective” (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002, p.64). The higher the score, the more long-term orientated a culture is. Values like tradition, low thrift, national pride, self-enhancement and self-esteem are included in Hofstede's short-term orientation, which is particularly found in the Western world. Whereas, long-term orientation is mostly found in East Asia and include values like acceptance of change, perseverance, thrift, pursuit of peace of mind and pragmatism (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002; de Mooij, 2018).

#### *Masculinity/Femininity*

As explained by de Mooij (2018), in the Hofstede model, this dimension “measures the degree of assertiveness or achievement orientation (masculinity pole) versus quality of life (femininity pole), as well as role differentiation versus the overlapping roles of males and females” (p.129). She also adds that values

characterizing masculine cultures are achievement and success, while those more dominant in feminine cultures are caring for others, as well as modesty and quality of life, which are far more preferred than competition. Indeed, for masculinity, status is an important aspect to show success and role differentiation between males and females is substantial, while in feminine cultures people orientation has more relevance. For example, usually more men have a part-time job in feminine than in masculine cultures, since in the former group raising children is something that both parents want to share.

#### *Indulgence/Restraint*

As explained by de Mooij (2018), indulgence versus restraint was first developed by Minkov and then included in the Hofstede model as sixth dimension; it “includes the degree of happiness people experience, the control they have over their own lives, and the importance of leisure” (p.139). Hard work and thrift are values usually associated with restraint (which is reflected in low scores in this dimensions); in low indulgent cultures, people usually buy something only if it is really needed. While in cultures with high scores in indulgence, such as for example Latin American countries, people are willing to pay for extra quality.

## **1.3 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR VARIES ACROSS CULTURES**

### 1.3.1 Consumer behavior is largely influenced by culture

As already mentioned while introducing this concept, culture has the power to shape our view of the world surrounding us, which in turn has influence on the decisions we make, also involving those about which brands to buy (Hollis, 2009). More specifically, values drive the selection of people's behavior, thus providing a reason why they act as they do (Baker et al., 2004). In this regard, a distinction between individuals' preferences and societal norms should be made, since individuals behave following not only their personal preferences but also descriptive norms, i.e. what is generally done by others (de Mooij, 2018).

The fact that how people behave, what they do and motivates them is to a large extent influenced by culture has implications also in terms of consumer behavior. The American Marketing Association defines the term *consumer behavior* as “the study of how customers, both individual and organizations, satisfy their needs and wants by choosing, purchasing, using and disposing of goods, ideas and services”. As explained by de Mooij (2015), there is an important hypothesis regarding consumer behavior by which “people will buy products that are compatible with their self-concept or that will enhance their ideal self-image” and culture has an important influence on “the construal of self and in the perception of ideal images” (p.12), as well as on needs, beliefs, attitudes and motives that all drive consumer behavior (de Mooij, 2018). Referring to a model showing the mutual

influence of culture and consumer behavior, Luna and Gupta (2001) state that “societal culture as well as regional subculture and familial values all influence the formation of an individual's cultural value system” (p.47) and, in turn, this system determines people’s behavior. The mutual influence described by the model consists in the fact that not only is consumer behavior affected by culture, but it itself may reinforce the culture’s manifestations, such as heroes, rituals, symbols and values. Among these four, values remain the main and most enduring manifestation and, as a result, “can be used effectively to distinguish one culture from another” (p.57).

### 1.3.2 Hofstede provides a tool to predict and explain consumption behavior across countries

As previously mentioned, the Hofstede’s model is an extremely useful tool for different disciplines, especially for international marketing, since “many consumption differences can be predicted and explained by analyzing the relationship between consumption and scores on Hofstede’s dimensions of national culture” (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002, p.63). According to Froese et al. (2019), before Hofstede’s study, based on which he developed his model, scholars of international business could not rely on any appropriate cultural index. By means of cultural dimensions and their scores, instead, it is possible to identify

and describe differences across countries in terms of various aspects related to consumption, such as product usage and buying motives, as well as consumer decision making process, internet usage, shopping behavior, adoption of innovations, product and package design. Just to make some examples, national cultural values provide explanations for different behaviors including, but not limited to, the choice of the type of car, ownership of insurance, readership of newspapers and books, time spent on television viewing, ownership of electronics and computers, usage of the internet and social media, consumption of mineral water and soft drinks, but also of fresh fruit and frozen food, together with many other products and services. All these kinds of behavioral differences have implications for all marketing aspects, such as brand positioning, product development, distribution and marketing communications (de Mooij, 2015). Hereunder only a few examples of these differences are illustrated so as to show the important role played by cultural values on consumer behavior and how national cultural dimensions can be used to acknowledge and leverage those cross-national consumer behavioral differences for marketing purposes.

### *Product Ownership And Usage*

As far as product ownership and usage are concerned, de Mooij (2018) explains that many differences existing in this aspect between countries derive from cultural differences, since values directly or indirectly affect product ownership.

Indeed, products have *attributes*, i.e. their physical features, which cause functional or psychological consequences on consumers. As she states “each product category has its own cultural relationship” (p.197). One example refers to the PC ownership; despite being determined by wealth, differences can also be explained by the uncertainty avoidance dimension which is usually involved in the adoption of innovations. On the other hand, as to clothing and footwear, expenditures on this product category considered as percentage of household expenditures turn out to be higher in cultures that are collectivistic, where for reasons of face, people prefer to be well groomed when they go out. Moreover, in cultures scoring high in the power distance dimension, where showing status is important, people spend more on expensive accessories like shoes and briefcases. Culture also plays a role in explaining differences in leisure expenditures in the developed world, which are higher in countries like Sweden and the UK than in countries like Spain and Portugal. In the latter two countries, which can be considered collectivist (scores in individualism according to Hofstede Insights: 51 Portugal, 27 Spain), people usually spend their free time with relatives and family members instead of opting for paid organized activities like in the former two countries. Another cultural dimension that is involved in leisure expenditures is uncertainty avoidance, in that cultures scoring low in this dimension are closer to values like low anxiety and are more prone to fitness. Another example referring to a product category that is worth mentioning for the purposes of this thesis and

that will be further discussed in the next chapters is food. In addition to history, climate, economics, food consumption is also influenced by culture. In this regard, one of the cultural dimensions that is involved is individualism-collectivism; food's symbolic meaning is stronger in collectivist cultures, where the variety of food has a remarkable importance and should never be missing in people's homes for any guest who may show up (de Mooij, 2018).

#### *Shopping and Buying Behavior*

Culture may influence not only the product meaning after acquisition, but also the actual shopping process, as this can be considered a social event entailing a meaning which may be even more strictly related to culture. Indeed, apart from product purchasing purposes, shopping for simple pleasure can as well be a purpose in itself (Ackerman & Tellis, 2001). With regard to shopping and buying behavior, differences among cultures can be detected in many aspects, including impulsive buying, consumer decision making, price bargaining and searching.

For example, as explained by de Mooij (2018), impulsive buying is something that involves sensation seeking, stimulation and thrill, features typical of individualism and low uncertainty avoidance. While impulsive behavior is fostered by individual needs, desires focusing on the self, it is actually discouraged by interdependence, moderation and emotional control, being all main values of collectivistic cultures.

Moreover, how family influences consumers' decisions also vary across cultures. Luna and Gupta (2001) report some studies analyzing the role of groups on consumer decision making and highlight how this role changes in different cultures. In countries like Mexico and Thailand, characterized by traditionally strong family ties, consumers' choices are influenced to a greater extent by family members than in countries like the USA, in which the family does not play such a prominent role. Moreover, in collectivistic cultures, individuals consider shopping activities also as social and recreational activities, whereas individualistic consumers have another concept of *recreation* (de Mooij, 2018).

Unlike what occurs with private goods, for public consumption goods, price is less important than social norms in collectivistic cultures and spending money for gifts can translate into a real social value (de Mooij, 2018). For example, when they have to purchase private consumption goods, Chinese may be quite price conscious and pragmatic. When it comes to public consumption goods and gifts, however, Chinese shoppers are status conscious and "social norms of reciprocity in gift giving in China also contribute to the importance of the symbolic meaning of public consumption goods. Status goods and high prices symbolize the importance of the relationship to the giver" (Ackerman & Tellis, 2001, p.63).

This leads to differences in another important aspect of shopping behavior, namely price bargaining and searching, in regard to which de Mooij (2018) points out that consumers from individualistic and short-term oriented cultures prefer to

prioritize time saving and convenience since searching (e.g. comparing prices, shops and products) takes time that could be invested in doing something else. This kind of behavior differs from that of consumers belonging to long-time oriented cultures, such as the Chinese which scores 87 in this dimension (Hofstede Insights, n.d.) and focuses on values like thrift and diligence and, as a result, shoppers tend to be scrupulous and to save money. This behavioral tendency is further demonstrated by an interesting study conducted by Ackerman and Tellis, (2001), who examined differences in consumers' shopping behavior and product prices in grocery stores, comparing samples of American and Chinese cultures and using Southern California as field setting, where first generation immigrants create spatially separate communities. Their findings suggest that shopping practices differ dramatically among the two cultural groups. First of all, Chinese shoppers examine unpackaged food by using multiple senses to a greater extent, inspect many more items and spend much more time to shop relative to American counterparts. In more detail, results also included cross-cultural differences in terms of smelling, scratching and digging. The fact that the observed cross-cultural differences and retailer reactions are similar over a period of five years suggests that they are most likely attributable to cultural differences rather than economic cycles or short-term trends. Therefore, cultural dimensions can help explain cross-cultural differences in consumer behavior also in this case. Indeed, as explained by Ackerman and Tellis (2001), Chinese are raised in a

collectivistic society that gives importance to values like price consciousness, thus differing from Americans who are raised with an individualistic orientation prioritizing other values. Therefore, retailing and pricing strategy may vary in response to these differences in culture. Moreover, long-term orientated consumers are attracted by promotional activities that allow to build relationships with a brand or with a retailer; they also prefer to buy goods directly at the store rather than receiving them at home, thus showing less interest in e-commerce (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002).

#### *Innovative Behavior*

Although culture cannot be deemed as the only factor affecting consumers' attitudes and behaviors, it does seem to be a major player; in fact, national culture is expected to have a strong effect also in the adoption of new products in a country. Indeed, the fact that consumers may be more or less prone to try new products is influenced by their cultural orientation, in that the degree to which people are tolerant of avant-garde ideas and ambiguity varies across cultures. The need for clear rules and formality for structuring life characterizes cultures scoring high in uncertainty avoidance, which is actually a cultural dimension that has a negative impact on consumer innovativeness. On the other hand, given their high tolerance for improbability and ambiguity, members of low uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to be more entrepreneurial, innovative and more willing to take risks

and try new things (Yeniyurt & Townsend, 2003). However, the way innovation operates in different cultures depends not only on one cultural dimension but on a configuration of them (Palumbo & Herbig, 2000). Indeed, as to adoption of new products, also individualism/collectivism is involved. In Asian markets, it can be harder for new products to enter because, as mentioned above, high uncertainty avoidance leads people to be more reluctant to change; however, in collectivistic countries when someone has already tried the new product, values such as conformance and acceptance make the adoption process faster than in individualistic countries (de Mooij, 2018). According to the results of an empirical study conducted by Yeniyurt and Townsend (2003) which included multiple regression analysis using the penetration rates of new products as dependent variable and the cultural dimensions as explanatory variables, a significant relationship exists between penetration rates and not only individualism and uncertainty avoidance, but also power distance. As it can be expected and consistent with previous empirical research, their findings show that individualism has a significant positive effect whereas uncertainty avoidance has a significant negative effect on the acceptance rates of new products. In the regression analysis, the coefficient for power distance turned out to be negative and significant, suggesting that also this dimension hinders the acceptance of new products, along with uncertainty avoidance. This could be explained by the fact that in high power distance societies, where status and age are quite important

aspects, individuals tend to embrace new ideas and products to a lesser extent, thus leading to lower penetration rates (Yeniyurt & Townsend, 2003).

### *Brand Loyalty*

Palumbo and Herbig (2000) define brand loyalty as a company's ability to make consumers repeatedly search and prefer to buy one brand instead of another, in spite of other brands offering coupons or lower prices. The importance of this concept could be summarized by pointing out that loyalty contributes to reducing marketing costs of doing business for a number of reasons, including the fact that, thanks to loyalty, customer acquisition costs are less needed; it is more convenient to keep existing customers satisfied, thus lowering the risk of them opting for another brand. Moreover, loyal customers tend to be less sensitive to prices and if they share positive comments about the brand with other people, companies could have the opportunity to save on marketing costs (Rundle-Thiele & Mackay, 2001). As a result, understanding how brand loyalty varies across cultures and which cultural aspects may determine it, seems to be highly significant in the international business context. These relations can be explored and explained by means of Hofstede's dimensions. Collectivism affects both consumer attitude and brand loyalty and it contributes to the survival of dominant brands (Palumbo & Herbig, 2000). National or global brands are more likely to be preferred relative to private label brands in collectivistic cultures; in fact, the percentages of market

share for private label brands was found to be positively correlated with individualism (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002).

Although both collectivistic and individualistic consumers use brands for self-expression, the former do this to reaffirm their similarity with members of their reference group, while the latter want to stand out from the crowd and differentiate themselves (Luna & Gupta, 2001). Indeed, collectivistic cultures are usually more brand loyal because of their need for harmony and conformance; this means that consumers belonging to this kind of cultures tend to choose brands they consider popular and preferred also by other group members. High uncertainty avoidance contributes considerably to this tendency. On the other hand, changing products or brands and looking for stimulation are values more present in low uncertainty avoidance and individualistic cultures. Another element that increases brand loyalty is trust, which is strictly linked to power distance. In high power distance cultures, like most Asian cultures, brands holding big market shares instill trust in consumers and this is one of the reasons why a brand like Coca-Cola has and keeps a high market share. That said, it is quite easy to understand why brand credibility and reputation have a stronger influence in collectivistic cultures rather than in individualistic and low power distance ones (de Mooij, 2018). For example, for Japanese consumers to evaluate a brand positively, for example, it is very important that they consider the company as trustworthy and reliable first. Before making a purchase, many consumers must

consult a reference work to guarantee its prestige. Indeed, being a recognizable and accepted brand is extremely important in this country and people even buy catalogs filled with photographs of products of accepted brands. Chinese consumers tend to be members of a small number of reference groups and they usually buy the same brand or product that is recommended by other group's members. Considering implications in marketing communications, multicultural advertisers who can be deemed successful in the international context have secured brand loyalty from consumers of different cultures by tailoring the brand's image to be in line with each culture (Palumbo & Herbig, 2000).

### 1.3.3 Culture can explain buying motives and behavior when other factors cannot

Among other purposes, cross-cultural value studies have been conducted to explain differences in terms of values driving consumer behavior across countries, since being able to understand the purchasing behavior of consumers around the world turns out to be essential in such an increasingly global marketplace (Baker et al., 2004). This importance is also proved by the fact that sometimes cultural values can explain significant differences in terms of sales that cannot be attributable to economic or demographic factors (de Mooij, 2018). Indeed, as previously introduced when discussing globalization, convergence of media,

technology and income does not translate into cultural homogenization. As described by de Mooij and Hofstede (2002), this is also reflected in consumer behavior, in that not only does consumer behavior vary across countries but over time it will actually become more heterogeneous because of cultural differences. Their findings suggest that, as consumer incomes converge across countries as a result of the globalization process, the manifestation of value differences will become stronger. Arguing that the assumption of consumer behavior being rational is increasingly regarded as unrealistic and underestimates the cultural context in consumer choices, the authors state that scholars increasingly “find that there are many consumption differences across countries because consumers are often not rational and do not make purchase decisions that maximize utility” (p.61). They also point out that even in Europe, where there are converging economic systems, there is no evidence of the convergence of value systems. On the contrary, large differences among countries persist, being stable over time or, in fact, countries are diverging. They investigated the possible influence of culture on consumption relying on regression analyses, including time-series data analysis, using a variety of consumption and purchase behaviors as dependent variables, while national wealth (GNP/capita) and Hofstede’s cultural dimensions as independent variables. What emerged was that, in Europe, differences in the ownership and usage of products across countries could be initially best explained by differences in national wealth. However, at some point in time, “differences in

national wealth did not do a good job of predicting or explaining product ownership and usage. When that point was reached, culture became a more useful explanatory variable” (p.63). The fact that over time income is replaced by culture as an explanatory variable can be seen in **Table 1.1** in the Appendix which reports the table taken from their study on the adoption of radio, television sets and automobiles in Europe. IDV stands for the individualism dimension, which they consider an explanatory variable. Taking as example the time-series data for radio ownership per 1,000 population, a breaking point between 1980 and 1990 can be detected; indeed, in 1990 the cultural dimension of individualism accounted for 72% of the variance in dependent variable, which was no longer significantly correlated with national wealth. This is consistent with the idea that when income levels allow consumers to satisfy their basic needs, they will use their discretionary income to buy what best fits their value systems. Thus, “incremental discretionary income gives people more freedom to express themselves and that expression will be based in part on their national value system” (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002, p.67).

Acknowledging that cultural differences exist between countries and do affect consumer behavior is extremely important to develop effective international marketing and advertising strategies and this topic will be discussed in Chapter 2 with a particular emphasis on marketing communications.

**CHAPTER 2**  
**LEVERAGE CULTURE TO MARKET EFFECTIVELY AT**  
**A GLOBAL LEVEL**

**2.1 STANDARDIZATION MAY REDUCE COSTS BUT MAY HINDER THE EFFECTIVENESS OFFERED BY ADAPTATION**

In light of what has been illustrated in Chapter 1, once acknowledged the increasing importance and impact that national cultures have on consumer behavior and, therefore, on international business, a next step would be to understand how to make marketing strategies as effective as possible to be successful in foreign markets. Managers might possess all the required skills and expertise to work in their domestic or even in the international market, but some may lack in cultural sensitivity more than others and, in some cases, this may be so significant to make the difference. As Shapiro et al. (2008) claim, marketing managers who are culturally-sensitive are better able to negotiate competently. Declining profits of several multinational firms have been attributed to their centralized control, which is something that lacks local sensitivity (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002). In this regard, there has been a long-time debate on whether opting for standardization or adaptation in marketing and advertising strategies in the global context. Those who are in favor of standardization argue that, with one standard strategy, costs can be reduced because of economies of scale. However,

what is gained by cost reduction, may be actually lost because of less effectiveness. One company may benefit from cost efficiencies deriving from the fact that they use the same advertising campaign in various nations, for example, but their savings may not outweigh the benefit that would be obtained through local engagement. Another reason why some companies may opt for standardization is the need for control of consistency of their brand values across cultures; still, this viewpoint is based on wishful thinking of “assumed homogenisation of consumers’ values” (de Mooij, 2015, p.11). On the contrary, as discussed in the previous chapter, cultural value differences are not disappearing across the globe and do affect consumer behavior. In fact, according to de Mooij and Hofstede (2002), “the wealthier countries become, the more manifest is the influence of culture on consumption” (p.67) and thus, the effectiveness in marketing can be achieved by adapting to the cultural values of the country. Interestingly, referring to countries like Japan that still keeps a strong cultural identity while growing, Hollis (2009) argues that global marketers continue to face significant challenges in developing successful marketing communication and brands in the country. He also reports findings of a survey intended to explore the role of culture as driver of brand success according to which, all other things being equal, brands that are identified with local culture will perform better than other brands. Indeed, association with local culture turns out to be a driver that positively affects the purchase intent for both global and local brands. This is not

to say that brand consistency is to be underestimated, but de Mooij (2015) suggests that companies control this by defining specific brand characteristics for each culture they deal with. Having said that, it is also worth mentioning that the marketing mix, including the communication strategy, also depends on the different stages of market development. What can be considered as a tension between global and local culture differs according to brand, product category and country (Hollis, 2009). As explained by de Mooij (2018), considering some product categories, when a new product is introduced in a market, both product and advertising (focusing more on product attributes) can be standardized; whereas, as competition increases and customer demands become more heterogeneous, further penetration will be determined by the motives and needs of different cultural configurations. Indeed, despite in some cases products can keep being standardized, “marketing communications must be adapted, and this can be done by defining culture clusters” (p.458) and by using values and motives consistent with the culture consumers belong to. The author adds that markets are actually people and in order to reach them around the world, it is necessary to address them in a way they can understand. Based on this view, the future of global marketing, branding and advertising is the adaptation of brands to the cultural mind-sets of consumers and, to this aim, cultural segmentation should be performed. Indeed, markets should be defined according to cultural specifics so as to design culture-fit strategies.

As Hollis (2009) points out, local culture has such an important influence in global business that the combination of product formulation, distribution, along with positioning and communication strategy that contributed to the brand success in one country may have to be adjusted to build a connection with consumers in other markets. Among these aspects, communication is likely to be the most susceptible to the influence exerted by culture. Communication does not only involve language, however, since two or more countries may share language and some socioeconomic characteristics but are divided by humor, idiomatic expressions and other cultural aspects that can also be reflected in language.

Since the focus of this thesis is on cross-cultural marketing communications and on an empirical analysis of this aspect conducted on a real business case, the following paragraph attempts to provide a brief yet sufficiently complete overview of what is meant by communication, which elements are to be considered by firms for their communication strategy and in which way cultural dimensions can help to adapt this strategy to different cultures, thus reaching effectiveness around the globe.

## **2.2 EFFECTIVE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS ACROSS CULTURES**

### 2.2.1 Consumers buy not only products but also meanings

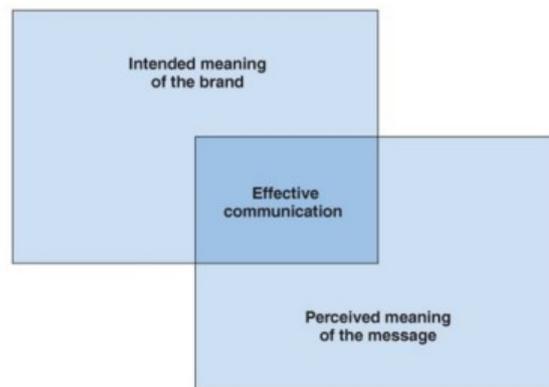
According to Browaeys and Price (2011), marketing is an integral part of the company's activities which is intended to find a balance between costumers' needs and a firm's needs and goals. When it comes to the more complex process of international marketing, the knowledge of foreign markets is not enough, as understanding cultural differences among countries is also required. Indeed, as already mentioned, the intercultural marketing approach is deemed to be the most effective way of dealing with consumers of an increasingly integrated market. In this regard, the very important role played by communication in the marketing process is reflected in the fact that consumers purchase not only products but also the meaning carried by them. People communicate through language, sounds, movements and gestures, thus involving reading, speaking, writing and creating images. Most importantly, the way individuals communicate is dictated by cultural conventions on the basis of which messages are produced, sent and interpreted (de Mooij, 2018). Therefore, the question naturally arises: how can individuals who do not share a common cultural experience understand each other? This is the question that, as stated by Bennett (1998), intercultural communication studies have tried to answer. He argues that, unlike monocultural communication which is similarity-based, intercultural communication has a

*difference-based* approach. Indeed, when they share a common language, values and behavior patterns, people tend to take some shared assumptions for granted and to predict how others may respond to certain messages; on the other hand, when the individuals involved in the communication come from different cultures, language, values and behavior patterns, trying to predict assumptions or responses to messages turns out to be quite challenging. In addition to linguistic relativity, perceptual relativity is one of the main points of intercultural communication: the assumption by which people from different cultures may perceive the world in different ways is necessary for understanding a foreign culture and how members of that culture communicate. As a result, cross-cultural communication is of strategic importance for companies if they want to grow in the global business arena (Dass & Vinnakota, 2019). This is also underlined by Browaeys and Price (2011), according to whom management skills, especially in the area of communication, enabling companies to be successful in foreign markets are needed more than ever in this increasingly global business environment characterized by a growing interaction between different cultures.

According to Rossiter et al. (2018), the term marketing communications (also called marcoms), is a modern term used to refer to the Promotion submix, one of the 4Ps of the “marketing mix” (the others being Product quality level, Pricing for value and Place of distribution and purchase). Marcoms include advertising, sales promotion or simply promotion, public relations or PR and personal selling,

which are all activities designed to sell the brand by communicating about it. Advertising and promotions are described by Rossiter et al. (2018) as the two major forms of marketing communications which, despite being different, both aim to sell the brand of product or service; this thesis will mainly refer to these two when mentioning marketing communications and how they vary across cultures. As to advertising, the Latin roots of the word suggest that its purpose is “to ‘turn the mind’ of the prospective customer ‘toward’ the brand” (p.8), whereas promotions are usually promotions included in advertisements, aiming for immediate purchase of the brand or at least for eliciting some immediate action, like inquiries or store visits, that will increase the opportunity for purchases. Defined by Browaeys and Price (2011) as “information intended to create a link between the producer and the consumer” (p.239), advertising is usually considered as the main channel that marketing employs to communicate products and brands to customers. In the attempt to attract the consumer, international marketing has to understand which meanings are given to behaviors, products and brands by consumers from different cultures. To this end, according to Hoeklin (1995), the more marketers know about how a culture views aspects including but not limited to humor, status, rules and emotions, the more they can control the creation of an ad that will be interpreted in the way they want. This cultural approach is able to provide added value through crucial information for marketers who, in the end, aim for strategies that can be as effective as possible; but *how* can

effectiveness be achieved in marketing communication? Effective communication actually occurs when the intended meaning of the brand, i.e. the advertiser's intended meaning, coincides with the perceived meaning of the message, i.e. the meaning of a product/service *perceived* by consumers, as shown in **Figure 2.1** below.



**Figure 2.1** Effective communication. Source: Browaeys & Price (2011), p.240.

Having said that, what is the resulting implication when marketing communications are conducted internationally? As Browaeys and Price (2011) point out, for international marketing and advertising, this means that the intended meaning of the brand that companies want to communicate needs to coincide with the meaning perceived by consumers belonging to different cultures. It is not only a matter of presenting a product and its characteristics, but what is far more relevant is the value communicated by brands. As described by Luna and Gupta (2001) through their model showing the mutual influence of

culture and consumer behavior, marketing communications are depicted as a moderator of the influence of culture on consumer behavior (for details see **Figure 2.2** in the Appendix). Indeed, marketers' actions act as a “vehicle to transfer meanings or values from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods” (p.48). At the same time, however, marketing communications may affect the manifestations of culture by means of advertising.

At this point, it is relevant for the purposes of this thesis to further discuss some elements, related to communication, that marketers need to consider when trying to design effective strategies that fit the culture of foreign markets they deal with.

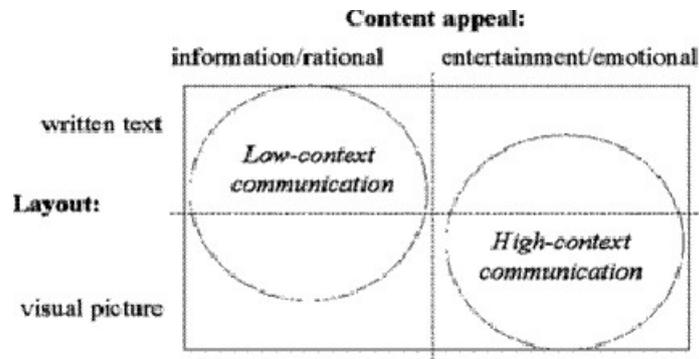
### 2.2.2 Communication Styles and Advertising Forms

Cultural knowledge provides the basis for the interaction between senders and receivers of messages, during which conventions are used. However, when advertising crosses cultures, conventions are no longer shared (de Mooij, 2018). Elements of advertising style like communication style, basic form or executional style and appeal, can be analyzed to see some cross-cultural differences.

#### *Communication style*

Styles of communication, both interpersonal and mass communication, vary across cultures. Differences can be seen, for example, in the purpose, directness

used and in the need for context (de Mooij, 2018). The latter aspect refers to the degree of importance attributed to the context of the message; Hall and Hall (1990) explain that “the elements that combine to produce given meaning—events and context—are in different proportions depending on the culture. The cultures of the world can be compared on scale from high to low context” (p.6). In high-context cultures (e.g. Japanese, Arabs and Mediterranean peoples), it is not required to provide much in-depth background information, whereas in low-context cultures (e.g. Americans, Scandinavians and other northern Europeans), detailed background information is needed in communication, as people tend more to compartmentalize their personal relationships, their work and many aspects of everyday life. As a result, in high-context cultures like Italy, China and Japan contextual cues turn out to be important in order to interpret the message, while in low-context cultures like Germany and the United States, the information is explicitly contained in the words of the message (van Everdingen & Waarts, 2003) and communicated in a direct way often preferring written texts. Therefore, high-context cultures favor more indirect advertising messages that create emotions by means of entertainment and pictures; on the other hand, direct and rational advertising messages that provide information on the product are more important in low-context cultures (Hermeking, 2005), as briefly summarized in **Figure 2.3**.

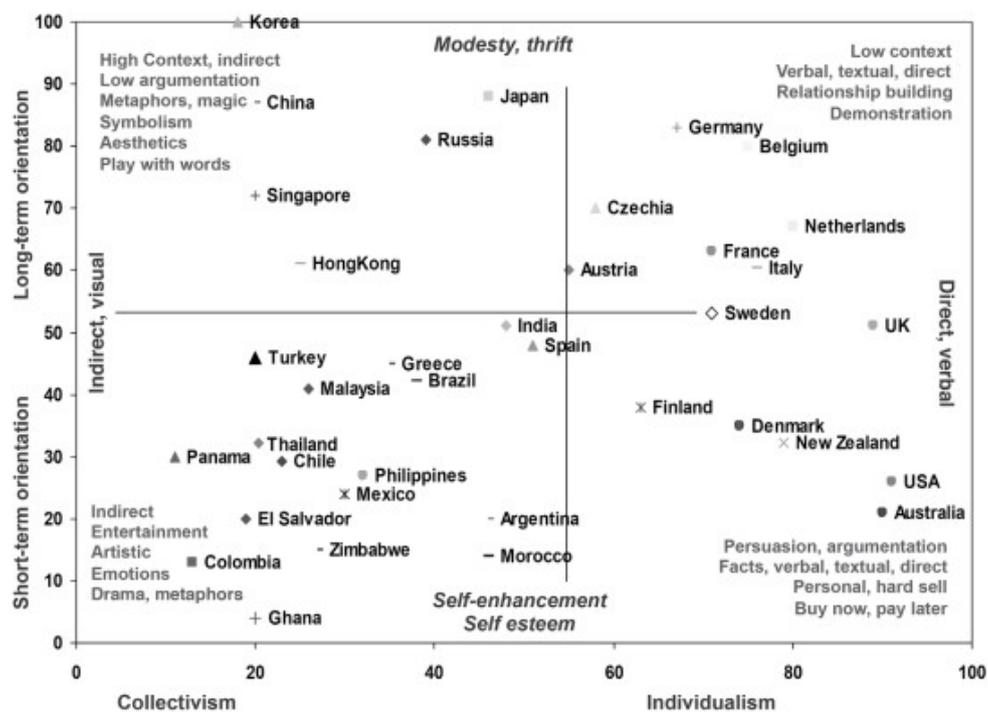


**Figure 2.3** General relation between creative strategy and communication styles. Source: Hermeking (2005), p.205.

Although Hall’s model does not strictly quantify culture (Hermeking 2005) and “no culture exists exclusively at one end of the scale” (Hall, 1976, p.91), in their study van Everdingen and Waarts (2003) refer to scores on Hall’s cultural dimensions ranking various categories of countries from very low (=1) to very high (=16) context (for details see **Figure 2.4** in the Appendix). In this regard, Hermeking (2005) reports that “Hofstede (1991) refers to Hall’s concept of Context and concludes that high Individualism is very often connected to ‘low-context’ communication, whereas low Individualism (Collectivism) very often is connected to ‘high-context’ communication” (p.196).

In addition to the distinction between high- and low-context cultures, it is also relevant for the purpose of the analysis that will be carried out in the second part of this thesis, to illustrate some examples of cross-cultural communication differences in relation to cultural configurations. Using power distance and

uncertainty avoidance can be useful for both interpersonal communication and mass communication styles, although for the latter individualism/collectivism and long-/short-term orientation seem to create a better tool to map cultures (de Mooij, 2018), as illustrated in **Figure 2.5**.



**Figure 2.5** Cultural map of advertising styles. Source: de Mooij (2015), p.17.

The first dimension mainly divides the map on the basis of direct and indirect communication styles, encompassing not only low versus high context, but also verbal versus visual orientation and hard versus soft sell methods. By the term *soft sell* Hermeking (2005) refers to indirect approaches that create atmosphere and emotions by means of visuals and symbols, as opposed to *hard sell* reflecting

“direct approaches highlighting product features with explicit information and competitive persuasion” (p.204). The author adds that, in general, soft sell advertising appeals are predominant in high-context cultures while hard sell appeals prevail in low-context cultures. The long-/short-term orientation dimension, instead, mostly distinguishes between long-term thinking for building relations between brands and consumers, modesty and thrift versus short-term thinking and needs for self-enhancement. As a result of the combination of the two dimensions, four quadrants compose the cultural map showing various advertising styles and formats. Most East-Asian cultures are classified as collectivistic and long-term oriented, whereas Latin-American cultures are mostly defined as collectivistic and short-term oriented (de Mooij, 2015). In the two quadrants on the right, where countries are individualistic, advertising style is direct, explicit, more verbal than visual, more focused on argumentation. Most of these cultures are low-context (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, USA, and UK), therefore all the information is contained in the message itself, thus favoring rational and direct messages that mainly provide information on the product (Hermeking, 2005). Between these two quadrants, however, differences deriving from other cultural dimensions do exist: when cultures are also strong in uncertainty avoidance, advertising is more serious, including clear demonstrations of the functioning of the product, while in cultures of weak uncertainty avoidance, humor and ambiguity are more tolerated. In the two quadrants on the left,

collectivistic national cultures can be found (e.g. Japan, Korea, China and Brazil), which are characterized by an implicit style with symbols and visuals. Indeed, they are high-context, since information is contained in the context, which is essential to understand the message. Between these two, the upper-left quadrant refers to cultures that use more symbolism, aesthetics, visual metaphors and subdued communication; here taglines, play on words and *double entendre* are also popular, along with songs. In the lower-left quadrant, in which most countries are from South America and Africa, although cultures are more verbal in their communication, they also tend to use an indirect advertising style, metaphors and emotions (de Mooij, 2018). These differences are crucial as they can explain why advertising addressed and tuned to consumers of a culture may be perceived in a different way by members of another culture, for which that kind of communication may not be effective.

#### *Basic advertising forms*

As de Mooij (2018) argues, although there is still little knowledge about form effectiveness across cultures, certain forms have proved to be effective in some cultures but not in others. Actually execution is culturally relevant and although the same appeal may be found in advertisements across countries, different expressions are usually required. Also in this case, a major distinction is between direct and indirect style; in this regard, the term *emotional* is used to refer to the

indirect style with all its variations around the world, as opposed to an approach that is more rational and argumentative, on which persuasive communication is based (de Mooij, 2015). Just to mention some of the basic forms used worldwide and relative cross-cultural differences in terms of actual execution and distribution, one major distinction is between *drama* and *lesson* (or lecture). Drama is an indirect advertising form, like a movie, based on dialogue between the characters, not directly with the audience. It leads the viewer to make inferences and is typical of Latin American and Spanish cultures. This is not to say that the drama form is not used in other cultures, but it tends to differ: in Italy, where show is preferred, it is more theatrical; in the United States it is employed to show everyday-life scenes; in countries in the right quadrants of **Figure 2.5** it is entertainment aimed at building relationships between brand and consumers.

As described by de Mooij (2018), unlike drama, a lesson is a direct form, since the speaker explains, shows the product/service through presentations of facts and arguments by directly addressing the audience also with imperatives, in the attempt to persuade. This is a typical form of individualistic, low-context cultures, particularly effective in Anglo-German countries. Within the lesson form, many variations can be found relative to comparisons, presenter and testimonial. *Comparative advertising*, for example, is appreciated differently across cultures and better fits individualistic-masculine cultures and those of weak uncertainty avoidance, mainly the Anglo-Saxon world (de Mooij, 2018). **Figure 2.6** shows a

tweet posted by the Twitter account of BMW USA for Halloween 2019 with an image of a Mercedes-Benz car wearing a costume of a BMW car. Both the image and the caption “Now every car can dress up as its favorite superhero” highlight the comparison between the two car manufacturers alluding to the fact that BMW is a superhero to the Mercedes, which would like to be like a BMW.



**Figure 2.6** BMW USA’s tweet of October 31, 2019. Source: Retrieved from Luchian (2019)

As to *presenters*, in cultures scoring high in individualism and masculinity, presenters can be such a persuasive and dominant figure that may be perceived irritating by feminine cultures, which prefer a softer approach. At the same time, in cultures of strong uncertainty avoidance, presenters have to demonstrate

competence and their expertise cannot be understated as it occurs in countries scoring low in this dimension, in which experts are not appreciated, as highlighted by de Mooij (2018). Regarding *endorsements* showing celebrities, in Asian countries the celebrity can be used with many different product categories, while in Western cultures they must be associated in some way with the product category advertised. In addition, individualistic and masculine cultures are more obsessed with personality and stardom than feminine cultures, in which celebrities tend to minimize their fame or they are even ridiculed. *Recommendations* are usually implicit and indirect in high-context countries like Japan, in which statements such as “They say it is good” are preferred to “It is good for you” as de Mooij (2018) points out. She also mentions some interesting differences related to other basic forms. For example, one is related to *entertainment*, which can differ considerably in its execution and which has an indirect communication style, aiming at pleasing and entertaining the audience rather than simply selling, thus fitting more collectivistic cultures, like Japan. Its effectiveness in these cultures derives not only from indirectness but also from the relationships and trust it is able to build between companies and consumers. In addition, the use of artistic stimuli, *special effects* such as cartoons, music, tunes or any sort of animation also varies, being most often present in countries that are more art-oriented such as Spain and others in Southern Europe, for example.

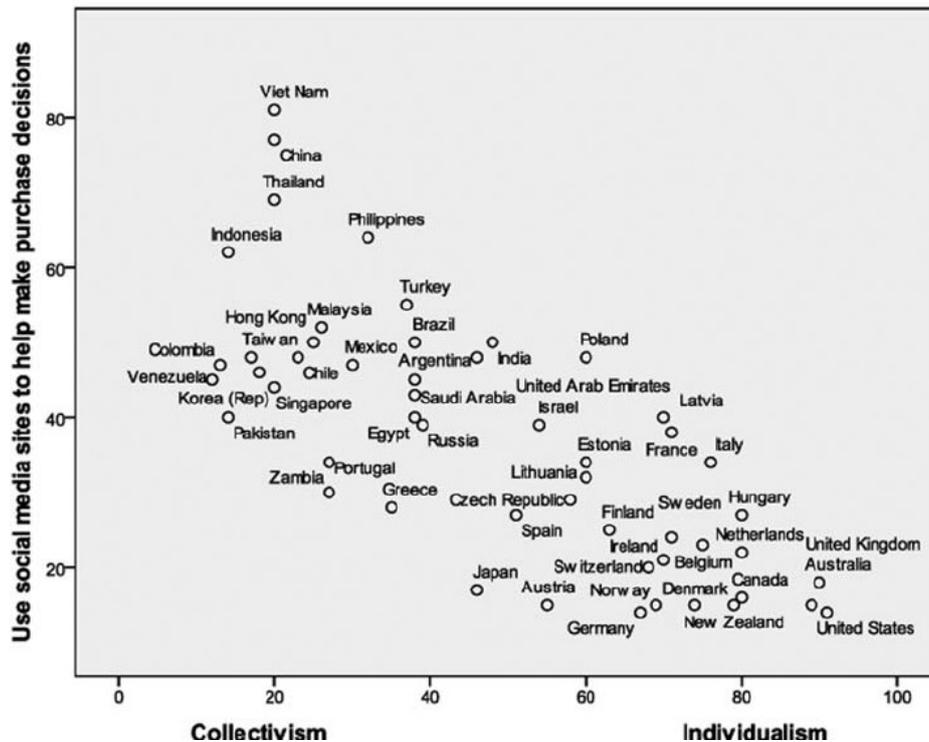
In sum, although any advertising form may appear in all countries, both in print advertisements and TV commercials, while drama and entertainment are typical of an indirect style, demonstrations, testimonials and comparisons are those representing the direct style (de Mooij, 2015). Having said that, it is important to clarify that it has been observed that advertising styles and forms depend to a large extent on the advertiser's culture, the specific product category and on the international development phase of the company. When they start approaching a market, companies tend to illustrate the product attributes first. Only gradually are advertising styles and forms being designed to be consistent with the cultures of different target markets (de Mooij, 2018).

### 2.2.3 Media

A different way of communicating across cultures implies that also the media is used in a different way. Means of communication can be considered as channels that connect consumers to brands to promote the product through for example e-mails, social media, weblogs, TV or video commercials, magazines and newspapers. As de Mooij (2018) suggests, the enormous variety of media that are available worldwide and the related cross-cultural differences make the effective combination of media a challenge. As a result, marketers should know how culture influences the use of media so as to try to develop effective promotional

activities and media plans, which may need to be executed even locally or at least with the support of local experts. She also defines online communication as an hybrid form combining both interpersonal and mass communication and both oral and literate communication. Referring to the Internet and its web, Hermeking (2005) argues that despite their apparent universality and important role as engines of globalization, they “neither eliminate cultural differences nor are they culture-free products” (p.212). Indeed, findings from cross-cultural marketing and advertising research can demonstrate the large influence exerted by culture on this medium. As explained by de Mooij (2018), while until 2010 the number of households having an Internet connection in European countries had been mainly correlated with income, as countries started to converge with respect to GNI/capita, correlations with cultural variables (individualism and femininity) turned out to be stronger than with income. In developed nations, and more specifically in low uncertainty avoidance cultures, the adoption of the Internet among people was more rapid. Other differences in Internet consumption are attributable to cultural differences between high- and low-context communication: in high-context cultures, individuals prefer more to interact with other people and participate in customer discussions, as opposed to low-context cultures whose members look more for facts, information, also by using search engines. It is well known that in addition to the mere function of providing information, the Internet can also have a social and more interactive function of which companies are to be

aware in order to both keep the relationships with their customers and attract new potential ones. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that also the use of social media has proved to be different across cultures. In collectivistic cultures people tend to connect and share experiences with individuals they know, thus connecting with strangers to a lower extent relative to members of individualistic cultures. The same may happen for people of high uncertainty avoidance cultures, who are more risk-averse. Unlike short-term oriented cultures, for which self-enhancement is very important, long-term oriented people (like Japan) prefer modesty, self-criticism and self-improvement and they tend to use nicknames to hide their true identity. As a result, according to de Mooij (2018) brand messages should emphasize self-expression in short-term orientation cultures, but group orientation (and facilitating anonymity) in long-term orientation cultures. In **Figure 2.7** countries are mapped as a result of the combination between the percentages of social media usage for helping make purchase decisions (reported in the y-axis) and corresponding scores in the individualism dimension (x-axis), suggesting a negative correlation. Indeed, individualistic countries such as the USA and Australia, are less likely to use social media for purchase decisions than are collectivistic cultures like China, where social media may significantly contribute to opinion formation (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014). This suggests that, in developing their communication strategy, marketers should be aware of and leverage the important role of social media, especially in collectivistic cultures.



**Figure 2.7** Individualism/collectivism and usage of social media for purchase decisions. Source: Goodrich & De Mooij (2014), p.11.

#### 2.2.4 Visual in advertising and Website design

The previously mentioned assumption according to which individuals belonging to different cultures may perceive the world in a different way is further explained by Bennett (1998) by stating that “the human eye and brain respond selectively to stimuli” and that “the perceiver is assumed to respond to culturally influenced categorizations of stimuli” (p.10). De Mooij (2018) adds that, imagery is very important in advertising as people belonging to different cultures may interpret it differently. Differences in terms of visual processing and perception have

implications for the use of pictures in advertising across cultures. Variations have been found comparing some countries on the basis of the visual elements used in print advertising: they involved size of visuals and product, frequency and typology of people depicted, as well as frequency of photographs used.

However, this is also relevant to websites and website design since, for promoting organizations' products, services or ideas, communication through the web is normally equivalent to marketing communication such as advertising or public relations. Actually, this kind of communication combines several elements of traditional communication through TV, telephone, direct mail, newspaper or radio and can therefore be analyzed by using Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Among several external, country-specific conditions influencing international website design (defined as "uncontrollables" in **Figure 2.8** in the Appendix), like the type of product, competitors and technical preconditions, there are also cultural values and communication preferences of the website users, which may have influence on the appropriateness or on the designer's decision regarding the degree of cultural adaptation. Indeed, website design encompasses a series of technical, social, economic, aesthetic and symbolic attributes that contribute to the satisfaction of its users, which in turn depends on the users' cultural values and habits (Hermeking, 2005). As de Mooij (2018) remarks, not only does cultural adaptation facilitate the use of websites, but it also allows for a more favorable attitude toward them as well as positive purchase intentions. In this sense, it has

been shown that if websites are congruent with the target culture, they are also more effective. According to Hermeking (2005), too many websites still present a dominant low-context style, i.e. rational, text-heavy and with deeply structured contents relative to the prevailing high-context communication preferences (e.g. for visual-heavy and less structured contents); however, many websites of global consumer brand (B2C) have showed a higher degree of adaptation, “which might be considered as the beginning of a necessary further cultural adaptation of the Web” (p.213). In website design, cross-cultural differences mostly refer to the abovementioned distinction between low and high context cultures: for example, in low-context national cultures (including countries like the UK, the USA and Germany), visuals are more literal than symbolic as in high-context countries like Korea, Japan and China. In the case of local US websites, there is a direct and informative approach, with references to success and independence; Japanese websites, instead, are often characterized by aesthetics, many colors and nature elements such as cherry blossoms and butterflies (de Mooij, 2018). This is in line with the findings of a study conducted by Okazaki and Alonso (2003) according to which soft sell approaches are used more than hard sell ones in Japan, whereas the relation is the opposite in the USA. Also Hermeking (2005) argues that high-context cultures generally exhibit text-limited layouts characterized by larger pictures, more colored backgrounds and a much higher rate of animated illustrations or moving visuals. They also tend to include higher multimodality,

perhaps with jingles or offering downloading options for video interviews or hidden pop-up icons leading to further website content. The author also adds that the use of many entertaining visuals, animated illustrations and real multimedia elements in websites is typical of polychronic time-orientated cultures as high-context cultures often are; according to this orientation, time is often considered circular and repeating, handled in a flexible and imprecise way as it is subject to social relationships or needs. This implies that only rarely is explicit navigation support found in these cultures, since neither very quick orientation nor a strictly ordered route through the website structure are deemed necessary.

Moreover, de Mooij, (2018) suggests that in general more consumer interaction (like forums where to discuss) should be included in websites when addressing high-context cultures, in which social interaction acts as an important motivating factor, whereas in low-context cultures local websites should be more focused on information to provide (e.g. adding keyword search).

### 2.2.5 Packaging

Even the labeling as well as packaging say a lot about a brand (Rossiter et al., 2018). Indeed, as explained by de Mooij (2018), the physical package of products varies across countries because of different climate, transportation and other factors. However, what is even more important about a package is its design that

can be seen by consumers “as the package communicates a message about the product or brand” (p.437). Cultural differences seem to affect packaging and its design, which reflect the communication style of cultures through colors, shape, decorations, symbolism, degree of details and textual information, as well as position and size of the brand logo and typography. Japanese packaging, for example, tends to use more abstract symbolism as opposed to more concrete symbolism of German packages, as seen in the case of deodorants. Another example relates to colors: although differences may also exist to identify the brand or product category, softer harmonious colors are usually used more in feminine than in masculine cultures.

#### 2.2.6 Advertising Appeals

As de Mooij (2018) states, all marketing communication carries values, which enable brands to distinguish themselves and stand out from the competition by creating association networks in the mind of the consumer. The stronger the sets of associations, the stronger the brand. Values are not only reflected in the advertising style and executional form, but also in the appeal, which includes motives and values defining the central message. Mueller (1986) defines an advertising appeal as “any message designed to motivate the consumer to purchase” and she also adds that “to motivate consumer action, the statement must

be related to the person's interests, wants, goals and problems” (p.6). This entails that, to motivate consumer action to purchase, marketers need to be aware of those interests, wants, goals and problems which, as previously mentioned in this thesis, are not only individual-specific but also culture-specific. This underlines once again how important is for companies to employ cultural sensitivity in their marketing communication strategy in order to effectively communicate and market their products and services also in foreign countries having different cultures. Indeed, as de Mooij (2018) points out, when the values included in advertising reflect and are congruent with those of consumers, then the likelihood that consumers like the ad and the brand increases, thus resulting in more effective advertising. In this regard, a value structure map is a useful tool for designing a brand communication strategy, since it links the product’s attributes and its subsequent benefits to values, showing how people’s associations between these three aspects are connected. This connection was actually defined as the means-end chain model which, referring to the link between values and behaviors, aims to explain how a product/service facilitates the achievement by consumers of their desired end-states, such as happiness or security. As Baker et al. (2004) describes, concrete attributes reflect the product’s physical features, among which some may be included in more subjective attributes, like quality. Consequences (or benefits) are more abstract and they refer to the perceived costs or benefits related to specific attributes. Within this category, functional consequences involve tangible

outcomes derived from consumption, while the psycho-social ones reflect intangible and less direct outcomes. At a higher level of abstraction, there are values, being enduring beliefs or end-states that people want to achieve and by which they are driven in their choices and behavior. What is particularly interesting and important is the fact that, although products from different brands may have similar or same attributes, in order to differentiate themselves, brands can choose different paths from attributes to reach end values in their communication; even more so when dealing with different cultures and therefore different end values. It is also worth mentioning, however, that different routes may depend not only on culture, but also on the target group as well as other factors. In addition, when the target countries are quite similar in terms of one or more cultural dimensions and corresponding values, using only one route leading to those shared values could be an option. Studies have revealed the existence of culture-specific advertising appeals; de Mooij (2018) illustrates real examples of these appeals found in advertising by dividing them on the basis of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (except for indulgence/ restraint) and providing explanations, some of which are reported and briefly described hereunder.

#### *Individualism/Collectivism*

It is important for marketers to develop a communication consistent with the local values of the target market as, for example, individualistic and collectivistic

consumers will have a different response with respect to advertisements that stress individualistic or collectivistic values. In individualistic countries like the USA, effectiveness in advertising is often achieved through appeals like independence, individual preferences and personal success conveyed by using, as previously illustrated, a more direct, textual (as they are mainly low-context cultures) and personalized approach to address the audience. *You, I, we* and imperatives are often employed. On the other hand, in collectivistic countries like Korea, China or Japan, appeals reflecting harmony, in-group benefits, sharing and family are much more effective. Another difference is related to the appeal of sharing, for which de Mooij (2018) makes an emblematic example by comparing the appeal “It is so good, you want to keep it for yourself” used by Evers, a confectionery company from Denmark (scoring 74 in individualism according to Hofstede Insights) with the appeal “It is so good, you want to share it with others” by Hermesetas in Portugal (scoring 27). Another difference in appeal concerns being alone: while in individualistic societies being or eating alone can be seen as relaxing, and therefore emphasized in advertising, in collectivistic cultures being alone is not desirable as it means being outside the group one belongs to, having no friends or no identity. Moreover, families showing multiple generations together are not so common in advertising in individualistic cultures, as opposed to collectivistic cultures.

### *Uncertainty avoidance*

In strong uncertainty avoidance cultures, for example in Germanic or Southern European countries, advertisements are usually structured and need to include test reports, scientific proof and advice, along with detailed explanations. Technology is also stressed and technical details must be shown, along with functioning of the product. In the advertisements, the color white is often used as it symbolizes purity and being well-groomed, i.e. wearing matched colors and choosing the right accessories, is preferred. Also emotions, and words related to them, contribute to effectiveness in communication in these cultures. In addition, what should not be missing is the emphasis on the competence of the manufacturer, that is to be demonstrated. As far as food products are concerned, freshness and purity are two extremely important appeals providing reassurance to members of these cultures, thus helping them avoid ambiguity and uncertainty. To this same aim, another appeal advertised is relief from anxiety and tension.

On the other hand, cultures of weak uncertainty avoidance focus more on the result deriving from the product/service. For example, in the case of toothpaste, de Mooij (2018) compares a German advertisement of elmex and aronal calling them experts brands for tooth health and providing details on how the product works, with an English advertisement of the Crest brand that puts emphasis on the result, i.e. the smile and beauty.

### *Power distance*

Status symbol and, therefore, references to prestige or royalty, are very important appeals in high power distance cultures, characterized by a strong hierarchical distribution of roles and in which the elderly may be shown to give advice to young people. For example, showing a daughter recommending the advertised product/service to her parents would be more consistent with a low power distance national culture like the UK as opposed to Greece, a country which scores 100 in this cultural dimension (Hofstede Insights). The same would happen with advertisements in which older people dress or act as young people. Moreover, in high power distance cultures, advertisements often show generations (e.g. including parents and grandparents) using the product/service. Among the examples reported by de Mooij (2018) in relation to this dimension, there is an interesting case of a commercial by the Japanese KIWI, in which the desired value was shown instead of what is desirable in the culture of that society: an office lady standing up to and rebelling against a man who puts a pile of work on her desk which would force her to work overtime. According to the author, this commercial did not work well to promote the product and after a few years they discontinued it. On the other hand, low power distance cultures favor antiauthoritarian elements, along with the appeal of the “empowered consumer”, according to which consumers are encouraged to judge for themselves, without any company imposing ideas.

### *Long-/Short-term orientation*

Communication in short-term oriented cultures mainly uses appeals involving the sense of urgency; with typical phrases like “buy now, pay later”, “don’t wait”, they encourage to live now and not to wait or think about the future, stressing the instant benefit or pleasure consumers would get by buying the product/service. This approach would not be very effective in long-term oriented cultures, as they focus more on the future and prefer to “save for tomorrow”. Indeed, in this case, long-term symbolism plays an important role, using thick trees, future generations or other symbols of continuity. The combination of long-term orientation and collectivism requires harmony of man with nature and fellow humans, a very significant and popular advertising appeal in Asian countries, where the aim is to please the customer and build a sense of trust in the company. The approach in this kind of advertising is visual to please the eye, indirect, often for pure entertainment, employing many symbols not easy to decode for foreigners and usually related to nature, like flowers, autumn leaves and bamboo trees.

### *Masculinity/Femininity*

Popular appeals in masculine cultures are achievement and winning, along with competition and status, which is particularly stressed to demonstrate a person’s success. Moreover, another value communicated in masculine cultures is mastery, i.e. being a master at doing something, also encompassing the idea that any person

can do and obtain anything as long as one tries hard; in this regard, great expectations, dreams coming true and also being the first at doing something represent important expressions characterizing masculine cultures. In most Anglo-German cultures, masculinity is combined with individualism, which means that it is relevant not only to be successful, but also to show it and dominate, thus being “the best”, “the biggest”, “the greatest”. In this case, comparative advertising and persuasiveness can go together with the use of hyperboles.

On the other hand, feminine cultures prefer to use understatement like in the tagline by Carlsberg “Probably the best beer in the world” reported by de Mooij (2018). Indeed, in these cultures, whose advertising tend to include caring, “the small”, love for the weak, family protection and safety, showing off is deemed as negative. Modesty is also typical of feminine cultures. Another important difference in terms of appeal between masculine and feminine cultures is the role differentiation between males and females. While in cultures scoring high in masculinity there is large role differentiation between man and woman, usually depicting women as mothers looking after children or as competent housewives, in feminine cultures there is less gender differentiation, in that men can be shown while shopping, cooking or caring for children. This is not to say that in masculine cultures men do not appear with children or while playing a role in household activities, but if they do, they usually seem not able to perform them or even clumsy so as to underline the woman’s competence in those roles.

However, the abovementioned are only a few examples of advertising appeals across cultures and they do not mean that values that are not deemed congruent with a certain culture (on the basis of the cultural dimensions) will never be found in the advertising of that specific national culture. In order not to neglect an important aspect of cross-cultural marketing communication, it is also worth mentioning what de Mooij (2018) points out regarding value paradox, i.e. the opposing and unexpected values of a culture. Sometimes the presence of value paradox seems to be effective in advertising since it reflects the desired, what people really want for themselves regardless of what is desirable in the society. In this regard, advertising reflecting values like belonging (e.g. showing families or group of friends eating together), which would be a typical value of collectivistic cultures, might also be found in individualistic cultures to leverage the need for belonging of people as a reaction to a high level of individualism. Actually, families in advertising have been found to be as much or even more present in individualistic rather than collectivistic cultures; indeed, in the latter cultures showing families may be less necessary, as family plays a very important role and represents the norm. A similar example involves the appeal of deviation from the group, that could be typical of individualistic cultures but it may also be found in collectivistic ones, for which it would represent the desired, the opposite of following the collective norm. Moreover, what is also relevant to consider for a better interpretation in cross-cultural advertising is the fact that a culture is a

combination of the various cultural dimensions and this could explain why two countries having similar scores in one or more dimensions but not in others, may use different appeals or also different advertising forms and communication styles.

#### 2.2.6.1 Country-Of-Origin appeal

There is an appeal that may travel and be effective across cultures, namely the country-of-origin (COO) appeal, which derives from the connection between product category and the country where the product is made or perceived to be made. Effectiveness in communication, however, can be reached if the combination of the two aspects is lasting and strong enough (de Mooij, 2018). As Costa et al. (2016) explain, the country-of-origin research has investigated whether the national origin of a product has an influence on the preferences and evaluations of consumers. The size, visual appearance, along with opinions from friends or others are some of the elements that may contribute to the consumer's decision on whether to buy a product or not. With a foreign product, however, the country-of-origin of the product is an additional element that may influence the consumer's attitude towards products and affect their purchase decision; therefore, companies need to consider this aspect so as to adapt the marketing mix, and therefore promotion, accordingly. As the country of origin for brand or products affects consumer perception, the favorable or unfavorable response to country-

related advertisements will depend on the positive or negative consumer's attitude with respect to a particular country (de Mooij, 2018). For example, for quality and automobiles we may immediately think of German brands, while for perfumes a very likely association would be with French brands.

Associating a product with the national image of a country entails some sort of stereotypical images (Browaeys & Price, 2011), and besides, over time country images can change, together with consumer attitudes (de Mooij, 2018). However, according to Piron (2000), "consumers often casually display overt preferences for national product categories by publicly consuming or using goods such as American casual wear, German and British automobiles, Italian and French designer fashion, thus hinting at a link between a product's COO and its public consumption" (p.316). Findings from his study suggest that although a product's intrinsic cues, elements, such as reliability and performance are more important than extrinsic ones, such as the product's country of origin, the latter does play a significant role.

One of the most popular examples regarding country-of-origin appeal probably includes the one linking food products to Italy, especially for pizza and pasta, the latter being very relevant to the cross-cultural communication analysis that will be carried out in the next part of this thesis. Indeed, references to Italy can be often encountered in the promotion of food products, also when they are not produced in Italy or by any Italian brand, such as for example in the case of the

advertisement of the brand Parla (USA), reported in **Figure 2.9**. The advertisement shows a typical Venetian gondola with tourists and a gondolier rowing surrounded by glaciers, suggesting that in the freezer aisles people can find authentic Italian-style fresh pasta, as also specified in a brief caption. In addition, the colors of the packaging also remind of the Italian flag.



**Figure 2.9** Parla pasta print ad. Source: Concentric (n.d.)

Another popular case of Italian country-of-origin appeal relates to coffee, or *espresso*. In this regard, Heinemann (2019) mentions the German Dallmayr crema d'Oro and, in particular, one of its commercials (of autumn 2018) featuring a popular German actor, Moritz Bleibtreu, arriving at the Dallmayr shop on his Vespa with many people greeting him in Italian (even Italianizing his first name in Maurizio). After entering the café and taking a sip of coffee, he understands

why all the people outside were talking to him in Italian. The commercial conveys an atmosphere of the Italian lifestyle which, according to the author, “is unmistakably at the centre of interest” (p.66). Moreover, being a popular vacation destination, Italy is associated not only with authenticity or product quality (especially for typical Italian food products), but also with positive holiday memories as well as romanticism and quality of life. The author also points out that through the country-of-origin effect, foreign companies attempt to maximize profits, although their products often do not reach the quality of the authentic Italian ones.

## **PART II – CASE STUDY OF THE ITALIAN BRAND GIROLOMONI**

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **COMPANY DESCRIPTION**

With reference to the topics illustrated in the previous chapters and, therefore, to the significant role of culture in international business, this thesis includes a case study dealing with a cross-cultural marketing communication analysis conducted on the Girolomoni brand. The abovementioned analysis, which will be described in detail in the next chapter, was carried out thanks to the support and contribution of the “Gino Girolomoni Cooperativa Agricola” (hereinafter also referred to as Gino Girolomoni Agricultural Cooperative or simply Girolomoni).

#### **3.1 THE GIROLOMONI AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE AND ECOSYSTEM**

The abovementioned company, i.e. the Girolomoni Cooperative, whose brand (Girolomoni) will be the subject of the communication analysis in the next chapter, is actually at the center of a much broader ecosystem, whose mission is “to continue to develop a farming economy and short supply chain model that is

sustainable in cultural, social, environmental and economic terms”, as can be read in the company’s website (<https://girolomoni.it/>).

This is the reason why the Girolomoni ecosystem is composed of different structures, as shown in **Figure 3.1**.



**Figure 3.1** The Girolomoni ecosystem. Source: <https://girolomoni.it/>.

Each structure composing the ecosystem is characterized by its own specific area of expertise, as described in the abovementioned website:

- **Cooperativa Girolomoni** (Girolomoni Cooperative) which makes and sells pasta and other products;

- **Cooperativa Montebello** (Montebello Coop) for farming and growing their raw materials;
- **GranoTurismo (WheatTourism)** with the restaurant located in their Locanda, B&B Girolomoni and Educational Farm, for hospitality and educational visits;
- **Fondazione Girolomoni** (Girolomoni Foundation) for culture;
- **Shops** in Fossombrone and Urbino, for local retail;
- **Consorzio Marche Biologiche** for the promotion of the organic short supply chain and the need to form networks.

Indeed, from a small organic farm in the Marche region with an idea which first took form in the shape of organic pasta, Girolomoni has grown into a real ecosystem today. In particular, as to Girolomoni Cooperative, they grind the organic wheat, previously grown on some 400 member farms in Italy (more than 70% of which are in the Marche), in their own mill at Montebello, near Urbino. Then, the freshly ground semolina is mixed with water exclusively from the hillside in their adjacent pasta factory, thus becoming the Girolomoni organic pasta which is exported all over the world. In addition, they grow other grain and legumes and also sell other products (i.e. rice, EVO oil, couscous, tomato passata and sauces), all made by using organic methods only and all under the Girolomoni brand. With reference to the significant role of Girolomoni in the field of organic farming and food products, some of the main awards given to Girolomoni are

worth mentioning, including: the CLAI “100% Italian” award (2017) to Gino Girolomoni as pioneer and father of organic farming in Italy; “Green Heroes” during the Green Heroes initiative (promoted by the ecological association, The Kyoto Club, by national daily paper La Stampa and famous Italian actor, Alessandro Gassmann), which recognized them as “protagonists of a new economy that refuses waste, that is a friend of the environment, and which produces innovation, income and employment”; winners (for the third time) of the Bio Awards 2022 for their organic ancient grain pasta. Moreover, in 2022 Girolomoni was selected as one of the 3 finalists for the EU Organic Award as Best European Organic Enterprise. This award was established by the European Commission together with other EU bodies to highlight the best European companies active in the organic world.

### **3.2 BRAND HISTORY, MISSION AND VALUES**

A brief summary<sup>1</sup> of the key facts characterizing the background and history of the Girolomoni brand may help not only better understand the core values of the company which go beyond the production of pasta, but also make some useful

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<sup>1</sup> All the information contained in this paragraph were taken from the Girolomoni’s website (mentioned in the previous paragraph), leaflet and monograph “Girolomoni 1971-2021 Custodi della Terra – Guardians of the Earth”, edited by Cristina Ortolani, Fondazione Girolomoni Edizioni (2022).

considerations for the analysis of the brand promotion in Italy and in the international markets.

From the time he was elected mayor of Isola del Piano (province of Pesaro and Urbino), the aim of Gino Girolomoni was to restore the Monastery of Montebello, which since the 1970s has been home to the Girolomoni Cooperative. Gino Girolomoni can be considered one of the pioneers of organic farming in Italy, as already in the 1970s he understood the risks related to intensive agriculture with regard to health and sustainability (including but not limited to water, soil and air pollution and biodiversity losses); therefore, he took a stand against the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. In 1977, he founded the Alce Nero cooperative; the brand representing the first Italian organic company referred to Alce Nero (Black Elk), shaman and chief of the Sioux Oglala tribe of Native Americans riding “against the tide” and spreading his message of freedom and love for the land. One year later, the Cooperative began to sell its first Italian 100% whole-wheat flour and pasta and a nationally important course in Organic Farming was held in Isola del Piano, with the most important experts in the field. Girolomoni’s strong commitment to spreading the importance of the organic farming also translated into many other meetings on this topic.

In 2004, the cooperative left Mediterrabio, a company distributing the cooperative’s products and Mielizia branded products that had been founded in 1999, and the Alce Nero brand was sold. Although in 2005 the brand of the

organic farming cooperative was changed into Montebello, inspired by the place where everything began (i.e. the Monastery of Montebello), in 2012 the new brand name Girolomoni completely replaced Montebello (and Alce Nero). The Native American chief design was changed to Gino Girolomoni, “who in life was able to gallop with all the breath he had in his body, to promote organic farming in Italy, to tell a story of ecological rebirth and to sell his organic products” (<https://girolomoni.it/>). 2019 was the year of the inauguration of the organic mill and Gino’s dream of closing the production cycle and tracking the pasta from field to table came true.

As one can read in the company’s website, Gino Girolomoni’s aim was “to get back the social and cultural conditions of the farming life that so many were abandoning in favour of towns and factories. That is how organic farming began to develop in the Marche, to restore ‘Dignity to the land!’”, expression currently used as brand pay-off. Indeed, as to the brand mission and vision, the message “**Let’s feed the world by feeding the Italian organic supply chain**’ to restore **‘Dignity to the earth!’**”<sup>2</sup> suggests the company’s attention to the sustainability of their organic pasta as well as to the mark they leave on the community and the environment, thus aiming to preserve fertility and biodiversity, rebuilding the rural world with its people and creating a new economy linked to rural areas. With their new concept of supply chain, the values of the farming civilization including

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Girolomoni’s leaflet.

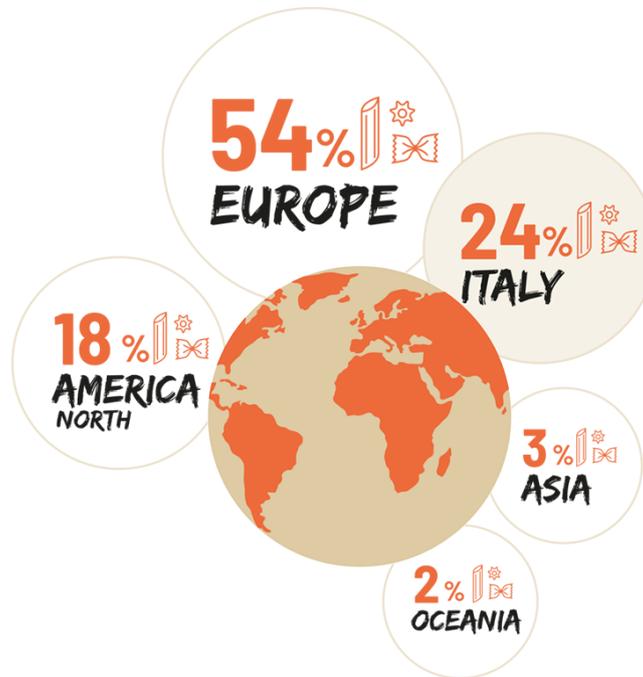
the respect for people and nature and the importance of promises made now translate into: research and use of energy from renewable sources; paying a fair price for the work of farmers; ensuring the consumer a product made from Italian raw materials sourced at a fair price; preserving the natural heritage and rural landscape.

### **3.3 GIROLOMONI IN THE WORLD**

#### 3.3.1 Girolomoni in the world: general overview

In 1984 the Cooperative saw their first sales of whole meal pasta in Germany and for many years the export market (for Montebello products) would be their main commercial outlet, reaching the whole Europe, the United States, Canada but also Australia and Japan. **Figure 3.2** provides a general overview of the international presence of Girolomoni around the world in recent times.

Exporting in 28 countries around the world, the leading markets for Girolomoni are France, the United States and Germany. At the same time, Asia Middle East and Oceania have confirmed their interest in the consumption of the Girolomoni organic products consumption. More recently, also the UAE has shown appreciation for closed-chain organic pasta (“Girolomoni a Biofach,” 2022).



**Figure 3.1** Girolomoni in the world. Source: <https://girolomoni.it/> (the data refer to the sales turnover of pasta sold by Girolomoni, private label included, in 2020).

### 3.3.2 International marketing strategy<sup>3</sup>

Given what previously described regarding the history of Girolomoni, the Girolomoni brand can be considered relatively recent. Indeed, the name of the brand became Girolomoni in 2012 (the same year of the death of the founder Gino Girolomoni) and, therefore, they have been developing image and positioning for a few years relative to the fifty-year history of the Cooperative. In this regard, in

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<sup>3</sup> The information contained in this paragraph has been elaborated on the basis of the answers provided by the Girolomoni Cooperative through a questionnaire/interview prepared for the purpose of this thesis.

January 2022, some marketing changes were adopted including a more eco-friendly and sustainable packaging, from transparent plastic to white paper, and the payoff which became closer to the founder's vision: "Dignity to the land!" (in Italian "Dignità alla Terra!"). The term "land" is intended to encompass and summarize both the work of farmers cultivating it, which is to be fairly remunerated, and the natural environment that must be preserved; therefore, first of all organic farming, but also renewable energy, sustainable packaging, short and zero-kilometer supply chain.

Unlike the Italian market, in which Girolomoni's customers are quite identified and traceable, the foreign markets of Girolomoni include different kinds of distributors. In some countries, for example Germany, they also produce for private labels. In this regard, the analysis that will be illustrated in the next chapter will focus on the marketing communication of the Girolomoni brand only, without considering the case of private labels. Until a year and a half ago, Girolomoni would produce their organic food products and the distributors would handle the goods pick-up from Girolomoni's warehouse along with all the activities relating to the marketing communication. Recently, despite the fact that the international promotion of the Girolomoni brand is still directly managed by the local distributors, Girolomoni has created some video material, translated into some languages such as English and French, that local distributors can use for the promotion of Girolomoni products in their countries. Moreover, the new

packaging was also made for the various foreign markets. The communication included in the packaging is mutually agreed with the local distributors; for example, for the Australian distributor it was important to emphasize the “organic” concept by highlighting it with the green color. Moreover, Girolomoni invested a part of their operating budget for some initiatives involving foreign distributors, such as for example the contest organized with the Spanish distributor for a holiday at Girolomoni headquarters in Italy to be won. Indeed, the Cooperative is trying to push the promotion through visits to make people better know the product, production and local environment, as well as shared values.

The fact that the marketing communications of Girolomoni for the foreign markets are directly managed by Girolomoni’s local distributors implies that the international promotion of this brand is formulated differently across countries, thus deriving from different local management capabilities and further specific characteristics of each local distributor.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CROSS-CULTURAL MARKETING COMMUNICATION ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 AIM AND METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of the analysis that will be illustrated in this chapter is to identify the level of consistency of the marketing communication of the Girolomoni brand with the national culture of some of the foreign markets in which Girolomoni operates. The countries included and taken into consideration for this analysis were selected and agreed upon together with the Italian company introduced in the previous chapter, i.e. Gino Girolomoni Agricultural Cooperative (Gino Girolomoni Cooperativa Agricola). In addition to Italy, the analysis studied the communication of the Girolomoni brand adopted in Spain, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia, thus encompassing countries from Europe, Asia and Oceania scoring quite differently in terms of Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

As to the methodology, the analysis of the marketing communication on the Girolomoni brand was conducted for each of the abovementioned countries considering two main aspects previously described in Chapter 2: first, from the point of view of the communication style and basic form (or executional style) and then, from the point of view of the content by focusing on the appeals used for the promotion of the brand in the country. Both aspects were studied by referring to the Hofstede's model previously described and using it as a tool to

help assess the level of consistency of the Girolomoni brand marketing communication adopted in each of the selected countries with the corresponding national culture. More specifically, the marketing communication analysis took into consideration five Hofstede's cultural dimensions, namely individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, long-/short-term orientation and masculinity/femininity, also checking the scores of the selected countries in each of these five cultural dimensions from Hofstede Insights. In addition, Hall's concept of high- and low-context cultures mentioned in Chapter 2 were also considered for this communication analysis.

Through the forms listed hereunder, both the Italian company and the local distributors were asked, for the purpose of this analysis, to:

- share some material referring to Girolomoni brand and products. **Appendix A** and **Appendix B** report the model forms called "Richiesta di materiale di marketing comunicativo" and "Request for Marketing Material for Master's Thesis" addressed to the Italian company and the local distributors, respectively;
- answer some questions referring to Girolomoni brand and products. **Appendix C** and **Appendix D** show the questionnaires "Questionario per analisi Tesi Magistrale" and "Questionnaire Research for Master's Thesis" addressed to the Italian company and the local distributors, respectively.

Indeed, as explained in Chapter 3, the promotion of the Girolomoni brand in the foreign markets is directly managed by the local distributors. Therefore, although

the material used for conducting this analysis was received from the Italian company, it actually included catalogs, leaflets, packaging, newsletters, magazine or newspaper articles as well as further marketing and promotional material provided by both the Italian company and some local distributors. As agreed with the Girolomoni Cooperative, some additional material on the basis of which this analysis was carried out was directly taken from the websites and social networks (which will be mentioned in more detail below in the analysis) of the Italian company and of the local distributors. Part of the material analyzed was translated from the original language into English for the purpose of this study; some of these translated texts are also reported in the following paragraphs.

The findings are the result of an analysis conducted on all the material (questionnaires included<sup>1</sup>) that was available for each country and this thesis reports some examples of the Girolomoni brand communication that were considered the most relevant and significant in terms of frequency and purpose of use. The interpretation of the results about the level of consistency of the Girolomoni communication with the various national cultures is provided in the analysis in terms of qualitative assessments and further discussed and summarized in the next chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Although for Spain and Australia the questionnaires were not filled out, the corresponding marketing material shared by the Girolomoni Cooperative and local distributors was deemed enough to allow for a communication analysis also for these two countries. Conversely, although Girolomoni's local distributors from Greece, Portugal and Canada answered the questionnaires, the corresponding marketing material available for these three countries was deemed not enough to conduct an analysis of their communication and, therefore, these three countries have not been included in this study.

## 4.2 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 4.2.1 Italy

#### 4.2.1.1 Description of the national cultural dimensions

Based on the data taken from Hofstede Insights, the Italian national culture can be considered an individualistic and masculine culture, scoring 76 (out of 100) and 70 in these two dimensions, respectively. Also, the quite high score of 75 in uncertainty avoidance suggests that individuals belonging to the Italian culture may not feel comfortable in ambiguous situations or in contexts characterized by uncertainty. With a score of 61 in long-term orientation, the Italian culture may be considered more long-term oriented. As far as power distance is concerned, despite the fact that the score of 50 may be seen as an intermediate level without suggesting any particularly strong inclination for a low or high degree of this dimension, de Mooij (2008) refers to Italy as a country which scores “high on Hofstede’s power distance scale” (p.124). An important aspect that is worth underlying is that although, as already mentioned in Chapter 2, high individualism is often associated with low-context communication while collectivism with high-context communication (Hermeking, 2005), the Italian culture may be deemed a particular case in this regard, since it scores high in individualism but it is also considered a high-context culture, as reported in **Figure 2.4** in the Appendix.

For the description of the national culture of the remaining five countries, namely Spain, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia, a bar chart showing the

country's scores attributed to the various Hofstede's cultural dimensions is reported under the paragraph of each selected country. To avoid repetition, for a more detailed interpretation of the scores, one can also refer to the description of the Hofstede's cultural dimensions provided in Chapter 1.

#### 4.2.1.2 Analysis of the communication<sup>2</sup>

##### *Communication styles and forms*

One of the main aspects that unmistakably emerges from the analysis of the communication and promotion for the Girolomoni brand in Italy is the frequent use of pictures, visual elements and illustrations. Indeed, one common denominator of all the marketing material analyzed is the visual communication style which is conveyed by the extensive use of multiple pictures of many different dimensions, most of which are large in size. As a result, the space available in leaflets, posters, catalog or other print material is mainly occupied by visual elements, as can be seen in **Figure 4.1** showing two pages taken from Girolomoni main leaflet, currently used. In addition to pictures, also many stylized illustrations often accompany written texts or, in other cases, other pictures. In the former case, they simply depict visually what is already expressed in the body text: for example, a tractor in correspondence of the point of the text

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<sup>2</sup> The parts of quoted text that are reported in this paragraph were taken from leaflets, catalogs, video and other marketing material on the Girolomoni brand, already written in the English language.

communicating that the production chain is 100% agricultural and organic; ears of wheat to express that the wheat they use is 100% Italian and comes from their farming members; arrows linking the pack of Girolomoni pasta to the information that the company wants to highlight.



Figure 4.1 Girolomoni marketing material: detail from a Girolomoni leaflet.

On the other hand, some illustrations are used as symbols recalling, for example, natural elements, animals, agricultural life as well as pasta production. In general, the colors that most frequently appear are rather strong, being consistent with the high level of masculinity of the country. Orange is the color characterizing the brand; it is a strong one which stands out relative to other colors present in the marketing material and, in addition to be used for the logo and pay-off of the

brand, it is also largely employed for backgrounds, as can be seen both in Girolomoni's print material and website (<https://girolomoni.it/>).

Indeed, all these elements are also reflected in the online communication, as the homepage along with many other pages of the website are characterized by multimodality, combining a verbal with a more prevalent visual approach, also including videos in plain view, pop-ups and several links and buttons that, once clicked, lead to further content of the website as well as to downloading options for catalog. In this regard for example, after filling out a form, the user must click on a picture showing the landscape in which the company is located in order to download the catalog. Moreover, layouts can be considered limited in terms of written text, but rich in colors and large pictures. At the same time, keyword search tools are not present and the structure of the website does not seem to impose the user to follow a strictly ordered route.

All the abovementioned elements resulting from the analysis, both in print and online communication, mostly reflect a visual style and together with the use of entertaining and multimedia elements, they recall what previously described in Chapter 2 in relation to the communication style adopted by high-context and polychronic cultures, thus showing consistency with the Italian culture. Other elements resulting from the analysis which can be considered typical of high-context cultures can be found in the main promotional video called *Girolomoni: dal campo alla pasta, la nostra missione* (whose English version of the video is

called *Girolomoni: from farm to pasta, our mission*), on which users can click in the homepage.



**Figure 4.2** Four still images from the video *Girolomoni: dal campo alla pasta, la nostra missione*  
Source: Girolomoni (2022).

**Figure 4.2** shows four still images from this video, whose executional style resembles more a drama advertising form, like a movie with a setting and characters: there is an off-screen voice that tells a story, starting by saying “it was right here at Montebello, in the hills just a few kilometers from Urbino that in 1971 Gino Girolomoni began to write his story simply by planting a seed, a seed of an idea”, recalling a typical drama style that also includes metaphors like *planting a seed* referring not only to the concrete act related to their agricultural activity, but also to the abstract concept of having an idea and starting a project

from it. The sound and music used are important elements conveying an emotional style, typical of indirect communication, and contributing to create a captivating atmosphere around the story told by the off-screen voice and through the scenes, thus entertaining the audience. Actually, the audience can hear not only the background music, but also the sound of what is featured in the scenes, such as the rustling of leaves and twitter of birds before the off-screen voice starts to talk, the wind through the wheat in the fields and other meaningful details like the sound of pouring the wine into the glass. Therefore, the predominant communication style can be deemed to be emotional, indirect, visual to please the eye, using metaphors, symbols and aesthetics. However, a certain level of directness can be found both in Girolomoni print and online marketing material. For example, although the abovementioned promotional video can be considered as a drama form, which is an indirect advertising form and does not typically involve characters who directly address the audience, in this case the story is told using the first-person plural (we) and moreover, in the final scenes the off-screen female voice leaves the floor to a male voice, as if the founder Gino Girolomoni was talking to the audience quoting his own words. Part of his quotation is also reported in the form of written text: “the earth is our mother, a mother that nourishes you and you have to take care of her”, in which the audience is addressed directly and recommended to take care of the earth. A possible interpretation is that, in addition to be a high-context culture in which an indirect

and emotional style is typically predominant, the Italian national culture also scores high in individualism as well as in masculinity, thus possibly explaining some degree of directness in the communication, as previously described in this thesis. Individualism may also explain the fact that Girolomoni communication includes facts and arguments, but they are presented neither in the form of announcements nor in the form of lessons with presenters directly addressing the audience or using imperatives in the attempt to persuade them to buy, which would fit more individualistic and low-context cultures.

### *Appeals*

From the analysis conducted on Girolomoni marketing communication for the Italian market, the main promoted appeal emerging from all the material analyzed and from the answers collected through the questionnaire/interview<sup>3</sup>, appears to be the fact that Girolomoni products are organic and derive from organic farming. More specifically, the main message seems to be that Girolomoni pasta is good both for the health of human beings and for the environment, in that the production of pasta and other Girolomoni products is carried out keeping as many nutrients of the wheat as possible and, at the same time, in respect of the environment. As far as health is concerned, on one hand, one may interpret this appeal as reflecting Italy's high level of individualism, since individualism is

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<sup>3</sup> Some answers were provided in written form and others by telephone.

associated with the pursuit of individual benefits like health outcomes (Roseira et al., 2022). This may also be considered in line with the findings reported by First and Brozina (2009), according to whom “the more the cultures ... practice and value high individualism, the more they consider health protection to be the motive for organic food consumption” (p.195). On the other hand, the health appeal may also reflect the need to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity. The expression “dal campo alla pasta” (from farm/field to pasta) included in the title of the promotional video already mentioned (**Figure 4.2**) and the emphasis on the fact that Girolomoni grows, grinds and makes pasta all in one place fit quite well the strong uncertainty avoidance of the Italian culture. Indeed, most of the communication used stresses many elements that reinforce this concept and help avoid any kind of ambiguity about the origin of their products and raw materials used, thus showing a certain level of consistency with the Italian culture. Girolomoni communication emphasizes for example: the fact that the product derives from a single and traceable supply chain which is totally organic and agricultural and that is managed by them; the fact that they “grow wheat, grain and legumes on some 400 farms in Italy and over 70% of these are in the Marche” (from the video); the purity of the product expressed by stating that they use “water from the surrounding hills” and a slow-drying process in their pasta factory which preserves as many nutrients and also flavors and aromas of the wheat as possible. They also refer to a “pure line of ancient Khorosan wheat, grown in the

Mediterranean Basin in the past” (from the website). The term “buona pasta” (good pasta) is used to emphasize the purity and quality of the final product as well as of the raw materials resulting from organic farming, thus making Girolomoni organic pasta *good* for the health of people. This is in line with the findings of Theocharous (2015) who tried to explain the higher frequency of the appeal of naturalness<sup>4</sup> in the corpora of advertisements she analyzed for Greece relative to those analyzed for the UK, by reporting that freshness and purity are more important appeals in uncertainty avoidance cultures. Moreover, in high uncertainty avoidance cultures emotions can be shown (de Mooij, 2018) and Girolomoni communication is consistent with this aspect, as it mainly provides information with emotions. For example, the promotional video is executed using an emotional communication style both through music and scenes as already mentioned, and reaching an emotional peak at the end (see the last image of **Figure 4.2**) when Girolomoni pasta arouses the emotions of a girl who, after tasting it, seems to perceive in her mind where it comes from and all the story behind the production of Girolomoni pasta. She also feels good and relaxed, a typical appeal of strong uncertainty avoidance cultures. Moreover, the frequent use of the first-person plural often reinforced by the possessive adjective “our” as in sentences like “we grow wheat, grind it in our mill” or “we make pasta in our

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<sup>4</sup> In the abovementioned study, the appeal of naturalness encompassed the following concepts: farming, minerals, unadulterated, pure, organic, natural, free from preservatives/chemicals (Theocharous, 2015).

pasta factory” may contribute to reassure the consumer by stressing that the product is totally traceable and 100% organic, in the attempt to remove uncertainty. In this regard, the country-of-origin (COO) appeal emerging from the communication analysis and associating Girolomoni products with their country of origin, i.e. Italy, may actually be interpreted as a way to further reassure the consumer about the origin and quality of Girolomoni food products and raw materials, since for example the body text of the main Girolomoni leaflet reads “ensuring the consumer a product made from Italian raw materials”. As previously mentioned, another appeal always stressed in Girolomoni brand communication in Italy is about the environment, in that organic farming is promoted in strict connection with the benefits it brings in terms of environmental sustainability and biodiversity. In this regard, the pay-off of the brand “Dignity to the land!” emphasizes the importance of respecting the land instead of underlying how tasty the product is for example, as it would be more common in cultures of low uncertainty avoidance, which tend to focus on the end result of using the product. Environmental protection may be an appeal more frequently associated with collectivism and femininity (Browaeys & Price, 2011; First & Brozina, 2009) rather than an individualistic and masculine culture like Italy. The same may hold true for another appeal used in Girolomoni communication, namely fair cooperation intended as paying a fair price for the work of the farmers with the aim to rebuild the rural world and its people, namely the “civiltà contadina”

(farming civilization). This appeal can be found in Girolomoni marketing material including messages like “all of us, from those who sow to those who shape the pasta, have an equal share in the value of our products” and “sourced at a fair price”. However, it is worth mentioning that environmental sustainability and fair cooperation are not only two fundamental values on which the production of Girolomoni food products is currently based, but they actually lie at the heart of the founder’s commitment and thoughts from which the whole history of the brand originates. Indeed, the care for the environment expressed in the pay-off actually encompasses a broader meaning linked to ethical values and, more specifically, to the “dream of Gino Girolomoni” consisting in restoring “dignity to the land and its guardians, his fellow farmers”. In the marketing communication of Girolomoni for the Italian market, these ethical values related to the respect for nature and people thus encompassing a broader concept that goes beyond the production of pasta itself, are far more stressed than the final product, which turns out to be more a means to create a new economy linked to rural areas rather than a mere goal. In this sense, it is not only promotion of pasta but also of a lifestyle, as further underlined by the written expression “BIO RURALE”, thus suggesting the emphasis on appeals relating to a sense of harmony, community and society development usually more associated with collectivism (de Mooij, 2018; First & Brozina, 2009), along with quality of life which is an important value in feminine cultures (de Mooij, 2018; Browaeys & Price, 2011). The

abovementioned appeals are, in a way, summarized in the form of written text and also depicted through a visual representation composed of symbols characterizing the marketing material of Girolomoni, including leaflets, catalog and packaging, as shown in the detail reported in **Figure 4.3**.



**Figure 4.3** Detail from Girolomoni marketing material and packaging.

The logo itself is the symbol of the Monastery of Montebello and it is at the centre of a broader narrative relating to the world of organic farming mentioned above. Also the choice of a more eco-friendly and sustainable packaging adopted by Girolomoni in 2021 can be interpreted as a way to reaffirm the commitment of the company to a smaller ecological footprint, thus reinforcing the importance of environmental protection in their marketing communication.

On the other hand, the individualistic dimension characterizing the Italian culture may be reflected in a certain level of directness used in Girolomoni promotion. In

this regard, in the last part of the promotional video referred to in **Figure 4.2**, the audience is addressed directly by using the pronoun *you* almost ordering “you have to take care of her”, in which the term “her” refers to the earth. Some people (possibly friends) are shown eating together and, moreover, eating is defined in the video as a gift (and being “about spirituality, friendship, fraternity, beauty, warmth, color, knowledge, aroma, simplicity and good company”), two aspects more typically associated with collectivistic cultures rather than individualistic ones. However, although in general individualistic cultures may be more associated with the appeal of eating alone as previously illustrated in Chapter 2, it may actually be considered part of the Italian food tradition and culture to eat together with other people, usually family members or friends, which is also an appeal often present in TV advertisements in Italy, especially for the promotion of food products. Another recurrent appeal emerging from the video and from Girolomoni marketing material is the explicit reference to generations, along with the continuity of the dream and work of the founder, in messages such as: “we keep working to ensure that this dream continues to sow the seeds for a truly sustainable economy”, “we have contributed to the birth of organic farming and we continue to support it, seeing it as a starting point rather than as a point of arrival, to preserve fertility and biodiversity”, “today the cooperative is continuing with the new generation”. These sentences, and in particular the words underlined above, may be explained and attributable to the level of long-term orientation and

power distance of the Italian culture. Indeed, the analysis identified a frequently used appeal emphasizing the long-term view of respecting the environment and preserving fertility across generations, also conveyed by the metaphor “sow the seeds”. Long-term orientation may also help explain the quite extensive use of symbols, which are mainly related to nature; some of them may not be immediately decodable for those who are not familiar with certain details of the history of the company, such as the flying hawk included in **Figure 4.1**, recalling the large number of hawks that were flying over the Monastery of Montebello when the founder Gino Girolomoni arrived there for the first time, thus symbolizing how everything began. Although Girolomoni promotion does not generally include terms like “the best pasta” or other hyperbolic expressions typical of the configuration of individualistic and masculine cultures like Italy, appeals attributable to the cultural dimension of masculinity do appear, such as the reference to achievement, mastery and dreams coming true, along with the fact of being the first at doing something, in expressions like “we have contributed to the birth of organic farming” (from the video). In addition, the aspect of masculinity referring to the fact that while “men are assertive, women are nurturing” (Browaeys & Price, 2011, p.28) could be partially reflected in the following quotation from the promotional video: “the earth is our mother, a mother that nourishes you”. As far as achievements are concerned, a page of Girolomoni’s website is entirely dedicated to the many awards received by the

Girolomoni Cooperative over the years. Another clear example is the frequent reference to the founder, his dream and achievements; for example, both in the leaflet and packaging one can read “the dream of Gino Girolomoni – pioneer of the organic ethos, intellectual and activist, but above all, farmer – was to restore dignity to the land and its guardians. In the name of his dream, he was able to bring a hill back to life, planting and transforming wheat into pasta, all in this one place.” These concepts are also communicated in the promotional video, in which the off-screen voice mentions the founder’s name and “Gino’s message”. This contributes to the important role played by the founder as a key figure in the brand promotion, as someone who gives advice to follow, possibly reflecting the power distance dimension. Indeed, in high power distance cultures, characterized by great respect for elders, advertisements tend to refer to generations using the product and the elder advising the younger (de Mooij, 2018).

## 4.2.2 Spain

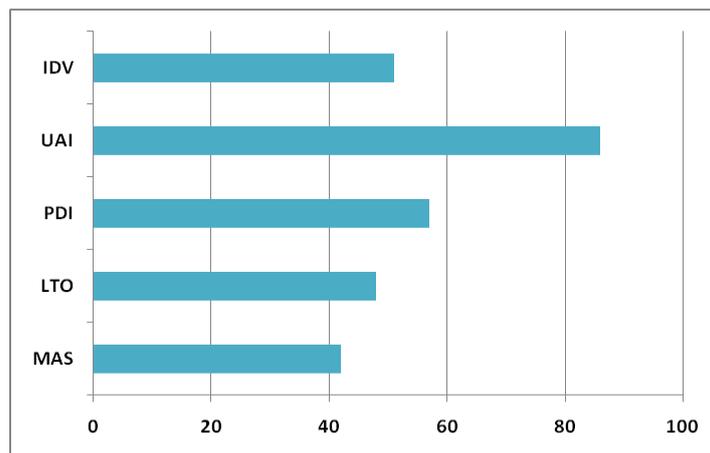
### 4.2.2.1 Description of the national cultural dimensions<sup>5</sup>

Spain “in comparison with the rest of the European countries (except for Portugal) is Collectivist (because of its score in this dimension: 51)” (Hofstede Insights,

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<sup>5</sup> To indicate the dimensions of national culture, this thesis will use the abbreviations reported by Hofstede Insights: IDV for Individualism vs Collectivism, UAI for Uncertainty Avoidance Index, PDI for Power Distance Index, LTO for Long-Term vs Short-Term Orientation and MAS for Masculinity vs Femininity.

n.d.), as shown from item IDV (standing for individualism) in the bar chart of **Figure 4.4**, built on the basis of Spain's scores reported by Hofstede Insights. With a score of 42 in MAS, this culture can be considered more feminine than masculine. It is also characterized by high PDI (57) and a rather strong UAI (86). Although this national culture scores almost intermediate in the LTO dimension (48), Spain may be considered more a short-term oriented country. Moreover, **Figure 2.4** suggests that this country is characterized by a high-context culture.



**Figure 4.4** Bar chart showing Spain's scores in Hofstede's dimensions of national culture.

Source: Hofstede Insights, n.d.

#### 4.2.2.2 Analysis of the communication<sup>6</sup>

##### *Communication styles and forms*

The analysis conducted on the available material related to the marketing communications of the Girolomoni brand in Spain revealed a sort of combination

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<sup>6</sup> This paragraph reports parts of quoted text in Spanish taken from the marketing material on the Girolomoni brand provided by Girolomoni Agricultural Cooperative and translated into English (*in parentheses*) by me.

between an indirect approach and a quite explicit communication style. Indeed, on one hand the communication used does not generally address the public directly (for example by using the pronoun *you*) and it seems to be intended to create positive feelings in the attempt to build an emotional relationship between the consumer and the brand, which can be considered consistent with South-European cultures (and therefore with Spain) as explained by de Mooij (2018). Also, as previously mentioned, building a trusting relationship first between parties is an important aspect in collectivistic cultures which is also reflected in advertising (de Mooij, 2018). This seems to be performed in Girolomoni communication in Spain mainly through the extensive use of emotional appeals relating to the history of the brand, the commitment and values of its founder as well as the environmental concern, which will be described in more detail when discussing the appeals. A possible example reflecting an emotional style can be:

“Gino dedicó su vida a restaurar la dignidad de la tierra y de quienes la trabajan ... La sede de la compañía está en el monasterio de Montebello, cuyos restos admiraba Gino cuando era niño y se propuso restaurar”.

*(Gino dedicated his life to restoring the dignity to the land and to those who work it ... The company's headquarters is located at the Monastery of Montebello, whose remains Gino admired as a child and set out to restore).*

On the other hand, the promotion can also be deemed to include some elements reflecting a more explicit approach, in that most of the material analyzed showed

a quite explicit and informative communication style providing facts, details and background information both on the product and its production process without leaving room for misunderstandings. Although this more explicit style would probably better fit low-context and individualistic cultures instead of high-context and collectivistic cultures like Spain, it is also worth mentioning that, unlike the material analyzed for most countries, the analysis conducted on Girolomoni communication addressed to the Spanish market also included magazine and newspaper articles. By comparing the different marketing materials analyzed, it does not appear a clear predominance of visual-heavy over text-heavy communication or viceversa; however, pictures can be deemed to be quite often employed both in print and online promotion. In particular, the local distributor's website (<https://www.veritas.es/>) makes a wide use of large pictures depicting not only Girolomoni products but also the founder Gino Girolomoni and the current President of the Girolomoni Cooperative, Gino's son. Other elements contributing to a high-context communication, mainly found in the website, include the use of a bold font for highlighting some sentences of the body text along with colored boxes containing quotations from the current President of the Cooperative. In addition to pictures, metaphors like "la agricultura ecológica es una forma de vida" (*organic farming is a lifestyle*) are also used for example to emphasize the important role played by organic farming in people's lives, thus going beyond the final product consumers buy. In relation to the marketing communication strategy

of Girolomoni for the Spanish market, last Spring (2022) a contest was organized in collaboration with the Italian company that hosted a Spanish influencer, who created various contents and promotional videos in the social media asking followers to answer some questions. Over 1,000 applications were received and last July the winners went to Italy for a stay at the Monastery of Montebello. It is worth mentioning that marketing communication initiatives of this kind can be considered very important for the promotion and awareness of the Girolomoni brand, especially in a country like Spain. Indeed, not only is social media usage stronger in collectivistic than in individualistic cultures (de Mooij, 2018) but also collectivistic cultures are more likely to use social media for purchase decisions than are individualistic cultures, as previously described in Chapter 2. This can probably be related to the fact that social media may play a significant role in the opinion formation in these cultures (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014), especially considering the possible contribution in this regard of a collectivistic value like conformance. Indeed, if one chooses another brand than the group-members', this distinguishes one from the group and while people in individualistic cultures are emotionally more detached from in-groups other than immediate family, "collectivist cultures are conformity oriented and show a higher degree of group behavior" (Leng & Botelho, 2010, p.265). This aspect can be even more important if considering that, in general, collectivistic cultures are more brand

loyal because of their need for harmony and conformance (de Mooij, 2018), as already described in Chapter 1.

### *Appeals*

As far as the Spanish market is concerned, one of the most recurrent appeals highlighted from the analysis, appearing to be the main topic on which all Girolomoni marketing communication is focused, is organic farming usually expressed in relation to environmental sustainability. In general, the communication puts significant emphasis on the brand values that go beyond the production of pasta and inspired the founder Gino Girolomoni to put faith and totally commit himself to organic farming. In particular, Girolomoni promotion underlines the commitment of the founder Gino who “dedicó su vida a restaurar la dignidad de la tierra y de quienes la trabajan” (*dedicated his life to restoring the dignity to the land and to those who work it*), thus highlighting that the production of pasta Girolomoni is only the result of a much broader vision aimed at safeguarding the environment but also farmers and their work. Regarding the fact that their “compromiso ‘va mucho más allá de la producción de pasta’” (*commitment ‘goes far beyond the production of pasta’*), some of the appeals that may be recognized from the communication analysis of the Girolomoni brand in Spain include family, tradition, community, society development, in-group benefits and harmony, aspects which can be deemed to reflect collectivistic

cultures (de Mooij, 2018; First & Brozina, 2009; Theocharous, 2015). In addition, the analysis also identified appeals like cooperation, quality of life and caring for others, i.e. appeals more often associated with femininity (Browaeys & Price, 2011; de Mooij, 2018) The emphasis on environmental protection may actually be attributable to both the collectivistic and feminine dimensions characterizing the Spanish culture (Browaeys & Price, 2011; First & Brozina, 2009).

The appeals mentioned above in relation to collectivism and femininity may be deemed to contribute to make the Girolomoni marketing communication highly consistent with the Spanish culture, which scores high in both cultural dimensions. Some examples taken from the marketing material analyzed and reflecting these two cultural dimensions are reported here below. For instance, the sense of community and the bond with local land and people are expressed by mentioning that “la sede de la compañía está en el monasterio de Montebello, cuyos restos admiraba Gino cuando era niño y se propuso restaurar” (*the company’s headquarters is located at the Monastery of Montebello, whose remains Gino admired as a child and set out to restore*), by referring to the brand logo as a way to “reforzar el vínculo con nuestra tierra” (*strengthen the bond with our land*), by clarifying that for Girolomoni the production of pasta is also “un camino para conectar con los valores del estilo de vida agrícola” (*a path to connect with the values of the farming lifestyle*) and by defining the founder Gino “por encima de todo, agricultor” (*above all, farmer*) himself who promoted a

series of initiatives “para apoyar la economía local” (*to support the local economy*). Femininity may better explain the sense of quality of life and caring for others expressed by underlying the importance of “restaurar la dignidad de la tierra y de quienes la trabajan” (*restoring the dignity to the land and to those who work it*) and therefore of “cooperación leal” (*fair cooperation*), but also defining organic farming as a lifestyle. The body text of an article analyzed reports in bold font a very significant example in this regard that reads “cuidando la salud y la calidad de vida de las personas y del planeta” (*taking care of the health and quality of life of people and the planet*). Femininity is also reflected in the recurrent emphasis on Girolomoni values, being based on “agricultura sostenible y un profundo respeto por las personas y el medio ambiente” (*sustainable farming and on a deep respect for people and the environment*).

Family ties are mainly expressed by the use of the words “padre” (*father*) and “hijo” (*son*) when referring to the founder Gino and the current President of the Italian Cooperative, who is defined in the communication as “fiel al pensamiento y legado de su padre” (*faithful to the thought and legacy of his father*), highlighting the fact that the commitment of Girolomoni “sigue siendo el mismo” (*continues to be the same*). Not only do these messages emphasizing generations seem to contribute to create an emotional communication style, but they may also be considered consistent with high power cultures like Spain. In addition, the frequent references to the two generations and the history of the company, along

with the appeal of tradition seem to be expressed also emphasizing a sort of link between past and present times; as Browaeys and Price (2011) argue, virtues related to past and present, including respect for tradition, are fostered in short-term orientation, thus showing a possible consistency with the Spanish culture. The appeal of tradition, together with other aspects and appeals frequently used in Girolomoni promotion in this country, may also be deemed to reflect another cultural dimension, namely uncertainty avoidance in which the Spanish culture scores quite high. Indeed, the communication makes an extensive use of technical details and information, also including precise figures, on many aspects such as: the packaging is “100% de papel reciclable procedente de bosques gestionados de forma responsable y 0% plastic, un dato muy importante porque muchos fabricantes utilizan lo que se conoce como polilaminado” (*100% recyclable paper deriving from responsibly managed forests and 0% plastic, a very important fact as many manufacturers use what is known as polylaminate*); demonstrations of the manufacturer’s competence by referring to Girolomoni as a pioneer of organic food and a one-of-a-kind company in Europe and providing details on the various phases of the pasta production process; naturalness and purity of Girolomoni products by specifying that for the production of pasta they use water from the mountains and describing the slow drying process, “un secado a baja temperatura, que no supera los 70 °C, para poder preservar las cualidades nutricionales y organolépticas de la material prima” (*a low-temperature drying,*

*which does not exceed 70 °C, so as to preserve the nutritional and organoleptic qualities of the raw material*). These appeals may be considered consistent with the need for scientific proof and explanations typical of strong uncertainty avoidance cultures. In regard to this dimension, the COO appeal revealed by the recurrent reference to Italy as the country of origin of Girolomoni pasta may possibly be interpreted as a way of fulfilling the need for reassurance of consumers about the quality of Girolomoni products by leveraging the world-renowned reputation held by the brand's country of origin in the food sector. This may be particularly evident when the promotion makes reference to the Italian tradition, by stating for example “se elabora tal y como manda la tradición italiana” (*made as the Italian tradition dictates*) or “el trigo se cultiva en unas 400 granjas italianas” (*the wheat is cultivated in about 400 Italian farms*). In addition, the headline of an article analyzed reads “Así es la mejor pasta: italiana, ecológica y de trigo duro” (*This is the best pasta: Italian, green (organic) and durum wheat*). This last sentence, together with messages underlying that Girolomoni is a “única” (*one-of-a-kind*) company in Europe or that Girolomoni packages “se diferencian de los de muchos fabricantes” (*distinguish themselves from those of many manufacturers*), allows for a possible remark about the use of elements like uniqueness, differentiation, competitive advantage which tend to reflect more individualism and masculinity rather than collectivistic and feminine cultures like

Spain. In this regard, **Figure 4.5** reports a detail inserted in one of the article analyzed so as to inform the public about the achievements of Girolomoni.



**Figure 4.5** Detail from marketing material for the promotion of the Girolomoni brand in Spain.  
Source: provided by the Girolomoni Cooperative.

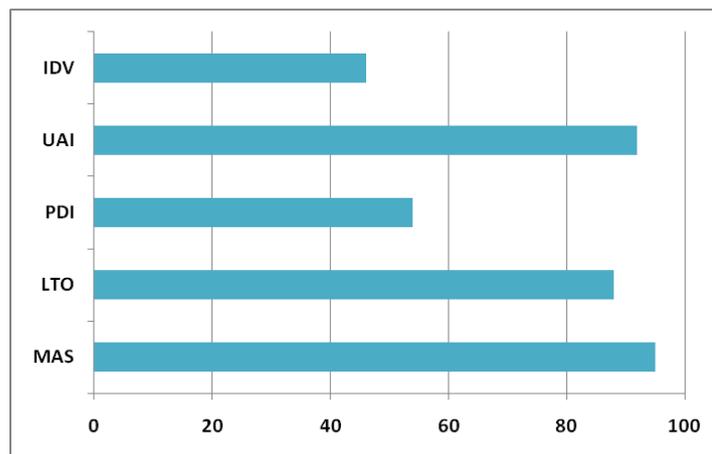
However, it is worth mentioning that the presence of these individualistic and masculine aspects is less prevalent and most of the communication seems to refer to appeals generally associated to cultural dimensions that can be considered in line with the Spanish culture, as already described.

### 4.2.3 Japan

#### 4.2.3.1 Description of the national cultural dimensions

As shown in the bar chart of **Figure 4.6**, with a score of 46 in IDV the Japanese culture tends to be more a collectivistic society. Hofstede Insights's scores also suggest that this national culture can be deemed to be characterized by a high level of UAI (92), LTO (88) and MAS (95). As to the PDI dimension, Japan is

associated with a score which slightly exceeds the intermediate level (54). Also, according to **Figure 2.4** Japanese is one of the most high-context cultures.



**Figure 4.6** Bar chart showing Japan's scores in Hofstede's dimensions of national culture.

Source: Hofstede Insights, n.d.

#### 4.2.3.2 Analysis of the communication<sup>7</sup>

##### *Communication styles and forms*

On the basis of the marketing material analyzed in relation to the promotion of the Girolomoni brand for the Japanese market, one of the main characteristics related to the communication style is the presence of pictures, colored backgrounds and other visual elements, all features typical of high-context cultures like Japan. The importance attributed to visual communication can be seen from both print and online promotion through the extensive use of pictures and visual elements, also recalling agriculture and nature. For example, the promotional material shown in

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<sup>7</sup> All the material analyzed regarding the promotion of the Girolomoni brand in Japan was translated from Japanese into English by Giovanni Ballarin, including all parts of *translated text* reported in this paragraph.

**Figure 4.7** in the Appendix, which focuses on the opening of the mill in the Italian factory, appears to be visually captivating through the predominant visual communication conveyed by not only colors and many pictures, but also stylized visual elements and a drawing of the factory indicating the various buildings.

Another significant element contributing to the consistency of Girolomoni promotion with the Japanese culture is reflected in the visual and entertaining style of the communication; for example, in print advertising not only is the founder Gino Girolomoni mentioned by reporting his words and thoughts, but he is also visually depicted as a cartoon character, as shown in **Figure 4.8**. Moreover, he is associated with symbolic elements recalling the farm and agriculture, like the typical farmer straw hat and the ear of wheat in his hand.



**Figure 4.8** Detail from the promotional material for the Girolomoni brand in Japan.

Source: provided by the Girolomoni Cooperative.

This cartoon illustration adopted for Girolomoni communication in Japan may also be intended as a way to create a positive and pleasing feeling toward the

brand, thus showing consistency with the fact that, unlike Western societies' advertising logic, in Asian collectivistic cultures you first need to make friends with the audience, prove that you understand their feelings and show that you are nice, so that consumers may decide to buy because they feel familiar with the company and brand and they trust them (de Mooij, 2018). As a result, instead of being persuasive, advertising should be liked in order to be effective in those cultures, for which it is important that the communication is able to build an emotional relationship between the brand and the consumer, as de Mooij (2018) underlines. Being highly consistent with a high-context culture like Japan, an indirect and visual communication is also used in the social networks through which the Girolomoni brand is promoted in Japan (in particular, this analysis will mention Instagram posts from the following Instagram profile: [https://www.instagram.com/girolomoni\\_japan/](https://www.instagram.com/girolomoni_japan/)) and in the website of the local distributor (<https://sokensha.co.jp/GIROLOMONI/>). In particular, the website is characterized by multimodality, also including many pictures and videos. Moreover, some elements reflecting polychronic time-orientated cultures can be mentioned. For example, from the homepage it is possible to click on some pictures leading to further pages and to various contents of the website without any strict guided route to follow, passing from a detailed explanation of grains (complete with a related drawing) to many multimedia and visual elements including pasta recipes and interviews with the Italian company, both through

videos and pictures accompanied by written text. Music is an element characterizing most of the videos of Girolomoni marketing communication in Japan, like the one showing an interview with Gino Girolomoni. In this video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eswCB5JvaMM>) for example, in addition to an enjoyable music, an off-screen voice talks about Girolomoni and where the brand comes from also by showing scenes of the Italian company and the natural landscape in which it is located. All the video is characterized by a pleasing communication style and the last part reflects a quite familiar and soft sell approach which seems to try to establish a dialogue with the audience: *“How was this video? We think you could see Mr. Girolomoni’s severe but (at the same time) gentle eyes. We ... would like to deliver the foods, that have been produced by using lots of time and lots of efforts and that is very healthy for you and your body, to your kitchen and on your dining table together with the motto: ‘Love, Food, Peace’”*. Indeed, this kind of videos, whose message and communication style elicit emotions, seems to aim to build a trusting relationship between the company/brand and consumers rather than simply selling the product, thus reflecting some degree of indirectness, consistent with high-context and collectivistic cultures like Japan. Therefore, what is important to underline is that the prevailing communication style emerging from the analysis seems to be an indirect and soft sell approach, in that instead of using a competitive persuasive advertising directly addressing consumers in the attempt to convince them to buy,

Giolomoni promotion in Japan mainly tends to create emotions and atmosphere to entertain the audience. Instead of being directly told that Giolomoni products are worth buying, the communication is intended to make consumers more aware of the importance of environmental issues and human health thus emphasizing the benefits deriving from organic agriculture and food. As de Mooij (2018) points out, trust may be a significant criterion to consider for Internet advertising in Asia. She also adds that opting for a direct and hard sell approach turns consumers off instead of persuading them in long-term oriented and collectivistic cultures, for which advertising has to build trust; inducing positive feelings is more important than simply providing information. These elements can actually be found in Giolomoni communication for the Japanese market and they are conveyed not only through videos and visual communication, but also written communication. For example, often one may not understand what is the promoted product until the very end of the message, especially in Giolomoni promotion made through the social networks. In this regard, an example taken from an Instagram post dated December 7, 2022 of the abovementioned Instagram profile is reported hereunder.

ジーノ・ジロロモーニは一貫して、人間が大地や自然環境に対して行ってきた過ちを鋭く糾弾し続けてきました。

*Gino Girolomoni has consistently denounced humans' misdeeds against nature.*

ジーノ自身は2012年に亡くなってしまいましたが、その後世界各地で起きている熱波や寒波、大規模な山火事、威力を増す暴風雨などを見ると、まさしくジーノが指摘した通りだと感じます。

*Since he died in 2012, we have been witnessing many disasters like extreme heat waves and cold waves, big crazy storms or incredible forest fires. This means that what he said has been admitted as a fact.*

地球は強 ひっぱたかれて跡が残るほどの傷を負ってしまったとジーノは言いました。

*He said: "the Earth has been heavily hurt by a fatal blow" (shock).*

「少なくとも30年前から地球は深刻な状況にあることがわかっていた」

*"At least for 30 years, this Earth has been under this seriously sad situation."*

時には「何かを壊したい気分だが、友よ、ここにはもう壊すものすら残っていない」と嘆き悲しんでいました。

*Sometimes he said that "Even if you want to destroy something on this Earth, there is nothing left to destroy."*

その一方で「有機農業は畑の傷の治療なのだ」と主張し続けていました。

*On the other hand, he insisted on that "Organic farming is the best way to cure this damaged, injured, hurt land".*

ジロロモーニの哲学は時代を超えて響きわたり続けるのです。

*This philosophy of Gino Girolomoni will last forever. Beyond time.*

~~~

12月8日はオーガニックデイ(有機農業の日)です。

*December 8th is "Organic Day".*

この日を農業の未来を考えるアクションを起こす節目にして欲しいと全国で様々なイベントやキャンペーンが行われています。持続可能な未来のために、まずはイタリアオーガニックのパイオニアである、ジーノ・ジロロモーニの思いを知っていただければ嬉しいです！

*All over Japan there will be many campaigns and events. Through these events, we would be happy if we could have the opportunity to introduce Gino Girolomoni's philosophy about organic farming for a sustainable future to you!*

By reading this post one can realize that there is a huge difference between a direct, explicit style intended to persuade and convince consumers to buy the

product and the indirect approach used for the promotion of Girolomoni in this message. The whole message focuses on the thoughts of the founder Gino Girolomoni and his condemnation of humans misdeeds against nature and the environment; at a certain point, the topic of organic farming as a way to cure this damaged land is introduced. Then, the company ends the message by using a very soft approach, without employing imperatives or even making any explicit reference to the products. A similar example is reported below, with some parts taken from another Instagram post dated December 6, 2022 of the same profile.

原文は、聖書の有名なフレーズ「幸いなるかな、心の貧しき者」のパロディです。

*The original sentence is “Blessed are the poor in spirit” from the Bible.*

ジーノ・ジロモニーが思い描いたエコロジカルな罪というのは、化学肥料・農薬をはじめとして、土壌を台無しにして痩せさせてしまったり、作物の持つ生命力を捻じ曲げたり奪ったりするようなことを指しているのだと思われます。

*It seems that the ecological sin described by Gino refers to the fact that the modern farming method, which uses chemical fertilizers and pesticides, destroys the land by removing the nutrition originally deposited and kept in the soil and it also takes away vitality that is basically kept inside the farm products.*

もちろんそれだけでなく、環境に負荷をかける先進国型の現代人のライフスタイルに厳しい目を向けたとも思われます。

*Moreover, he had severe opinions against the so-called modern lifestyle of (technologically) advanced nations that destroys and wastes the environment.*

いま世界的にレジ袋やストローをはじめ生活の中の身近なプラスチック製品の使用の見直しが進んだり、プラントベースのような「環境に負荷をかけない食材」が注目されたり、「エコロジカルな罪」から離れる動きが出てきています。

*However, lately we see companies getting rid of products such as plastic bags and plastic straws from our lifestyle or recommending plant-based food that is environment-friendly. This is a way of distancing from the “ecological sin”.*

ジーノが思い描いた「幸いなる」世界にはまだ遠いかもしれませんが、一歩ずつ近づいています。 *Although this is still far away from Gino’s ideal happy world, lately his dream is coming true little by little.*

そういえば、パスタもパスタソースやオリーブオイル、バルサミコ酢も「プラントベース」な食材ですね。

*By the way, pasta, pasta sauce, olive oil and balsamic vinegar are all “plant-based”, aren’t they?*

Also in this case, the communication style seems to correspond neither to a persuasive nor to a hard sell approach. On the contrary, the promotion of the brand can be considered indirect, reflecting the soft sell approach characterizing high-context cultures, since the context plays an important role in helping interpret the message and understand what the company actually sells. Also, the purchase of Girolomoni products is neither imposed nor directly recommended, but only implicitly expressed by inducing positive feelings toward the brand and making consumers aware of environmental concerns and of the fact that organic farming is a way “to cure this damaged, injured, hurt land”.

### *Appeals*

The major appeals characterizing most of Girolomoni promotion in Japan seems to be related to the environmental protection, the philosophy and history of the

Girolomoni Cooperative. In addition, the quality of Girolomoni products is another key element used for the promotion in this country. According to the answers provided to the questionnaire by the Japanese local importer, the awareness of Japanese people toward the organic sector is still immature and they mainly see organic products as something benefiting their health. At the same time, he added that motivating consumers to care for the environment is very important for the future diffusion of organic products in Japan and mentioned an increase in the awareness of environmental issues and in the demand for organic food products. In this regard, Girolomoni products are obtaining a certain level of success in Japan from consumers who are very sensitive to environmental issues.

With reference to the appeal of Girolomoni organic products in relation to the environment as a key element of the marketing communication in Japan, a clear example comes from the abovementioned video showing the interview with Gino Girolomoni, which can be found in the homepage of the website. Indeed, the emphasis of the interview is on the organic agriculture and food as a lifestyle which allows not only for a better health of humans beings but also for organizing a society that is more compatible with the needs of the earth, thus using less resources and more renewable energy. This appeal may seem to reflect more environmental protection and the sense of community, being consistent with Japanese collectivistic culture. Another example can be found in the content of the abovementioned Instagram post dated December 6, 2022, as the company starts

by reporting a passage from the Bible to describe the “ecological sin” derived from the modern farming method employing fertilizers and other chemicals. They then refer to the recommendation of more recent times to eat plant-based food as it is environmentally-friendly. It is also worth mentioning, in this regard, that many Instagram posts are part of a series of posts called “Gino, Food and Philosophy”, as they also report Gino’s thoughts. Recently, the choice of the new eco-friendly packaging for Girolomoni pasta products reporting a brief aphorism by the founder has been another way of communicating his thoughts on organic products, thus reinforcing the appeal of environmental protection that can be deemed to contribute to the consistency of Girolomoni communication with the Japanese culture since, as de Mooij (2018) underlines, harmony with both nature and fellow humans actually reflects a popular appeal in Asian advertising. Indeed, the configuration of cultures that are both long-term oriented and collectivistic (like Japan) requires communicating this kind of harmony, which also explains an advertising style intended to please the consumer and not to intrude. Other appeals reflecting collectivism and long-term orientation emerged from this analysis. Regarding the former cultural dimension, also the motto itself highlighted at the end of the abovementioned video interview, “Love, Food, Peace” (which is in fact the pay-off of the Japanese local distributor) conveys a message of harmony among people. Also, Japanese advertisements often recommend Girolomoni products as a gift or small present; this concept of sharing, typical of collectivism,

is also included in the message written inside the thought bubble of **Figure 4.8** which reads “*Great deal! Recommended as a gift.*” Here below, a part of another Instagram post (dated December 5, 2022) refers to Gino’s “philosophy” by mentioning some sentences highly consistent with the collectivistic dimension of the Japanese culture:

食べるということは贈り物なのだ。 *Eating is a gift (present from God).*

食べるということは霊的なことでもあるのだ。 *Eating is a spiritual matter.*

仲間とともにいるということなのだ。 *Eating is staying together with friends.*

食べる人のもとに幸せを運ぶ。 *Food brings happiness to the people who eat it.*

ジロロモーニの名を冠した食品には全て、そんな思いがこめられているのです。 *All the food having the registered mark of “Girolomoni” is produced following these ideas generated by his philosophy.*

Some of the recurrent appeals emerging from the analysis are consistent with the long-term orientated culture of this country, such as the emphasis on future generations, a sustainable future and continuity. For example, the message “*this philosophy of Gino Girolomoni will last forever. Beyond time*” taken from the abovementioned Instagram post of December 7, 2022, seems to highlight the continuity of the founder’s thoughts over time, also in the future.

Motives reflecting high masculinity in Girolomoni communication include references to the dream of the founder in sentences like “*although this is still far away from Gino’s ideal happy world, lately his dream is coming true little by little*”. According to de Mooij (2018), masculinity can also explain appeals like

great expectations or the idea that as long as one tries hard they can succeed, that can be found in some extracts taken from the previously mentioned advertisement of **Figure 4.7** in the Appendix: “*all this kind of fantastic and ideal environment had been created by the late Mr. Gino Girolomoni who was called ‘The father of the Italian organic farming’ ... They are a small local food manufacturer. However, their big project has been implemented. This success has been brought about by their nonstop, never-giving up and struggling spirit based on strong belief”.*

Other important appeals that may be related to this cultural dimension are the success of the brand along with the fact that Girolomoni, and especially its founder, is a pioneer or the *father* of organic farming and food products. These two words, as well as the terms *philosopher* and *warrior* are used in the promotion of the brand when referring to the founder, possibly highlighting his efforts and commitment in fighting for his beliefs. Actually, this emphasis on the pioneering spirit and success of Girolomoni may be better explained by the combination of masculinity and high power distance, in line with the Japanese culture. Indeed, in cultures scoring high in these two dimensions, both success and social position are drivers for status appeals in advertising (de Mooij, 2018). Indeed, this may help provide a possible interpretation of the figure of Gino Girolomoni as a major and predominant appeal, mentioned in most of the advertisements by quoting his thoughts or reporting his life, achievements and success. He is also visually depicted, through pictures and in the form of cartoon

character as previously described, in print and online communication and even displayed in some stores next to Girolomoni products. At the same time, as previously described, this major appeal may also be intended to build a trusting connection with the consumer and to induce positive feelings toward the brand and the good causes behind the production and selling of Girolomoni products.

The importance of trust may also be explained by the strong uncertainty avoidance characterizing the Japanese culture, a cultural dimension reflected in appeals frequently used in Girolomoni communication in this country, such as purity of the food and freshness of the raw materials, traceability, safety as well as emotions, as shown in some parts taken from the body text of the marketing material of **Figure 4.7** which reads “*as you can imagine, this environment, surrounded by pure nature which creates fresh air and water, would be very useful to produce high-quality and tasty pasta which differs a lot from the normal industrial one. ... dried under lower temperature and taking enough time not to lose the original nutrition and taste. ... they have finally established the traceability indicating ‘Safe and Secure food’ ”. In general, most of the print and online promotion includes detailed descriptions and explanations (even regarding for example the components of a grain) mainly focused on the production of pasta and its physical characteristics, possibly used to avoid uncertainty and reassure consumers about the quality of Girolomoni products, thus better fitting strong uncertainty avoidance cultures. In this regard, in the case of Girolomoni*

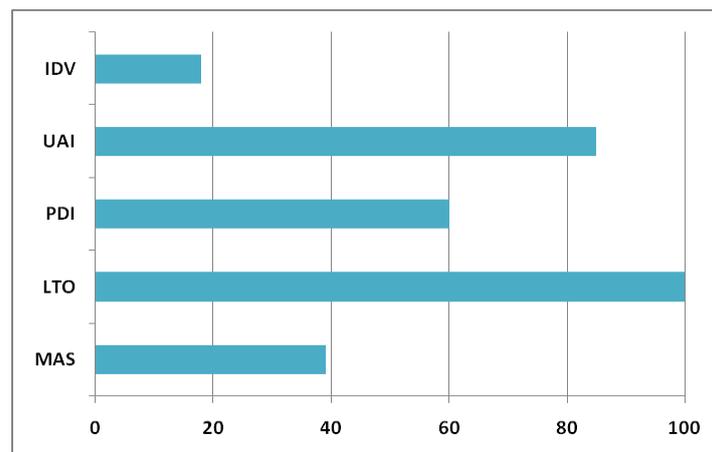
promotion in Japan, the benefits related to human health deriving from organic farming and products seem to more intended to address the need for reassurance and demonstrations of uncertainty avoidance cultures rather than emphasizing individual benefits as it would probably more common in individualistic cultures. The country-of-origin appeal can also be found as the communication sometimes makes references to Italy; Italian flags may also be found next to Girolomoni products in Japanese stores (see **Figure 4.9** in the Appendix) and this may be interpreted as a way to both capture the visual attention of the customers and let them know that these food products are from Italy. However, the figure of the founder Gino Girolomoni and his view on organic products seem to be more highlighted in the marketing communication relative to the brand's country of origin. In this regard, it is also worth mentioning that the Japanese importer, thanks to whom Girolomoni could start exporting its organic products in Japan, stated that he first met Gino Girolomoni and then, after learning his view on the "organic philosophy", he decided to import Girolomoni products. Moreover, their promotional activities include tasting events (inviting the stores' buyers or organizing the events directly in the stores), which are deemed to be very effective as they allow for building customer loyalty. They affirm that during these events, it is important to communicate not only the quality of the product but also the philosophy of the Girolomoni Cooperative, along with introducing the people working in the company. This kind of marketing activities can be considered

consistent with the need for building relationships and trust on which Japanese advertising is based (de Mooij, 2018), considering the collectivistic, long-term oriented and high-context nature of this culture.

#### 4.2.4 South Korea

##### 4.2.4.1 Description of the national cultural dimensions

If there is a cultural dimension in which South Korea clearly scores very high, this would probably be LTO (100), as can be seen from **Figure 4.10**.



**Figure 4.10** Bar chart showing South Korea's scores in Hofstede's dimensions of national culture.

Source: Hofstede Insights, n.d.

Moreover, it can be deemed to be both collectivistic and feminine considering its low scores of 18 in IDV and 39 in MAS. A very high score can be found in UAI (85), thus making South Korea a rather strong uncertainty avoidance national culture. As far as power distance is concerned, with a score of 60 "South Korea is a

slightly hierarchical society” (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). In line with the table of **Figure 2.4**, Koreans seem to have a high-context culture; the deeply-rooted Confucian values shared by South Korean people include the use of indistinct high-context communication (Merkin, 2009).

#### 4.2.4.2 Analysis of the communication

##### *Communication styles and forms*

The analysis of Girolomoni promotion addressed to the South Korean market was mainly conducted on the online communication of the local distributor, namely website (<https://hopelife.co.kr>) and social networks (i.e. Instagram profile: [https://www.instagram.com/hopelife\\_korea/](https://www.instagram.com/hopelife_korea/)), as well as on the packaging used to distribute Girolomoni products throughout the country<sup>8</sup>. One of the main characteristics resulting from the analysis is the extensive use of pictures and visual elements, being particularly evident both in the website and packaging. As to the website, by clicking on the product, a long visual-heavy page opens including descriptions and pictures ranging from Girolomoni packs of pasta, pasta served in a dish to the Monastery of Montebello, the founder, the wheat harvest, the Italian company factory, along with a series of pictures showing the step-by-

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<sup>8</sup> The parts of quoted text *in italics* reported in paragraph 4.2.4.2., taken from the abovementioned website and Instagram profile of Girolomoni’s Korean local distributor, were first translated from Korean into Italian by Narae Lee and then from Italian into English by Matteo Bugiolacchi. Conversely, the parts of quoted text already written in English on the packaging are not reported in italics, since they were not translated.

step guide on how to cook pasta. Also, thought bubbles are added to report some reviews. Unlike the packaging used for Italy and other countries, the one used for Girolomoni food products in the South Korean market is characterized by a colored rather than a white background and also highlights the writing “certified organic” within a green box, as illustrated in **Figure 4.11** in the Appendix. The importance attributed to visual communication for Girolomoni promotion in South Korea is also confirmed by the answers to the questionnaire provided by the local distributor who, with reference to the factors on which their marketing communication strategies and activities are based, mentioned that the beautiful packaging reporting the picture of the founder helps promote the brand. This aspect of the communication style may be deemed to be consistent with the South Korean culture, being high-context, collectivistic and long-term oriented. As previously mentioned in this thesis, high-context cultures tend to be more frequently associated with an emotional rather than a rational and informative communication style. An example that one can read on the packaging (under “our story”) can be reported: “Girolomoni is the story of a man who brought his deep love and respect for nature and humankind into his everyday life and work, leaving behind him a mark that will continue into the next generation. A true love for the land is the essence of Girolomoni organic products, grown by a small cooperative of family farms that has been promoting sustainable living for over 40 years”.

In addition, the packaging highlights a quotation, a thought by the founder Gino Girolomoni, written in a different color as compared to the rest and dealing with the connection between natural elements, human labor and the soul and arts. However, based on the material analyzed, most of the promotional messages used in the communication may be deemed to reflect more a low-context than a high-context style, in that they seem to be rather direct and explicit mainly providing information and facts. Some significant examples are reflected in the parts taken from the posts of the local distributor's Instagram profile reported here below:

지롤로모니 스파게티는 직접 재배한 유기농 듀럼밀에 이탈리아 전통의 브론즈 방식으로 면을 뽑아낸 가장 올바르고 정직하며 맛이 좋은 Made in Italy의 파스타 면입니다. 어떠한 소스를 준비해도 브론즈 방식의 오돌도돌한 표면에 잘 붙어 소스와 면의 분리를 막아줍니다. 그래서 요리 초보자들도 실패없이 파스타를 만들 수 있어요. 이번 주말에는 지롤로모니로 특별식단을 만들어 함께 즐겨보시기 바랍니다. (post dated July 29, 2022)

*“Girolomoni spaghetti are a genuine, tasty Italian product made by bronze drawing organically grown triticum durum (durum wheat), as tradition dictates. No matter what sauce you use, it will stick well to their surface thanks to the roughness achieved through bronze-drawing, which prevents the sauce from breaking. This way, even beginners can make perfect pasta. This weekend, make a special Girolomoni pastamenu and enjoy it together.”*

꼭꼭한 장마철, 불쾌지수가 배로 높아지는 오늘은 매콤하고 색다르게 펜네 아라비아타로 기분전환 해보세요. 지롤로모니의 파스타는 이탈리아 유기농의 아버지로 일컬어지는 지노 지롤로모니의 자손들이 파스타를 만들고 있어요. 직접 유기농으로 밀을 재배하고

생산까지 한 곳에서 이루어지는 진짜 Made in Italy의 제품입니다. 건강하고 맛있게 즐겨보세요!

(post dated June 29, 2022)

*“The wet season is upon us. If you're having a bad day, try cheering up with some penne all'arrabbiata. Girolomoni pasta is made by the descendants of Gino Girolomoni, a pioneer of organic farming in Italy. It is an authentic Made in Italy product made from local organic wheat only, from start to finish. Give it a go, it's healthy and delicious!”.*

수요일은 파스타

이탈리아 라찌오 지역의 정통 까르보나라는 달걀노른자, 치즈, 후추를 넣고 담백하게 만들어요! 생크림과 우유를 넣은 까르보나라에 익숙했다면 오늘은 정통으로 시도해서 고소하고 깊은 맛을 느껴보세요!

(post dated March 24, 2021)

*“Wednesday is pasta day. Carbonara, a traditional dish from the Italian region of Lazio, is made using egg yolk, cheese and pepper. If you are accustomed to making carbonara using whipped cream and milk, try the authentic recipe today for a tastier, richer flavour!”.*

In addition to explicit and rational communication, a certain degree of direct and persuasive approach may be perceived, since the messages not only provide detailed information on the product so as to inform people and persuade them to buy, but they also tend to directly address the public and make use of imperatives (e.g. *“make a special Girolomoni pastamenu and enjoy it together”*; *“give it a go, it's healthy and delicious!”*; *“try the authentic recipe today”*). In this sense, the

direct and explicit advertising which appears to characterize most of Girolomoni promotion in this country based on the whole material analyzed, may seem to reflect more a hard sell and low-context style as opposed to a high-context culture.

### *Appeal*

Along with the importance attributed to the packaging for the promotion of the Girolomoni brand in South Korea as previously mentioned, another factor on which the marketing strategy and activities are based is the fact that Girolomoni product is an organic product with heritage, as mentioned in the questionnaire by the local distributor. Indeed, the concept of organic farming and food can be both found in the online communication, such as in the social posts reported above (e.g. “*organically grown*”; “*organic farming in Italy*”, “*organic wheat only*”), and emphasized in the packaging by means of the green box on the front reporting the writing “certified organic” previously described, as well as in the detailed description placed on the back of the pack. In particular, the appeals of organic farming and environmental sustainability used in the communication are illustrated highlighting some aspects that may be better explained by both the collectivistic and feminine dimensions characterizing the Korean culture. In this regard, some examples can be found in the body text of the packaging under the sections “our story” (see above in this paragraph) and “our values”, and can be

deemed to be consistent with the Korean culture in terms of collectivism, femininity and long-term orientation, as illustrated hereunder:

- collectivism can be mainly reflected in the appeal of community, by promoting “the use of a sustainable lifestyle” and “sustainable living for over 40 years”, but also in the appeal of society development by underlying that Girolomoni “has been playing an important role in the development of the local economy”;

- femininity can be mainly found, for example, in concepts like cooperation, the small, love, caring also for the weak or those in difficulty, in sentences like “interacts constantly with all its stakeholders”, “a man who brought his deep love and respect for nature and humankind”, “grown by a small cooperative of family farms”, “it has allowed farmers to return to work and to move back into old, previously abandoned, farmhouses”;

- long-term orientation is mainly reflected in the emphasis on continuity, future generations and harmony with nature and fellow humans that, as already mentioned, is a popular appeal in Asian advertising mostly involving long-term orientation and collectivism. Some examples can be “inspired by a profound love for the land, enormous respect for the planet and its inhabitants”; “leaving behind him a mark that will continue into the next generation”.

It is also worth underlying that some of the appeals may be explained by more than one of the three cultural dimensions above characterizing the Korean culture, such as environmental protection in expressions like “deep love and respect for

nature” and “a true love for the land” as this appeal may be consistent not only with collectivism and long-term orientation, but also with femininity, as previously mentioned. The collectivistic dimension of this culture may also explain and, therefore be deemed consistent, with the presence of some reviews under Girolomoni products in the website, which are reported in thought bubbles next to the pictures of pasta dishes. The importance attributed to the reviews left by the customers as well as to the recommendation by influencers was also underlined by the local distributor when answering the question regarding the main food buying motives considered for the development of their marketing communication strategy. This aspect suggests a possible degree of consistency of Girolomoni promotion with the Korean culture, especially considering the important role that social media may play in the opinion formation in collectivistic cultures as described in Chapter 2, given that values like conformance and dependence are typically associated with collectivism (de Mooij, 2018).

However, although the communication appears to be explained more by femininity than masculinity, an appeal generally associated with masculinity does seem to be used, i.e. the fact that the brand Girolomoni and its founder represent a pioneer of Italian organic farming so as to emphasize their mastery and the fact that they were the first in this field, as reported both in the website (even underlined in orange) and in some social posts analyzed. The appeal of being a pioneer, along with the emphasis on the fact that Girolomoni products are

certified organic, may also be used in the marketing communication as a way to fulfil the need to demonstrate the manufacturer's competence of a strong uncertainty avoidance culture like South Korea. However, it is worth underlining that the analysis revealed that many of the messages contained in Girolomoni promotion (especially the one made through social posts) seem to be more focused on appeals generally associated with low uncertainty avoidance, and in a way individualism, since tastiness as resulting benefit of consuming the product is quite emphasized in the promotion. Some relevant examples in this regard are taken from the social posts reported above: "*Girolomoni spaghetti are a genuine, tasty Italian product*"; "*try the authentic recipe today for a tastier, richer flavour*"; "*give it a go, it's healthy and delicious!*".

These last two sentences also reflect a sense of urgency and short-term thinking of instant pleasure, reinforced by the use of imperative forms, that would better fit short-term oriented rather than long-term oriented cultures like South Korea, although Girolomoni communication also includes some references to continuity compatible with long-term orientation as previously described.

Many references to Italy as the country of origin of Girolomoni products are made in the communication analyzed for South Korea: "*Girolomoni spaghetti are a genuine, tasty Italian product made ... as tradition dictates*"; "*it is an authentic Made in Italy product*"; "*Carbonara, a traditional dish from the Italian region of Lazio ... try the authentic recipe*".

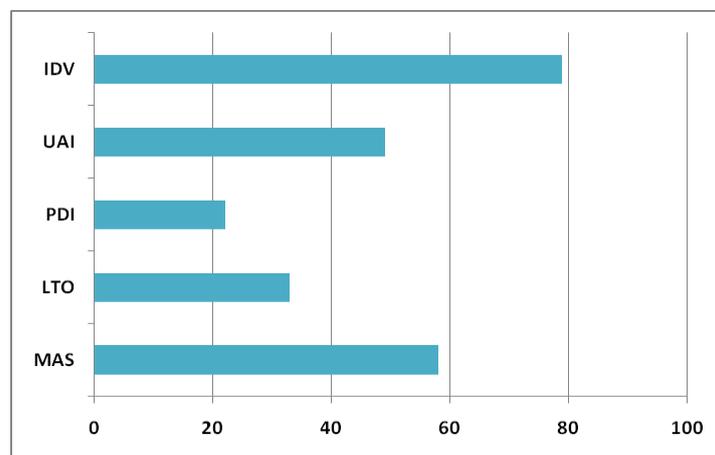
These examples suggest that the country-of-origin appeal linking Girolomoni products to Italy and its renowned reputation in the food sector (also by showing images and mentioning some typical Italian dishes) may be deemed to be used to emphasize the authenticity, tradition and tastiness of Girolomoni products. Indeed, a possible interpretation is that: on one hand, the use of the COO appeal in the promotion may be deemed consistent with the strong uncertainty avoidance of the Korean culture especially through the concept of tradition that may reassure consumers about the competence of the manufacturer and authenticity of the products; on the other hand, the emphasis on the concept of tastiness may actually better fit weak uncertainty avoidance cultures as they tend to be more result-oriented. The importance attributed to tastiness also emerges from the answers provided to the questionnaire when asking about the reasons why they decided to import food from Italy and why from Girolomoni: the local distributor said that Italian products are very popular in Korea and Girolomoni tasted really good.

#### 4.2.5 New Zealand

##### 4.2.5.1 Description of the national cultural dimensions

The highest score that New Zealand has among the various cultural dimensions is 79 in IDV, as shown in the graph chart of **Figure 4.12**. Hofstede Insights also reports 58 in MAS, thus considering this country a masculine society. The

intermediate score of 49 in UAI does not seem to show any particular preference in relation to this cultural dimension. On the other hand, the lower score in LTO (33) suggests that this national culture is more short-term oriented. With a score of 22, New Zealand can be considered a very low power distance culture. As one can see from **Figure 2.4**, this country is also classified as a low-context culture.



**Figure 4.12** Bar chart showing New Zealand's scores in Hofstede's dimensions of national culture. Source: Hofstede Insights, n.d.

#### 4.2.5.2 Analysis of the communication

##### *Communication styles and forms*

Based on the material analyzed for the promotion of the Girolomoni brand in New Zealand, one can recognize some elements that are typically used to communicate and advertise in individualistic and short-term oriented cultures, thus being consistent with the New Zealand culture. As far as these elements are concerned, the analysis conducted revealed a significant level of directness and a

communication style which is mainly explicit, verbal and factual, as one can deduce from the example in **Figure 4.13**, which reports a detail from a newsletter of Girolomoni's local distributor in New Zealand (website: <https://sabato.co.nz/>).



### Hi Claudia,

Farro, is truly an ancient grain, originating in the Fertile Crescent, the region in the Middle East that curves in a crescent shape from the Persian Gulf, through southern Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and northern Egypt. It has been found in the tombs of Pharaohs and is rumoured to have been a staple for Roman legions on the march. Italians have also had a love affair with farro for centuries.

We have chosen pearled, [Girolomoni organic farro](#), from Italy for Sabato. The quality is outstanding, flavour is full – especially when toasted before cooking, and it maintains an al dente texture when cooked. This farro is a delicious and nutritious whole grain, easily digested and packed with fibre and vitamins.

Farro is so easy to use and it has cashew-nut notes, a satisfying chewiness and a lovely texture. We find it combines so beautifully with whatever flavour accents you choose to add to it. It is an incredibly versatile ingredient to work with – try it layered with honey-roasted stone fruit, with a smooth, heavy yoghurt spooned through the mixture at breakfast time. Farro salads can be the main event when combined with a protein like [smoked salmon](#), warm roast [chicken thighs](#), [tuna](#), [duck confit](#), [salami](#) or [cheese](#). Throw in [olives](#), [semi-dried tomatoes](#), [artichokes](#), [sliced pimientos](#), [capers](#) – your favourite flavour combinations will blend beautifully with the farro grains. Just drizzle over a generous amount of our delicious [French](#) or [Spanish dressings](#) and you are ready to serve. We also find it can be a great little add-on to a [rustic tomato-based soup](#), a braise, osso buco or lamb shanks.

If you haven't done so already, try our fabulous farro, it deserves a place in your pantry.

Enjoy!



**Figure 4.13** Detail from the New Zealand local distributor's newsletter promoting the Girolomoni brand. Source: provided by the Girolomoni Cooperative.

First of all, starting the newsletter with an informal and direct approach like “Hi Claudia” makes the message more personal, which is another typical characteristic of promotion in individualistic and short-term oriented cultures. The first

paragraph clearly indicates a communication style based on facts about the origins of the product, i.e. farro. The rest of the message contained in the newsletter can be deemed to be very explicit, in that it is easily decodable and it includes all the information and details required to understand the message, without leaving room for misunderstandings. It also reflects a concrete and rational communication as it focuses on providing information on the product (e.g. texture, taste, how it can be prepared combined with other ingredients), also detailing concrete and physical features. All the abovementioned aspects, along with the predominance of an explicit and informative communication with quite structured contents (mostly evident in the website) as opposed to a visual-heavy multimodality approach, may be deemed consistent with the low-context nature of the New Zealand culture. Despite containing some pictures, the newsletter can be deemed to be more text-heavy. The frequent use of the first-person plural (we) as well as the imperative forms used for giving suggestions, which may be perceived more as orders, contribute to the directness of the communication style. Some examples are expressions like “try it layered with honey” or “try our fabulous farro, it deserves a place in your pantry”, which also suggest a certain level of persuasiveness, consistent with individualistic and short-term oriented cultures like New Zealand. Moreover, at the end of the newsletters analyzed, there is a list of Girolomoni products, showing the related picture, name, price and the highlighted writing “Buy Now”, which possibly suggests a hard-sell approach generally associated

with low-context cultures. Also the communication in the social media appears to be very direct, informal and personal, usually asking direct questions and giving suggestions of dishes prepared directly by them using Girolomoni products. An example can be the message included in the Instagram post dated August 19, 2022 taken from the Instagram profile of the New Zealand local distributor (<https://www.instagram.com/sabatonz/>): “Planning a weekend lunch? A pasta salad is a wonderful quick, easy and tasty go to. Here we’ve used Girolomoni organic wholemeal fusilli as a base, with roasted beetroot...”.

Despite the promotion of the Girolomoni brand in New Zealand can be deemed to be compatible in terms of communication style with an individualistic, short-term oriented and low-context culture, the message contained in the newsletter of the New Zealand local distributor reported in **Figure 4.14** reflects a slightly lower degree of hard-sell approach with respect to the previous newsletter, as it does not create the same level of urgency. Indeed, apart from the expression “Buy Now” placed under each Girolomoni product shown below the message as previously described, it does not use imperatives or call-to-action making pressure on consumers.

Hi ,

Don't panic, when you can't see the familiar [Girolomoni](#) cellophane packaging you have come to know as a staple on our shelves. Instead, you will discover their new recyclable white paper packaging purposefully designed to be much more environmentally friendly than its predecessor. This will come as no surprise given Girolomoni's commitment to the best organic pasta and sustainable practices.

The Girolomoni Italian pasta journey starts with the finest quality wheat and to ensure this is a controlled supply chain, a long-standing relationship has been forged with wheat farmers whose harvest is certified as completely organic. The crop is then sent to Girolomoni's own purpose-built, small cylinder mill, where it is carefully ground into semolina. From here, it is piped directly into Girolomoni's pasta plant, mixed with hillside spring water, and extruded through a variety of metal dies, according to each variety of pasta. Everything then rests for between 7-12 hours at 65 degrees, accordingly to variety, to preserve the maximum levels of nutrition, and to retain the best flavour and aromas of the wheat.

Girolomoni offer their fabulous pasta with both rough and smooth finishes, so you can choose the one best suited to the dish you are going to cook. The rough extrusion creates a more porous home-style pasta with a matt surface, while its regular ridges are a great repository for a delicious [Sabato pasta sauce](#). We find Girolomoni's smooth extrusion offers a smoother, shinier surface, perfect for simpler sauces that adhere readily to the pasta. We love to present Girolomoni pasta throughout the year, it is an amazing hero ingredient for all seasons – served piping hot in autumn and winter, warm in the spring and at room temperature over the summer. Girolomoni pasta varieties pair so beautifully with so many flavour accents, complement so many other ingredients and offer such scope for family feasts and larger-scale entertaining. You will find some wonderful [pasta recipe](#) inspiration on our website!

Cheers,

**Figure 4.14** Detail from the New Zealand local distributor's newsletter promoting the Girolomoni brand. Source: provided by the Girolomoni Cooperative.

### *Appeal*

From the same material analyzed in regard to the communication style in the previous paragraph, it is also possible to identify some recurrent appeals used for the promotion of the Girolomoni brand in New Zealand. Also according to the answers collected from the questionnaire, the factors on which the communication strategy is mainly based are the fact that Girolomoni products are organic, the quality of pasta and tastiness. It also refers to the diverse range of products (including standard wholewheat, semi wholewheat, farro and barley) as well as

recyclable packaging and co-operative with sustainable environmental practices. Then, history of the brand was also mentioned. Moreover, regarding the food buying motives considered to establish this communication marketing strategy, the New Zealand local distributor pointed out that customers look for healthy, organic, delicious and versatile pasta and grains. The producer/company is also an important element. Therefore, the fact that Girolomoni food products are organic seems to be emphasized more in relation to health and tastiness, which may be deemed to be the most important appeals in Girolomoni promotion in New Zealand, as emerged from both the answers provided to the questionnaire and the material analyzed. This appears to be in line with the fact that individualism is associated with the pursuit of individual benefits including health outcomes and with First and Brozina (2009)'s findings by which individualism correlates with health protection as a motive for organic food consumption, as previously mentioned in the paragraph dealing with the communication analysis of Girolomoni in Italy. Individualism can also help explain the use of a direct language employing "you" or "we" by means of which the communication is intended to address the public in a rather direct and personalized way, considered a common denominator of all the material analyzed for the promotion of the Girolomoni brand in New Zealand. Other aspects that may make the promotion more consistent with an individualistic culture like New Zealand include: the emphasis on the wide range and versatility of Girolomoni products, which may

reflect the need for variety and differentiation from others, values characterizing individualism (de Mooij, 2018); the signature reporting name and surname of the sender found at the end of the newsletters.

However, it is worth mentioning that although benefits related to the consumption of Girolomoni products are clearly and explicitly described thus resulting rather consistent with the low-context nature of the New Zealand culture, most frequently the benefits are not illustrated in strict relation to the individual like in the message “farro is so easy to use and it has cashew-nut notes, a satisfying chewiness and a lovely texture” from the newsletter in **Figure 4.13**. Moreover, instead of using the appeal of enjoying eating alone that would possibly better fit a culture scoring high in individualism like New Zealand (and Australia), the communication used for the newsletter of **Figure 4.14** underlines the fact that Girolomoni pasta varieties can be enjoyed with other people: “Girolomoni pasta varieties offer such scope for family feasts and larger-scale entertaining”.

On the other hand, the combination of individualism and masculinity, which tends to lead “to the strong need to win, to be successful and show it” with expressions like “being first” or “being the best” (de Mooij, 2018, p.369), may explain the use of hyperbolic expressions and a persuasiveness approach, also based on comparative advertising that reflects competitiveness. A clear example can be found in the title of the newsletter of **Figure 4.14** “Girolomoni organic pasta – simply the best!” and in the body text that reads “this will come as no surprise

given Girolomoni's commitment to the best organic pasta" and "it is an amazing hero ingredient for all seasons". Moreover, sentences like "in the world of organic pasta production, patience is everything", "patiently however, Gino began to promote initiatives hoping to provide the region with a sustainable economy using traditional organic farming methods", which can be read in the website, may be deemed to refer to dreams and to the idea that you need to try hard to reach your goals, typical expressions of masculinity as mentioned in Chapter 2. The extensive use of words such as *exceptional quality*, *absolutely delicious*, *outstanding* (mainly referred to quality) may contribute to this aspect. In general, the promotion of the Girolomoni brand in New Zealand seems to be more focused on the result deriving from the consumption of Girolomoni products, i.e. the fact they are tasty, and also versatile and digested, thus reflecting low uncertainty avoidance. There are also references to the high quality of Girolomoni food products. Some examples can be found in the following messages: "we have chosen pearled, Girolomoni organic farro ... The quality is outstanding, flavour is full – especially when toasted before cooking, and it maintains an al dente texture when cooked. This farro is a delicious and nutritious whole grain, easily digested and packed with fibre and vitamins" (from **Figure 4.13**); "Girolomoni pasta varieties pair so beautifully with so many flavour accents" (newsletter in **Figure 4.14**). In addition, from a visual point of view, most of the pictures inserted in the

communication depict dishes, meals with Girolomoni products already prepared and ready to serve, as shown in **Figure 4.15**.



**Figure 4.15** Picture accompanying the newsletter of Figure 4.13.

Humoristic expressions are sometimes used, thus being compatible with low uncertainty avoidance cultures, such as in the newsletter of **Figure 4.14** “don’t panic, when you can’t see the familiar Girolomoni cellophane packaging you have come to know as a staple on our shelves”.

However, some elements most frequently associated with high uncertainty avoidance cultures were also identified in the analysis. For example, some technical details, mainly referred to the production process of Girolomoni products and the controlled and certified organic nature of their products, are added in the newsletter of **Figure 4.14**:

to ensure this is a controlled supply chain, a long-standing relationship has been forged with wheat farmers whose harvest is certified as completely organic. The crop is then sent to Girolomoni's own purpose-built, small cylinder mill, where it is carefully ground into semolina. From here, it is piped directly into Girolomoni's pasta plant, mixed with hillside spring water, and extruded through a variety of metal dies, according to each variety of pasta. Everything then rests for between 7-12 hours at 65 degrees ... to preserve the maximum levels of nutrition, and to retain the best flavour and aromas of the wheat.

This kind of appeals may be used to highlight the competence of the manufacturer and the quality of the products. This not well defined preference in regard to uncertainty avoidance for the promotion of Girolomoni products in New Zealand may actually find a possible explanation in the fact this national culture is characterized by an intermediate score (49) on this dimension, which therefore does not show a preference (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

Messages like “buy now”, “just drizzle over a generous amount of our delicious French or Spanish dressings and you are ready to serve”, “if you haven't done so already, try our fabulous farro” (newsletter in **Figure 4.13**), “a pasta salad is a wonderful quick, easy and tasty to go” (abovementioned Instagram post dated August 19, 2022), may be deemed consistent with the short-term orientation

characterizing this culture. Among the reasons why they decided to import Girolomoni products, the local distributor mentioned the fact that the growth in demand for organic products led them look for a premium, sustainable pasta and grain range from a co-operative having control over the entire process and having a concern for the environment. As previously mentioned, the recyclable packaging and sustainable environmental practices are part of the factors on which Girolomoni communication strategy is based in New Zealand, and are reflected in sentences like “you will discover their new recyclable white paper packaging purposefully designed to be much more environmentally friendly than its predecessor. This will come as no surprise given Girolomoni’s commitment to the best organic pasta and sustainable practices” (newsletter in **Figure 4.14**). Indeed not only is the packaging recyclable, but it also reports the writing “certified organic” in plain view, contained in a green box (for details see **Figure 4.16** in the Appendix), so as to strongly emphasize the organic nature of Girolomoni food products and environment-friendly practices.

The country-of-origin appeal is used highlighting the fact that Girolomoni is an Italian brand and Girolomoni products come from Italy, even using linguistic expressions linked to Italian cooking written in the Italian language, such as in the following examples: “a slightly thicker noodle than traditional spaghetti, Girolomoni spaghettoni is a long durum wheat pasta is made in Italy” (as one can read in the website); “the Girolomoni Italian pasta journey” (newsletter in **Figure**

4.14); “Italians have also had a love affair with farro for centuries. We have chosen pearled, Girolomoni organic farro, from Italy ... it maintains an *al dente* texture when cooked” (newsletter in **Figure 4.13**). In addition to *al dente*, also the Italian term *osso buco* was used in the same newsletter.

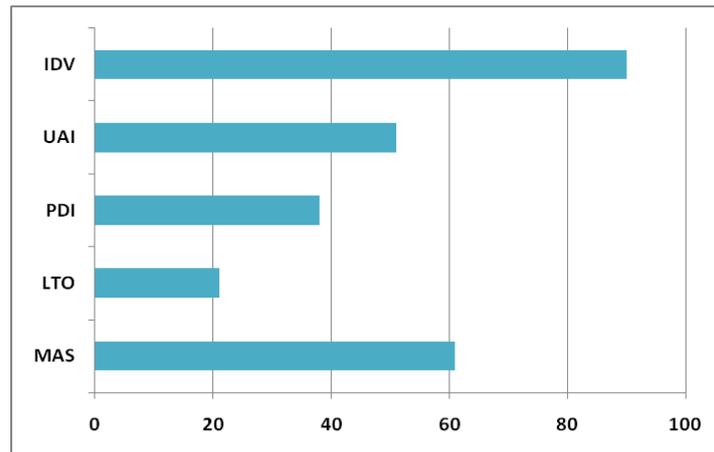
The emphasis and importance attributed to the connection between Girolomoni food products and Italy emerges not only from Girolomoni communication analysis, but also from the questionnaire answered by the New Zealand local distributor. Indeed, the fact that Girolomoni brand and products are made in Italy and premium organic were the aspects mentioned to describe the brand image and positioning in the country. Moreover, the local distributor’s emphasis was defined to be on quality products from Italy and Spain, preferring smaller and less industrial suppliers. In this sense, the COO appeal may be used to link Girolomoni food products with the high quality generally attributed to Italian food.

## 4.2.6 Australia

### 4.2.6.1 Description of the national cultural dimensions

As shown in the graph chart of **Figure 4.17**, Australia’s score of 90 in IDV is even higher than the one attributed to New Zealand, thus making Australia a highly individualistic culture. While it scores a quite intermediate 51 in UAI, Australia shows low scores both in LTO (21) and PDI (38), suggesting that this

national culture is more short-term oriented and low-power distance. With a score of 61 in MAS, Australia can be considered a masculine culture. Moreover, according to **Figure 2.4**, this country is also classified as a low-context culture.



**Figure 4.17** Bar chart showing Australia's scores in Hofstede's dimensions of national culture.  
Source: Hofstede Insights, n.d.

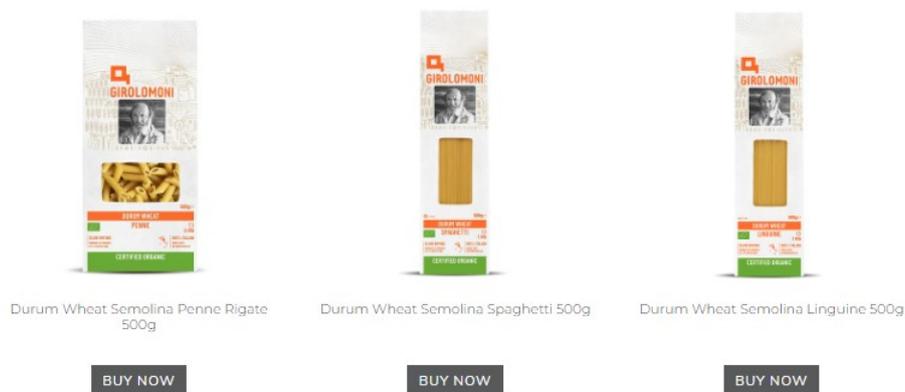
#### 4.2.6.2 Analysis of the communication

##### *Communication styles and forms*

Although the material analyzed on the promotion of the Girolomoni brand in Australia did not include the questionnaire, some elements characterizing Girolomoni marketing communication in Australia may be deduced and associated with some cultural dimensions. The 2020 marketing activity report shared by the Australian local distributor was helpful in this regard. The B2B website of the local distributor (<https://www.biolving.com.au/>) seems to be one of the most intuitive and user-friendly websites among those analyzed for the

promotion of the Girolomoni brand in the international markets taken into consideration, in that the website orientation appears to be quite explicit and quick. This may be explained by the low-context nature of the Australian culture that makes the style of the website direct and informative. Indeed, each of the sections on which the user can click in the homepage (under the brand name of the local distributor) leads to some lists of products and to the information provided for each of them. The dominant low-context style of the online communication by the Australian distributor actually reflects a rational and text-heavy communication without giving a visual-heavy impact on the public; moreover contents seem to be quite structured, mainly providing information on the product. This low-context style goes together with some elements typical of monochronic time-oriented cultures emerged from the analysis: to facilitate the search for products, the website allows the user to enter different sections in order to buy according to different categories, for example “all products”, “new products” or “by diet”; the user can also add filters and search for products according to three simple criteria, namely brand, category and diet. This explicit navigation support does not only reflect the need for quick orientation and an ordered structure to follow, but it also contributes to a direct and explicit approach of the advertising style thus being highly consistent with the Australian national culture. Another element that may be considered consistent with this culture is the fact that within any product category, the list of products reports the writing

“BUY NOW” under each product, as shown in **Figure 4.18**. The strategy used seems to resemble a hard sell approach, generally prevailing in low-context cultures as previously described, in this thesis. Indeed, it seems intended to persuade the consumer to immediately purchase the product, mainly providing product features and benefits and including a call-to-action.



**Figure 4.18** Detail taken from the website of Girolomoni’s local distributor in Australia.

Source: <https://www.bioliving.com.au/>

Although it includes visual elements and pictures, a similar prevailing explicit and hard sell approach can be found in print advertising, namely in catalogs, which seem to play an important role in the promotion of Girolomoni in Australia; according to the 2020 marketing activity report, the local distributor’s catalog is read by more than 2000 stores in the country and it offers an effective sales tool as it includes scannable product barcodes for easy ordering thus facilitating instant purchase. The direct communication style can also be observed by analyzing the social networks: parts of text taken from some posts of the Australian distributor’s

Instagram profile ([https://www.instagram.com/bioliving\\_australia/](https://www.instagram.com/bioliving_australia/)) are reported hereunder. Apart from the frequent use of *you*, there are expressions directly addressing the audience, like “have you tried our NEW Durum Wheat Risoni from @ginogiolomoni?” (Instagram post dated April 1, 2022). Moreover, most of the messages are quite short and go straight to the point using a direct, persuasive and personal style, typical features of a communication style used in low-context and individualistic cultures. Providing information and facts on the product can be considered one of the most important elements characterizing Girolomoni both print and online communication in Australia; hereunder one of the most significant examples is reported in this regard, in which the products’ characteristics seem to be listed in a sort of bullet-point form: “directly from Italy, these pastas are made using ancient varieties of wheat and grains. Organic, preservative free and suitable for vegans” (Instagram post dated July 28, 2019). The consistency of this aspect of the communication style with the Australian culture seems to be supported by the fact that individualistic and uncertainty-tolerant contexts favor informativeness, shown through the communication of facts, and prefer rational over emotional appeals (Theocharous, 2015). Indeed, the role of information in advertising is more important in countries with a cultural configuration of individualism, low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance, mostly typical of countries of Northwest Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world in which individuals consciously search for information (de Mooij, 2018).

### *Appeal*

Most of the appeals emerging from the analysis of Girolomoni promotion in Australia may be explained by both individualism and masculinity, two Hofstede's cultural dimensions in which Australia scores quite high. In particular, there is more emphasis on individuals benefits (or benefits for members of the family) and no specific reference to eating together can be deemed to be highlighted in the communication based on the material analyzed. Some examples are reported: "Girolomoni pasta will make you feel like you've eaten in a small Italian village" (abovementioned Instagram post dated July 28, 2019); "consumers want a better diet, families want the best nutrition for their kids" (from the ad of **Figure 4.19** in the Appendix); "Girolomoni's premium range of organic pasta will make meal times feel like you're eating in a small Italian village" (from the ad in **Figure 4.20** in the Appendix). Another argument used in the communication that may find a possible explanation in the individualistic nature of this national culture is the fact that Girolomoni offers a wide range of products from which people are free to choose, thus addressing the need for differentiation and variety of individualism, as previously mentioned. An example can be found in the ad of **Figure 4.20**: "Girolomoni offers a wide variety of certified organic pasta including organic durum wheat, spelt, wholemeal and khorasan varieties. ... the offer is endless".

However, the most frequently used appeals for Girolomoni promotion in Australia resulting from the analysis may be better explained by masculinity and, more specifically by the combination of individualism and masculinity which, as previously described, is associated with the strong need to win and show the fact that one is successful. This concept is largely emphasized in both print and online communication, also making an extensive use of hyperboles thus highlighting a rather competitive approach. For example, from the ad in **Figure 4.19** one can read “one of the most consumed foods in the world” (referring to pasta) and “one of the best traditional organic pasta brands in the market” (referring to Girolomoni); the title of the ad in **Figure 4.20** reports “One of the finest Italian organic pasta manufacturers in the world”. The term *premium* is also largely employed when referring to Girolomoni’s range of organic pasta so as to emphasize the high quality of Girolomoni products. The appeal of win and competition was strongly emphasized also through a web banner (in the January 2020 - September 2020 online communication as reported in the 2020 marketing activity report), which reported the writing *winter winners* next to Girolomoni products, as can be seen in **Figure 4.21**.



**Figure 4.21** Detail of a web banner (January 2020 - September 2020) taken from the 2020 marketing activity report of Girolomoni’s local distributor in Australia.

Source: provided by the Girolomoni Cooperative.

The message contained in the Instagram post dated November 9, 2018 (of the abovementioned Australian distributor’s Instagram profile) is reported hereunder, since it was deemed quite representative of Girolomoni promotion in Australia as it includes some of the most frequently used appeals, including the COO appeal:

“only authentic Italian pasta makes the best pasta in the kitchen. With #girolomoni you can be sure that every Pasta dish is just like a dish from Italy!”.

Indeed, the COO appeal can be found in most of the advertisements and communication related to Girolomoni promotion in the Australian market. Given the fact that the Australian culture can be defined both individualistic and masculine based on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, the use of the COO appeal may be interpreted as a way to underline that Girolomoni pasta is the *best* because it comes from Italy, whose reputation in the food sector is renowned worldwide. Indeed, the aim of this message may be to directly assure consumers (“you can be sure”) of the high quality and tastiness of Girolomoni pasta by leveraging the fact

that it comes from Italy (“only authentic Italian”; “just like a dish from Italy”). This reputation and connection between product category (here food, more specifically pasta) and the country where the product is made (Italy) seems to be strong enough to use it in the attempt to build an effective communication aimed at persuading and convincing consumers to buy Girolomoni products. As previously explained in Chapter 2, associating a product with a country’s national image entail some sort of stereotypical images; in this case, the ad of **Figure 4.20** along with most of the social posts analyzed include sentences like “Girolomoni’s premium range of organic pasta will make meal times feel like you’re eating in a small Italian village”. The reference to a *small* Italian village can actually be defined as a recurrent image in Girolomoni promotion in Australia, that may be used to reinforce the COO appeal by leveraging a possible typical image coming to people’s minds when thinking of Italy. Another way to underline and strengthen the association between Girolomoni pasta and its country of origin in the communication is the use of emoticons; in the abovementioned Instagram post dated November 9, 2018 the emoticons showing a dish of pasta next to the Italian flag were added at the end of the message.

The call-to-action expression *buy now* already mentioned in relation to the low-context and hard sell approach of the communication style used for Girolomoni promotion in Australia can also be explained by the very low score of Australian culture in the long-term orientation dimension. This is reflected in the sense of

urgency that can be perceived from the ad of **Figure 4.19**: “shop these organic pasta and noodle brands today”, but also in the fact that the local distributor’s database receives on a regular basis some marketing material providing information on new products, offers and promotions as well as sales incentives but also to pre or re-order existing lines. From the analysis conducted, Girolomoni communication in Australia seems to mainly reflect a weak uncertainty avoidance culture. The result orientation appeal is quite often used; most of the pictures used almost exclusively depict the pack of pasta or the pasta already cooked and ready to serve rather than the production process or the raw materials used. Moreover, the idea conveyed is providing a solution to a problem through the product, as in the following example: “treat those Sunday night blues with a hearty pasta from Girolomoni” (abovementioned Instagram post dated July 28, 2019). The quite extensive use of the term *new*, mostly frequently written in print, is another element that can be considered consistent with weak uncertainty avoidance cultures. There are, however, some elements resulting from the analysis that would be better explained by strong uncertainty avoidance, such as messages reassuring the consumer about the origin of the raw materials used for producing Girolomoni products in sentences like “we care about where the wheat you are eating comes from” (from the ad in **Figures 4.19**) or the recurrent use of the terms *certified organic*, *preservative free*, *non-GMO* both in print and online communication, often highlighted using a different font. The presence of both

strong and weak uncertainty avoidance appeals may find a possible explanation in the country's intermediate score in this cultural dimension as previously described. The emphasis on the fact that Girolomoni pasta is certified organic is also communicated through the packaging. Actually, as reported in the questionnaire answered by the Italian company, it was important for the Australian distributor to highlight the fact that the product is organic, using the color green. Indeed the packaging used for Girolomoni products in Australia is the same used for the New Zealand market, previously described, thus suggesting that both the organic characteristic of Girolomoni food and the attention for the environment may play an important role also in the promotion of the brand in this national culture. An example of the appeal of environmental sustainability can also be seen from the ad of **Figure 4.19** which reports “everyone wants to support sustainable food production to protect the environment”.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **IMPLICATIONS AND POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND FURTHER OBSERVATIONS**

The analysis conducted on Girolomoni brand communication, illustrated in the previous chapter, aimed to identify the level of consistency of the marketing communication of the Girolomoni brand adopted by the Italian company and its local distributors with the national culture of their respective countries, namely Italy, Spain, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia. Indeed, on the basis of the theoretical background provided in the first part of this thesis, and more specifically of the importance of cultural sensitivity for effective communication in international business, the cross-cultural communication analysis conducted was intended not only to study whether and how the communication of this Italian brand changed depending on the international market considered but also, and most importantly, to determine how much the promotion of this brand adopted in each country was consistent with the corresponding national culture. This was done by using the Hofstede model as a main tool to check the country's scores in the five cultural dimensions analyzed, so as to provide qualitative assessments of the consistency of the marketing promotion with the corresponding local culture not only from the point of view of the communication style, but also in terms of the concepts emphasized in each selected country.

The analysis revealed that among all the marketing communication strategies studied in relation to the Girolomoni brand, the ones addressed to the Japanese and the Australian markets seem to show the highest level of correspondence and consistency with the respective national culture. In these two countries, which are characterized by two quite different national cultures, the Girolomoni brand can be deemed to be communicated in a way that well reflects the values and in general the culture<sup>1</sup> of their consumers. Therefore, if we had to provide some general definition of the overall level of consistency of Girolomoni brand communication with each local culture analyzed, we could for example identify three main levels such as *high*, *intermediate* and *low*. Then, on the basis of the analysis illustrated in the previous chapter, the category of high level of consistency would probably encompass both the Japanese and Australian promotion, whereas the promotion of the Girolomoni brand for Italy, New Zealand and Spain could probably fall within an intermediate level. Regarding the case of South Korea, the promotion for the Italian brand may possibly be better identified with a low level of consistency with the local culture.

When analyzing the level of congruence of Girolomoni promotion with the local cultures selected, it is worth considering that, as previously mentioned, while the marketing communication for the Girolomoni brand in Italy is managed by the

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<sup>1</sup> The terms *culture* and *local culture* are used hereto to refer to national culture, as previously described in this thesis especially in relation to the Hofstede model.

Italian Cooperative, the international promotion of this same brand is formulated differently across countries since the marketing communication for each foreign market is directly managed by Girolomoni's local distributors.

The interpretation of the various aspects emerging from the communication analysis of the Girolomoni brand, and therefore of the consistency determined on the basis of the available material, led to some findings already discussed in detail during the analysis that are summarized hereunder.

### *Japan*

Regarding the Girolomoni promotion in Japan, a very high level of consistency could be identified not only in terms of communication style and forms but also in the appeals leveraged to promote the brand in this country, thus resulting in an overall high level of consistency with the local culture of this market. Indeed, the communication style and forms adopted for the brand promotion in Japan fully match the collectivistic, long-term oriented and very high-context Japanese culture: the predominance of an indirect, visual-heavy, entertaining, soft-sell and emotional style acts as a common denominator of both print and online communication, which seems to mainly focus on eliciting positive feelings toward the brand and building a trusting relationship with both the company and the brand. This last aspect is also reinforced by promotional activities like tasting events during which it is important to make people know the philosophy behind

the Girolomoni Cooperative and which are considered very effective, as confirmed by the answers to the questionnaire. Also the appeals, intended as comprehensive concepts including values and motives which define the central message (de Mooij, 2018), seem to well reflect the Japanese culture mainly in terms of collectivism, long-term orientation and uncertainty avoidance: in particular, one of the major appeals used in the promotion, i.e. environmental protection, is mainly expressed with the purpose of making consumers aware of environmental concerns and implicitly suggesting that if they choose products from organic farming they will contribute to cure the earth. This aspect can be deemed to contribute to the consistency and possible effectiveness of the communication, as it leverages the sense of community, harmony between man and the environment, sustainable future and future generations typically associated with the cultural configuration of Japan. In addition, the frequently used appeal of the figure of Gino, his life, achievements and dreams is a key aspect of Girolomoni promotion in this country which may be deemed in line with the masculinity and high power distance dimensions of this culture.

### *Australia*

It was interesting to see the great extent to which the communication for the promotion of the same Italian brand changed for the Australian market, in which different communication style and forms are used and different appeals stressed

relative to those identified for Japan, in such a way that better fits an individualistic, masculine, short-term and low-context culture like the Australian one. These aspects are clearly recognizable in the marketing communication analyzed for this country: the very direct, rational, explicit, personal and quite structured communication style, which goes straight to the point, seems to be intended to persuade and facilitate consumers to buy, mainly providing information on the products, highlighting more individual benefits (although environmental sustainability is also mentioned), also using a rather competitive approach and encouraging instant purchase options.

### *Italy*

As to the promotion for the Italian market, the communication may be deemed to be consistent with the Italian national culture especially from the point of view of the communication style and forms which include all elements reflecting a high-context culture like Italy (mainly visual and emotional, also using metaphors, symbols and drama form). Key elements characterizing Girolomoni promotion in Italy fit particularly well the local culture, especially in terms of high uncertainty avoidance (e.g. single and traceable supply chain, purity and freshness of the raw material used), long-term orientation (e.g. references to generations, symbolism, continuity of work and commitment in the future) and masculinity (e.g. dreams, great expectations and achievements). However, much emphasis is put on

concepts that may actually be leveraged for a more effective communication in collectivistic or feminine societies, such as the sense of community (by referring to the rural world and its people), fair cooperation, quality of life, environmental protection. At the same time, these are aspects that lie at the core of the company's values and commitment that can possibly distinguish this company from others operating in the same sector.

### *Spain*

As far as Spain is concerned, the consistency of the Girolomoni promotion with the local culture can be identified at an intermediate level both in terms of the appeals and communication style used. Indeed, the latter aspect resulted in a sort of mix between indirect and explicit approach: on one hand, the style is indirect, mainly inducing positive feelings toward the brand thus being in line with the high-context and collectivistic nature of the Spanish culture, while on the other hand, most of the material analyzed showed a communication providing explicit and background information probably better fitting low-context and individualistic cultures. As to the appeals, most of them can be deemed to well reflect Spain's scores in the Hofstede's cultural dimensions: collectivism through the emphasis on family, community society development and respect for people and the environment; femininity mainly by leveraging aspects linked to quality of life, cooperation, caring for others and the environment; short-term orientation

and power distance by stressing the link between past and present and between the Cooperative's founder and current President with terms like *father* and *son*; strong uncertainty avoidance through the extensive use of technical details and explanations. However, some elements more consistent with individualistic and masculine cultures (e.g. appeals like uniqueness and being "the best"), emerging from the analysis, may be interpreted as aspects lowering the consistency with the Spanish culture.

#### *New Zealand*

An intermediate level of consistency with the local culture may also be identified for the Girolomoni brand communication in New Zealand, which is characterized on one hand by the predominance of a personal, explicit and direct communication along with major appeals being health, tastiness and variety of products thus well matching the low-context, short-term oriented and individualistic nature of the New Zealand culture. On the other hand, part of the communication seems to show a more soft sell than a hard sell approach, product benefits tend to be expressed not in direct relation to the audience and some technical explanations (most frequently associated with quite high uncertainty avoidance cultures) were also used to promote the brand in the material analyzed.

### *South Korea*

Relative to the Girolomoni marketing communications analyzed in the selected countries, the one used in South Korea seems to show a lower level of consistency. Despite the importance attributed to visual elements and emotional communication being consistent with the high-context, collectivistic and long-term oriented nature of the South Korean culture, most of the messages used for Girolomoni promotion in the country may be deemed to be quite explicit and informative directly addressing and persuading the public to buy the product thus reflecting more a low-context and individualistic style. Moreover, although appeals like organic farming and environmental sustainability are mainly promoted by leveraging some aspects typically associated with collectivism, femininity and long-term orientation (e.g. idea of community, cooperation, love for nature and caring for other people, harmony with nature and fellow humans), these are mostly promoted through the packaging, while the online communication (more specifically social posts) seems to focus more on tastiness, which usually tends to be more emphasized in weak rather than strong uncertainty avoidance cultures like South Korea and which turned out to play a major role also for the introduction of Girolomoni products in the country. Messages highlighting instant pleasure have also been interpreted as an element lowering the level of consistency with the South Korean culture, being highly long-term oriented.

Having said that, it is also important to clarify that, the interpretation of the findings has been formulated on the basis of the material that was available for analyzing the promotion in each of the selected countries (as detailed in the previous chapter). Moreover, apart from the system of measurement or classification to choose, what is actually relevant is to find a way to identify the degree of consistency of the marketing communication used to promote the brand in a country with the corresponding local culture, that could help better understand whether and where there is room for improvement in order to communicate both brand and products more effectively in the various markets.

## **5.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE COMPANY**

What this analysis, along with the theoretical background provided in the first part of this thesis, would like to provide and leave to the Girolomoni Cooperative is a new tool and a new perspective that the company has never adopted before and which can be used as an additional assessment criterion to take into account in the development of their international business strategies. The company can rely on the Hofstede's cultural dimensions and relative scores as a base to start or deepen their knowledge of the various national cultures (they plan to approach for the first time or they have been dealing with) so as to better understand the corresponding cultural values that could be leveraged for a more effective brand

communication across countries. More specifically, the company can use the analysis conducted to:

- know in more detail how the Girolomoni brand and products are communicated in the selected countries and, therefore, which aspects are more emphasized for the Girolomoni promotion in one country relative to another, along with some reasons linked to cultural values;
- check the current degree of consistency of the Girolomoni communication with the national cultures in which the brand is present;
- consider this as a starting point to make similar analyses in the future and see whether and where there is room for improvement in order to communicate more effectively in the various markets, thus possibly contributing to achieve more successful results also in terms of sales performance.

This kind of analysis is useful not only for a company that establishes and directly manages the marketing communications both for its domestic and foreign markets, but also for a business like the Girolomoni Cooperative in which the international promotion of the brand is handled by its local distributors. Indeed, although one may expect that the marketing communication developed by a local distributor perfectly fits the national culture in which it operates, that may not necessarily be the case and the brand promotion may actually lack some level of consistency for a number of reasons of different nature. Therefore, the company can now consider to have an additional strategic tool at its disposal by which, at

least, it can reach a more comprehensive picture of the international marketing communication of its brand, which on one hand is not directly managed by the Italian company but, on the other, may play a very significant role in determining the overall brand and sales performance in the foreign markets, as described in the first part of this thesis. In this regard, by conducting this kind of analysis also in the future, the Italian company can better identify which changes to make in order to improve the communication for the Italian market and which could suggest to its local distributors. For example, it can realize whether and where its direct involvement, participation or any kind of collaboration with the local distributor may be more required for promotional initiatives in order to improve the local communication of the Girolomoni brand and achieve more effective results, based on the cultural characteristics of the various local markets.

Most importantly, it is hoped that this study could contribute to raise awareness of the important role of culture in international business and, therefore, of the possibility of adopting a higher level of cultural sensitivity to refine company strategies and boost their effectiveness. This is a very significant aspect for businesses of all industries, and even more so for those in the food sector like the Girolomoni Cooperative, especially considering the series of values and commitments that they want to communicate to consumers and that go beyond the production of pasta itself, as previously detailed.

As seen from the first chapter of this thesis, important differences exist across countries in relation to product ownership and usage, which can in part be explained by culture. According to de Mooij (2018), values have both a direct and indirect effect on product ownership and each category of product has its own cultural relationship. In the case of food, its consumption varies according to climate as well as economic, historical and cultural factors and food does carry cultural meaning. The cultural background of consumers influences the way they perceive food and culture turns out to be a key element affecting food choices and food-related attitudes and beliefs of consumers (Jeong & Lee, 2021). As Theocharous (2015) underlines, since food is a product category that favors affiliations to national culture, it is more likely to call for relevance to the cultural meaning system; food products are actually defined as the most culture-sensitive products. She also reports that in “an empirical study conducted by Zhou and Belk (2004) the use of local appeals in food adverts appears to be the respondents’ preference and increases the likeability of the copies even in the case of multinational brands” (p.1257). Passing from the more general category of food to the more specific one of organic food products, which is even more relevant for the case study of the Girolomoni brand communication, First and Brozina (2009) provide evidence that, although also education, product availability and price affect consumers’ decisions to purchase healthy food, people belonging to different cultures have different motivation on why they choose organic food and

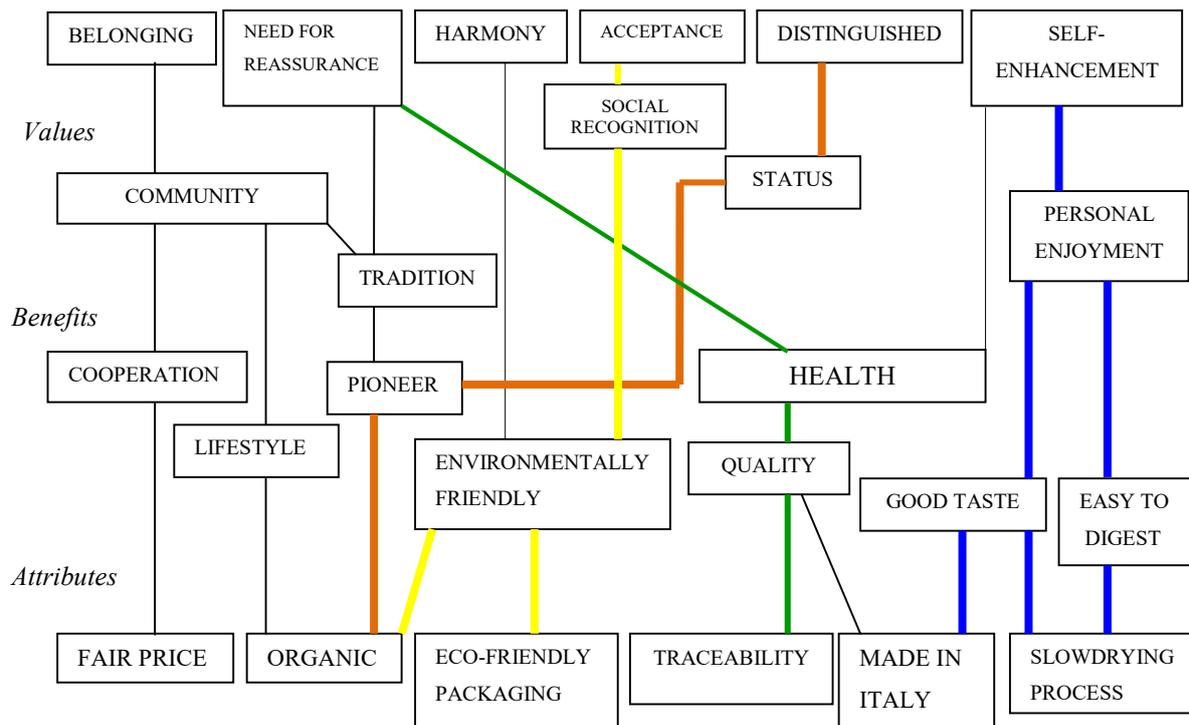
these very motives derive from basic differences among cultures. Some studies have investigated and highlighted some cultural dimensions as possible relevant determinants in this regard, some of which are briefly reported hereunder together with those already mentioned during the analysis in order to have a more clear and comprehensive overview. For example, Roseira et al. (2022) claim that among Hofstede's cultural dimensions, collectivism/individualism is considered one mostly affecting consumers' intention and behavior towards green products such as organic food. Considering that in collectivistic societies individuals tend to prioritize group goals and aim to preserve group harmony over personal needs, collectivism is thought to foster environmentally friendly behaviors, while individualism is associated with pursuing individual benefits like health outcomes. Being in line with previous literature linking collectivism with environmentally friendly behaviors, their findings show that collectivist consumers "are more prone to have positive attitude toward organic food, and to give higher importance to subjective norm, perceived price, and environmental concerns toward organic food. ... collectivist-oriented consumers are shown to be amongst the most willing ... to effectively prefer organic food instead of its alternatives" (p.14). This seems to be in line with a survey by Djekic et al. (2021) according to which individualistic cultures correlated with statements where individual choices and tastes prevail as opposed to collectivistic cultures in which food choices are influenced by tradition and principles that are socially accepted. Moreover, as

previously mentioned, First and Brozina, 2009 claim that cultures valuing more individualism consider more health protection as a motive for organic food consumption (in their study consumers from Austria, Italy, France, Germany and Great Britain put forward their own health as main motive for organic food consumption). Also, freshness and purity are appeals which are more important in uncertainty avoidance cultures as Theocharous (2015) mentions in providing a possible explanation of the higher frequency of the naturalness appeal in the Greek ads relative to the UK ads analyzed in her study. In light of the complexity of sustainable consumption, Ur Rahman et al. (2021) offer a multilevel perspective that could help marketers understand motives leading to sustainable consumption across cultures and develop advertising appeals accordingly, considering not only the individualism/collectivism dimension but also vertical–horizontal dimension, i.e. power distance (equality versus hierarchy) so as to better market products. For example, promoting sustainability in horizontal-individualistic (where horizontal refers to equality over hierarchy) cultures like Australia, Denmark and Norway should emphasize freedom, uniqueness and self-expression in advertising, whereas in vertical collectivistic countries like South Korea and Japan should leverage subjective norms regarding pro-environmental behaviors to be most effective. Moreover, as already described in the analysis, while family, tradition, community, society development, in-group benefits and harmony can be considered appeals reflecting collectivistic cultures (de Mooij,

2018; First & Brozina, 2009; Theocharous, 2015), environmental protection may also be associated with femininity (Browaeys & Price, 2011), a cultural dimension also linked to cooperation, quality of life and caring for others (Browaeys & Price, 2011; de Mooij, 2018).

Despite the fact that the Hofstede model may not be enough to have a deep knowledge of the various local cultures managers have to interact and deal with, its extensive use and popularity in the international business studies suggest that it could be a good starting point to, at least, gain some knowledge and understand how to approach a foreign market. In relation to marketing communications, Hofstede's cultural dimensions can be used to build a useful tool for designing the company's brand communication strategy, i.e. a value structure map as described in Chapter 2. **Figure 5.1** shows only an example, just to propose at least two possible routes that can be followed to build the communication of two different countries, starting from the same product attributes, passing from the various benefits deriving from the product so as to reach different values on which the company can put more emphasis in the promotion depending on the different cultures it is addressing. In light of what previously illustrated, some different possible routes can be followed to build the communication for the Girolomoni brand depending on different cultural configurations of the target country. Indeed, although the product attributes may remain the same, different end values can be

reached and leveraged according to the different cultures addressed in the communication.



**Figure 5.1** Example of Value Structure Map for Girolomoni products. In **orange**, the path showing a possible route to follow for high power distance cultures; in **yellow**, for collectivistic cultures; in **green** for strong uncertainty avoidance cultures; in **blue**, for individualistic cultures.

Source: personal elaboration from de Mooij, 2018.

For example, for a country like Italy scoring high in individualism, one of the suggested routes to follow could be the one highlighted in blue: Slow-drying process (which allows to preserve as many nutrients, flavors and aromas of the wheat as possible, as reported in Girolomoni marketing material) → Easy to digest or Good Taste → Personal Enjoyment → Self-Enhancement.

Due to its high score in uncertainty avoidance, another possible path to follow for the promotion in Italy could be Traceability (short supply chain) → Quality → Health → Need for Reassurance, which is highlighted in green.

On the other hand, a more effective communication for a collectivistic and high power distance country like South Korea may leverage the relative cultural values following a route such as the one in yellow Organic or Eco-friendly Packaging → Environmentally friendly → Social Recognition → Acceptance, or the one in orange Organic → Pioneer → Status → Distinguished.

These are just examples suggesting some possible end values to consider in the development of marketing communication strategies that could leverage cultural values of local cultures for a more effective communication of the Girolomoni brand in the foreign markets. Apart from practical suggestions to provide in relation to specific national cultures, considering Girolomoni products and philosophy, it may also be important to mention that, more in general, Ur Rahman et al. (2021) point out when congruence is reached between one's culture, motives and the appeals used, consumers are more responsive to the advertising efforts and this may be considered even more relevant today as health, a better quality of life and also clean environment are starting to be popular in many countries and many companies consider sustainability as a major aspect to focus on.

## CONCLUSION

By investigating the role of culture in the international business context, this thesis highlighted that in a globalized world of increasing interdependence of economies, people and cultures, the convergence of technology, income and media does not imply convergence of cultural values. Actually, cultural differences between countries not only seem to persist but they do appear to be stronger and cultural variables influence global business in a way that could lead to either a company's success or failure in international markets. As consumer behavior is also influenced and driven by culture, the need for culturally-sensitive management that can develop marketing strategies fitting cultural values and motives of local consumers becomes crucial to reach effectiveness in the foreign markets. Indeed, the literature review included in the first part of this thesis reports findings suggesting that when brands are identified with local cultures they perform better than others, since association with local culture positively affects the purchase intent for both global and local brands. In particular, in order to build effective communication and promotion of brands and products across countries, it is of strategic importance to adapt the message according to each local market addressed and leverage the cultural values driving purchasing decisions of consumers in the attempt to attract them. To this aim, international

marketing has the possibility to use a tool that maps and measures values of national cultures like the Hofstede model, through which one can better understand the implications of cultural differences in terms of consumer behavior and develop brand marketing communications accordingly, adapting to the cultural mind-sets of local consumers. The above provides an answer to the questions mentioned at the beginning of this thesis and serves as a basis for the second part of the study, which conveyed a more practical view of the topic through the actual adoption of a cultural approach for analyzing the Girolomoni marketing communication in different countries. Indeed, it showed how companies can apply the Hofstede model (as well as Hall's concept of high- and low-context cultures) in practical terms, so as to interpret cultural differences in communication styles, forms and appeals and assess the level of consistency with the national culture of the selected foreign markets in which Girolomoni operates. Findings have revealed that in general Girolomoni brand and products are communicated differently by local distributors across the various countries examined, emphasizing different aspects and using different communication styles and forms. Most importantly, despite the brand communication being directly managed by the distributors of each local market, different levels of consistency of the Girolomoni marketing communication with the corresponding local culture have been identified. These results, as well as those that could derive from similar analysis that the company can conduct in the future, can be used to

obtain a more comprehensive picture of the international marketing communication of this brand and understand whether and where there is room for improvement in order to communicate more effectively in the various markets, including the domestic one. An example of value structure map through which to build effective messages across cultures by leveraging different values has been included in the suggestions to the company, which is also advised to add this new perspective offered by cultural sensitivity to its toolkit as an additional criterion contributing to assess the sales performance in each foreign market. The implementation of a cultural approach seems to be relevant to reach effectiveness in international marketing not only for the Girolomoni Cooperative, as it operates in a quite culturally-sensitive industry and is driven by values going beyond the production of pasta, but also for all companies wanting to expand globally. Cultural sensitivity may help companies find answers to some aspects that sometimes may not be easily explained by numbers, but which can still play a crucial role in the pursuit of their goals in foreign markets. The fact that not even globalization, with its fast pace at which people and economies interact between different countries, has led to a convergence of cultural value systems among national cultures may seem to suggest that the path toward a complete homogenization of cultural values could be only a remote possibility also in the near future. If this is the case, cultural sensitivity is likely to remain an important strategic aspect to consider also in future relations between companies worldwide.

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As to the material used for conducting the cross-cultural marketing communication analysis of the Girolomoni brand illustrated in Chapter 4 of this thesis, most of the material was provided by the

Italian company Gino Girolomoni Cooperativa Agricola (also referred to in this thesis as: Gino Girolomoni Agricultural Cooperative, Girolomoni Cooperative or Girolomoni) and it included catalogs, leaflets, packaging, newsletters, magazine or newspaper articles as well as further marketing and promotional material of the Italian company and also of some local distributors.

As agreed with the Girolomoni Cooperative, some additional material on the basis of which the analysis was carried out was directly taken from the websites and social networks of the Italian company and its local distributors, namely:

For paragraph 4.2.1 Italy

Website: <https://girolomoni.it/>

GIROLOMONI – Official [@ginogirolomoni]. (n.d.) Posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from <https://www.instagram.com/ginogirolomoni/>

For paragraph 4.2.2 Spain

Website: <https://www.veritas.es/> ; <https://shop.veritas.es/>

Veritas [@supermercadosveritas]. (n.d.) Posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://www.instagram.com/supermercadosveritas/>

For paragraph 4.2.3 Japan

Website: <https://sokensha.co.jp/GIROLOMONI/>

【公式】ジロロモニー日本公式アカウント[@girolomoni\_japan]. (n.d.) Posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved December 12, 2022, from [https://www.instagram.com/girolomoni\\_japan/](https://www.instagram.com/girolomoni_japan/)

For paragraph 4.2.4 South Korea

Website: <https://hopelife.co.kr/>

호프라이프 코리아 [@hopelife\_korea]. (n.d.) Posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved December 12, 2022, from [https://www.instagram.com/hopelife\\_korea/](https://www.instagram.com/hopelife_korea/)

For paragraph 4.2.5 New Zealand

Website: <https://sabato.co.nz/>

Sabato [@sabatonz]. (n.d.) Posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved December 7, 2022, from <https://www.instagram.com/sabatonz/>

For paragraph 4.2.6 Australia

Website: <https://www.bioliving.com.au/>

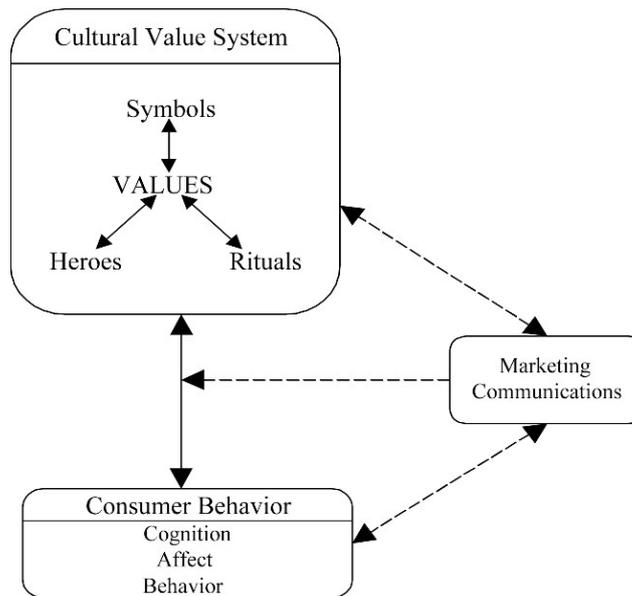
Bio Living [@bioliving\_australia]. (n.d.) Posts [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved December 7, 2022, from [https://www.instagram.com/bioliving\\_australia/](https://www.instagram.com/bioliving_australia/)

## APPENDIX

|      | Radios/1,000 pop. |                        |                    | TV sets/1,000 pop. |                        |                    | Autos/1,000 pop. |                        |
|------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------------|
|      | CV                | GNP/cap R <sup>2</sup> | IDV R <sup>2</sup> | CV                 | GNP/cap R <sup>2</sup> | IDV R <sup>2</sup> | CV               | GNP/cap R <sup>2</sup> |
| 1960 | .33               | .81                    |                    | 1.00               |                        | .37                | .56              | .80                    |
| 1970 | .24               | .69                    |                    | .30                | .61                    |                    | .34              | .82                    |
| 1980 | .36               | .58                    |                    | .24                | .55                    |                    | .23              | .69                    |
| 1990 | .35               |                        | .72                | .17                | .35                    |                    | .18              | .47                    |
| 1997 | .36               |                        | .48                | .11                | none                   |                    | .18              | none                   |

Sources: Hofstede (1997), United Nations Statistical Yearbooks

**Table 1.1** CV and R2 Values for Three Durable Products Over Time. Source: de Mooij and Hofstede (2002), p.66.

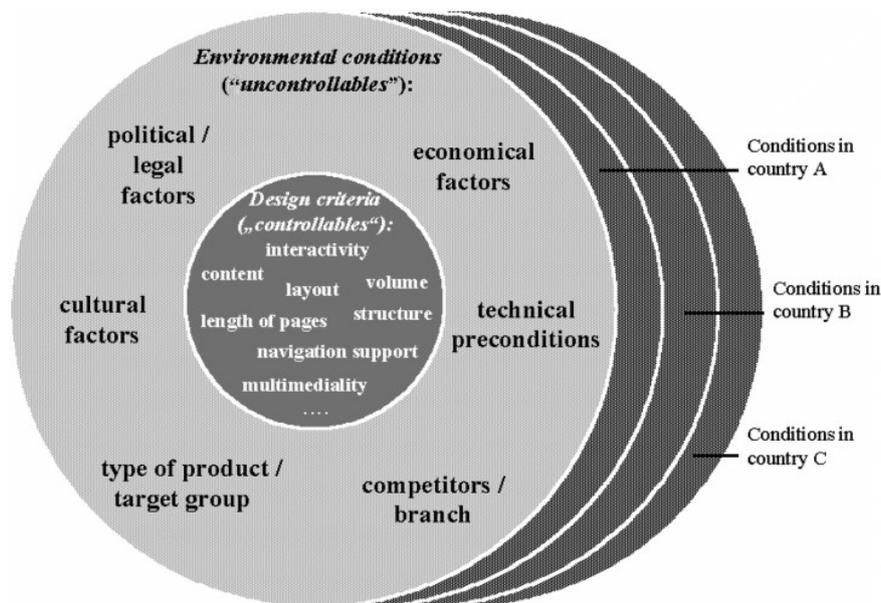


**Figure 2.2** A model of the interaction of culture and consumer behavior. Source: Luna & Gupta (2001), p.47.

|                     | Scale score | Countries                                                          | Characteristics                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Low context</b>  | 1           | Germans, Swiss, Austrians                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Message is made explicit</li> <li>• Interpretation of messages rests on the written or spoken word – focus on content</li> <li>• Seek information from a research base (reports, databases, internet, etc.)</li> </ul> |
|                     | 2           | New Zealanders, (white) South Africans                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 3           | North Americans (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant) and Canadians       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 4           | Scandinavians, Finns                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 5           | British, Australians                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 6           | Benelux people                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 7           | Other American cultures                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 8           | Slavs                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>High context</b> | 9           | Central Europeans                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpretation of messages rests on contextual cues</li> <li>• Seek information from personal information networks</li> <li>• Becoming well-informed about the facts before making a decisions</li> </ul>              |
|                     | 10          | Koreans, South East Asians                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 11          | Indians, and other Indian sub-continent                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 12          | Arabs, Africans                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 13          | Latin Americans                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 14          | Italians, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Other Mediterranean peoples |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 15          | Chinese                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                     | 16          | Japanese                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

Based on Morden, 1999; Usunier, 2000; Kotabe and Helsen, 2001.

**Figure 2.4** Low and High context countries and their characteristics. Source: van Everdingen & Waarts (2003), p.23 (modified).



**Figure 2.8** Factors influencing international Web site design. Source: Hermeking (2005), p.206.

**Fabbrica di fresatura di recente**

**Gino Girolomoni Giornale**

**有機小麦畑から商品まで 一貫生産体制を構築**

イタリア有機農業の先駆者、ジーノ・ジロロモニーの遺志を受け継ぐ、こだわりの製粉工場を新設

2019年はジーノ・ジロロモニー農業協同組合にとって大きな変革の年でした。この年の秋に稼働を開始した最新の設備を誇る製粉工場の完成により、有機小麦から商品までを一貫して賄う事が出来るようになったのです。

通常であれば小麦の栽培、製粉、パスタ加工などの工程はそれぞれの専門業者によって行われるのが一般的です。それに対して今は「ジーノ・ジロロモニー」が目指した理想の有機パスタ作りには、さらに一歩踏み込み製粉を含むすべての工程を自社で生産・管理出来るようにすることが必要だったのです。

清浄な空気や水、目指した理想の環境づくり

ジーノ・ジロロモニー農業協同組合があるイタリア中部マケ州のイゾラ・デル・ピアーノ村は、亜高気帯ではありませんが、標高500メートルの山頂周辺に位置し、組合の各施設や圃場は冬、深い雪に覆われる事が多々あります。自然に恵まれた土地に工場を建てることで得られる清浄な空気や水は、他とは違う高品質でおいしいパスタを作るのに役立っているはず。

内部に設置した異なる種類の篩、網を備える「カークリーフ」で、徹底した清潔管理で製粉し、製粉後の小麦を程の大きさによって篩選し、選別します。これにより篩選上が小麦粉の粒度をより一しやすくなり、膨らみやすいパスタに仕上げることが出来るようになります。

「Isola del Piano」

ジーノ・ジロロモニーの製粉工場から隣のバスタ工場へ、移送パイプを通してタイレクトに供給されます。製粉工場の稼働は圃場と直草を最短距離で結ぶラインを確立することであったのです。すべてはイタリア有機農業の父と呼ばれ、オリーブ栽培の普及に努めてきた故ジーノ・ジロロモニー氏が目指した理想の環境づくりによるもので、今日もその意志を継ぐ者たちによりしっかりと実を結び、大きな反響とともに世界にその輪を広げ続けています。

工場内の各フロアを貫いて稼働している伝送パイプ。選別に当たって稼働が完了した小麦粉は送り届けられ、貯蔵されます。

地方の小型機食品メーカーである彼らがこのようなプロジェクトを実現できたのは強い信念に基づいて、諦めない努力を続けてきた結果に他なりません。

食の安心安全を語る上で重要な指標となるトレイサビリティを高次元で確立するとともに、ジーノ・ジロロモニーのパスタは昔ながらのイタリアの家庭料理に合ったような豊かな味と香りを再現する事にも成功したのです。

ジロロモニーシリーズの詳細は - ホームページ [www.sokensha.co.jp](http://www.sokensha.co.jp)

**ジーノ・ジロロモニー 農業協同組合 案内図**

案内図には、原料小麦サイロ、バスタ工場、小麦粉一時貯蔵サイロ、製粉工場、風力発電、自家発電設備が示されています。

Figure 4.7 Marketing material for the promotion of the Girolomoni brand in Japan dealing with the opening of the mill in the Girolomoni factory in Italy. Source: provided by the Girolomoni Cooperative.



**Figure 4.9** Example of store display of Girolomoni products (Japan). Source: provided by the Girolomoni Cooperative.



**Figure 4.11** Examples of Girolomoni packaging: on the left, packaging used in most European countries; on the right, packaging used in South Korea. Source: <https://girolomoni.it/>; <https://hopelife.co.kr/>.



**Figure 4.16** Examples of Girolomoni packaging: on the left, packaging used in most European countries; on the right, packaging used in Australia and New Zealand.

Source: <https://girolomoni.it/>; <https://sabato.co.nz/>.



**Figure 4.19** Marketing material taken from the 2020 marketing activity report of Girolomoni's local distributor in Australia. Source: provided by the Girolomoni Cooperative.



**Figure 4.20** Marketing material taken from the 2020 marketing activity report of Girolomoni's local distributor in Australia. Source: provided by the Girolomoni Cooperative.

## Appendix A

### **Richiesta di materiale di marketing comunicativo**

Studentessa: Alice Bertozzi  
Master's Degree in International Economics and Commerce  
Università Politecnica delle Marche, Italia  
Ambito dell'analisi: Cross-cultural marketing  
Caso-studio azienda: Gino Girolomoni Cooperativa Agricola

Ai fini dell'analisi condotta per la mia tesi magistrale, chiedo gentilmente la condivisione del seguente materiale (riferito agli ultimi tre anni solo qualora possibile):

- Materiale marketing (stampato, video e foto): contenuti per sito web, social media, cataloghi, articoli in giornali e riviste, video aziendali/spot pubblicitari;
- Altre attività promozionali (per esempio: fiere, eventi, progetti e collaborazioni);
- Packaging;
- Prezzi di vendita al pubblico;
- Riconoscimenti e Certificazioni.

## **Appendix B**

### **Request for Marketing Material for Master's Thesis**

Name and surname of the student: Alice Bertozzi

Master's Degree in International Economics and Commerce

Università Politecnica delle Marche, Italy

Area of analysis: Cross-cultural marketing

Business case study: Gino Girolomoni Agricultural Cooperative

For the purposes of the analysis conducted as part of my Master's thesis, I kindly ask you to share the following material referring to Girolomoni brand and products:

- Marketing material (printed, videos and pictures): contents for website, social media, catalogues, articles in magazines, corporate videos, TV ads;
- Other promotional activities (e.g. exhibitions, events, projects, partnerships,..);
- Packaging;
- Retail price;
- Awards and Certifications.

## Appendix C

### **Questionario per analisi Tesi Magistrale**

Studentessa: Alice Bertozzi  
Master's Degree in International Economics and Commerce  
Università Politecnica delle Marche, Italia  
Ambito dell'analisi: Cross-cultural marketing  
Azienda case-study: Gino Girolomoni Cooperativa Agricola

Ai fini dell'analisi condotta per la mia tesi magistrale, chiedo gentilmente di rispondere alle seguenti domande riferite al brand e ai prodotti Girolomoni:

1. Qual è l'immagine e il posizionamento del brand nel paese?
2. Qual è il principale mercato di riferimento per i Vostri prodotti?
3. Su quali fattori (caratteristiche del brand e dei prodotti) si basano la Vostra strategia e le Vostre attività di marketing comunicativo?
4. Quali sono i principali motivi di acquisto che sono stati considerati nello stabilire la Vostra strategia di marketing comunicativo?
5. Informazioni sui competitor: chi sono? Cosa vendono e come comunicano e promuovono i loro prodotti? Quali sono i loro risultati e/o quota di mercato?
6. Informazioni sui distributori: su quali criteri si basa la scelta dei distributori? Chi sono e qual è il loro ruolo? Ci sono differenze tra i paesi?

7. Come sono suddivise le operazioni e attività aziendali? Quali vengono gestite direttamente dall'azienda in Italia e quali invece sono affidate ai distributori locali? Per quanto riguarda la comunicazione, per esempio a chi è affidata la decisione sui contenuti e i mezzi di comunicazione da utilizzare (su sito, social, packaging, eventi o altro)? Ci sono differenze tra i paesi?
8. Come valutereste il grado di successo dell'azienda nei vari paesi presi in esame? Per esempio, utilizzando uno o più tra questi fattori: numero o trend delle vendite; quote di mercato; punteggio o valutazione espressi sulla base degli obiettivi aziendali.
9. Sono state rilevate delle differenze in termini di risultati nei vari paesi presi in esame in seguito a eventuali modifiche apportate alla comunicazione?

## **Appendix D**

### **Questionnaire Research for Master's Thesis**

Name and surname of the student: Alice Bertozzi  
Master's Degree in International Economics and Commerce  
Università Politecnica delle Marche, Italy  
Area of analysis: Cross-cultural marketing  
Business case study: Gino Girolomoni Agricultural Cooperative

For the purposes of the analysis conducted as part of my Master's thesis, please answer the following questions referring to Girolomoni brand and products:

1. What is the brand image and positioning of Girolomoni in your country?
2. Which is the main target market for these products?
3. Which factors (brand and products' characteristics) are your marketing communication strategy and activities based on?
4. Which are the main food buying motives that have been considered to establish your communication marketing strategy?
5. Why did you decide to import food from Italy? And why from Girolomoni company?
6. Information on competitors: Who are they? What do they sell and how do they communicate and promote their products? What are their achievements and/or market share?

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis marks the end of a very important path on which I embarked with great motivation and along which I had the good fortune to meet people who were able to boost that motivation through their professionalism and dedication; I would like to thank all the professors of the Faculty for this. In particular, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Cusi, who supported me every step of the way in this project and whose valuable advice was available at any time and will accompany me also in the future. This study would not have been possible without his guidance. I would also like to give my thanks to Professor Canullo for his kind availability and interesting topics discussed during his lessons. I am also grateful to the nice and helpful people I shared this journey with. A very special thanks go to the Girolomoni Cooperative: in particular, to Maria for trusting this project and to Veronica and Sergio for their interest and time dedicated to this thesis as well as for their constant support. I would like to extend my thanks to Matteo Bugiolacchi and Giovanni Ballarin for their translations that helped me analyze the material. Last, but not least, I must express my deepest thanks to my family and, in particular, to my daughter Ginevra for believing in me and giving me the strength throughout this journey.