

Cross-cultural analysis of sports brand creative advertising in Australia and South Korea

As globalised sports brands increasingly look to fast-growing emerging markets to leverage their equity those that use creative advertisements which can respond to differentiated cultural nuances and communicate a coherent brand essence and identity across these cultural divides will do well. This study compares two sports brand advertisements from South Korea and two from Australia and uses Hofstede Insights n.d. (2018) to explore the dimensions of cultural distinctiveness and how these differences influence creativity in each context.

Evaluating Creativity

Ewing, Napoli and West (2001, p. 161) describe creative advertising as ‘the forming of a new association of words, images, meanings, or events to produce an original communication intended to modify buyer behaviour’. This study applies the five dimensions framework offered by Reinartz and Saffert (2013) to evaluate creativity by focusing on the components of originality, flexibility, elaboration, synthesis and artistic value. These directly relate to how consumers process advertisements in their cultural context.

Nike, South Korea

The Nike 'Run it' (2018) advertisement features Korean-American rapper Jay Park and inspires high school graduates to have the confidence to passionately express themselves in sport and in art. The *elaboration* dimension is salient in the way the Nike 'Just Do It' attitude is extended into many diverse relatively unknown sports, and even into art and culture. The *artistic* dimension is also salient in the confidence inspiring rap soundtrack, the detailed depictions of some of Korea's rising stars, and the aesthetically pleasing production quality.

Reebok, South Korea

The Reebok 'Subway Pump Battle' (2015) ZPump Fusion advertisement plays on the insight that urbanites spend excessive time inactive. They created a unique, gamified battle on a subway where paired random contestants press pump buttons to win shoes. This advertisement is particularly salient in the *originality* dimension because it transforms the usually inactive subway commute. The *synthesis* creative dimension is also achieved by combining these two different ideas.

South Korean Culture

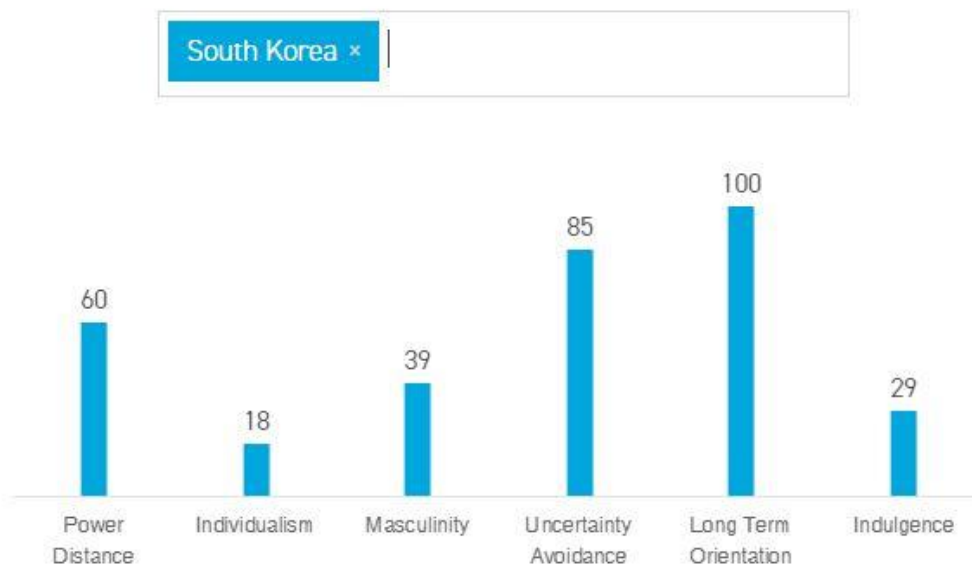


Figure 1. South Korea on Hofstede Insights n.d. (2018)

Hofstede Insights n.d. (2018) show South Korea is a high context culture and understanding the subtleties and nuances of cultural messaging is imperative. South Korea's defining characteristic is a pragmatic *long-term* orientation (100) where virtues are practised. South Korea also is a collectivist society, which scores low in *individualism* (18) as loyalty to the group and social harmony are highly valued.

In the Nike advertisement, we see both low *Individualism* and high *long-term* orientation represented by the 'Jindo' dog which is recognised as a national treasure because of its loyalty and whose origins date back over centuries (Wikipedia).



Figure 2: Jindo Korean Dog, Nike. (2018)

Altstiel & Grow (2017, p.122) also describes South Korea as a “paradoxical we/me” culture where the group comes first, however individual expression is becoming increasingly important with millennials.

In the Reebok advertisement, the paradox is presented as a battle between the traditional collective culture versus youthful individualism.



Figure 3: Reebok. (2015)

In conservative South Korea, tattoos are not only stigmatised but a criminalised activity for artists. Their use in the Nike advertisement to show expression optimises how millennials are embracing individual expression.

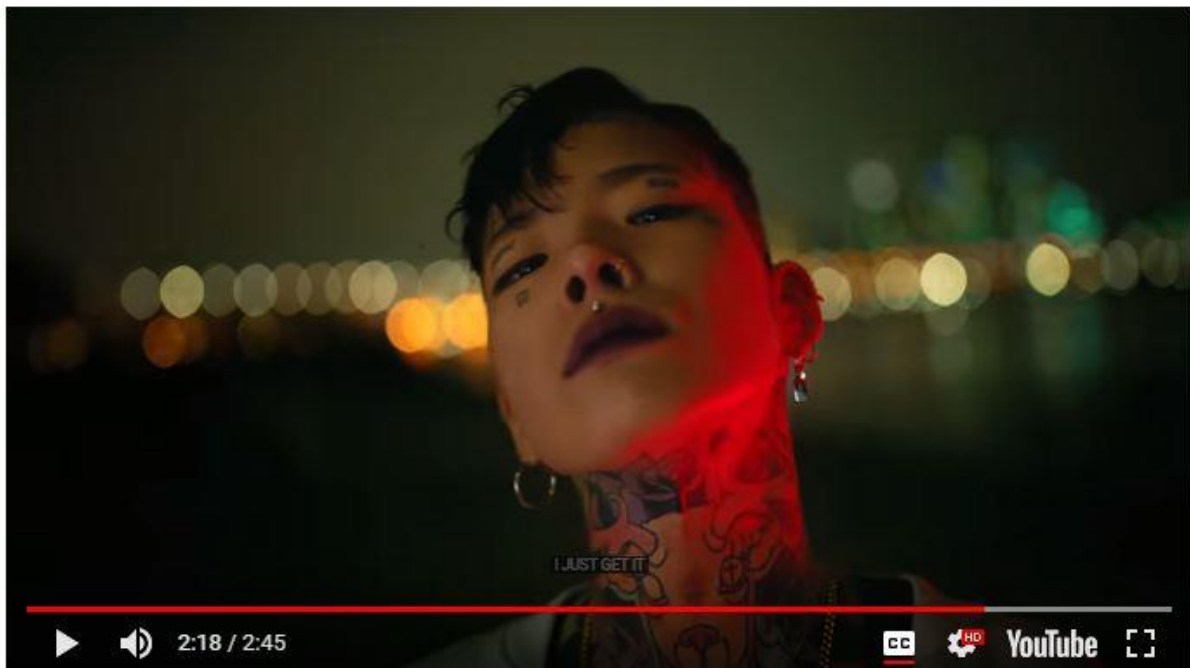


Figure 4: Tattoo artist Ember, Nike. (2018)

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This values gap is again evident in the Nike advertisement when the overweight boy in a convenience store hip-hop dances to the lyrics of 'I trust only myself', oblivious to the older shopkeeper looking on disapprovingly.



Figure 5: Nike. (2018)

Nike Australia

'Museum' from the 'No Turning Back' campaign for Nike Australia (2018) features NRL player James Tedesco giving himself no choice to go back by deliberately setting off an alarm and preparing to take on security staff.

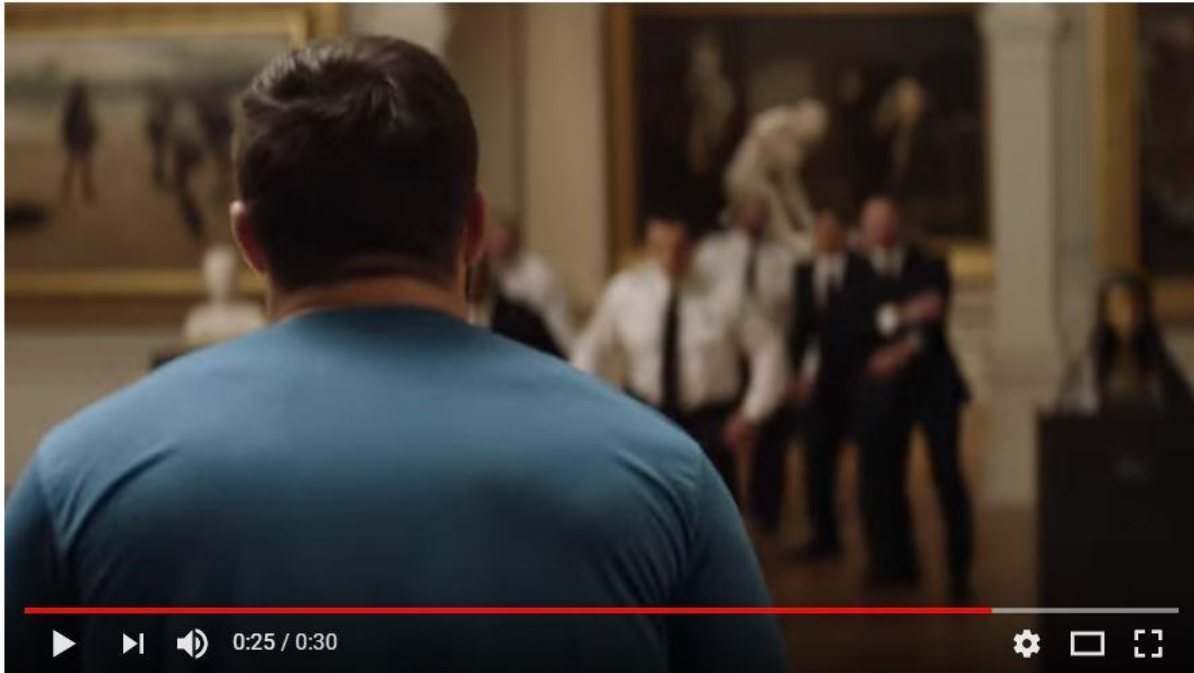


Figure 6: Nike Australia. (2018)

Creatively the advertisement is *original* because it takes the succeed at all costs attitude of exceptional sportspeople into a new space. *Synthesis* is also in effect as the usually non-competitive space of a museum unexpectedly turns it into a battlefield. The effect is of inspiring young athletes to play like they have nothing to lose in line with the Nike brand values and personality.

Asics Australia

Asics Oceania used a highly creative and original approach of 'The Travelling Salesman' (2018) documentary travelling New Zealand in a motivated challenge to sell Wallabies jerseys. The likable independent everyday hero salesperson who 'once sold a pair of undies to a nudist' sets off on the ambitious task in a highly *original* and humorous approach which seems to almost mock the ultra-serious attitude to competition Nike has taken.



Figure 7: Travelling Salesman, Rebook. (2018)

Australian Cultural Distinctiveness

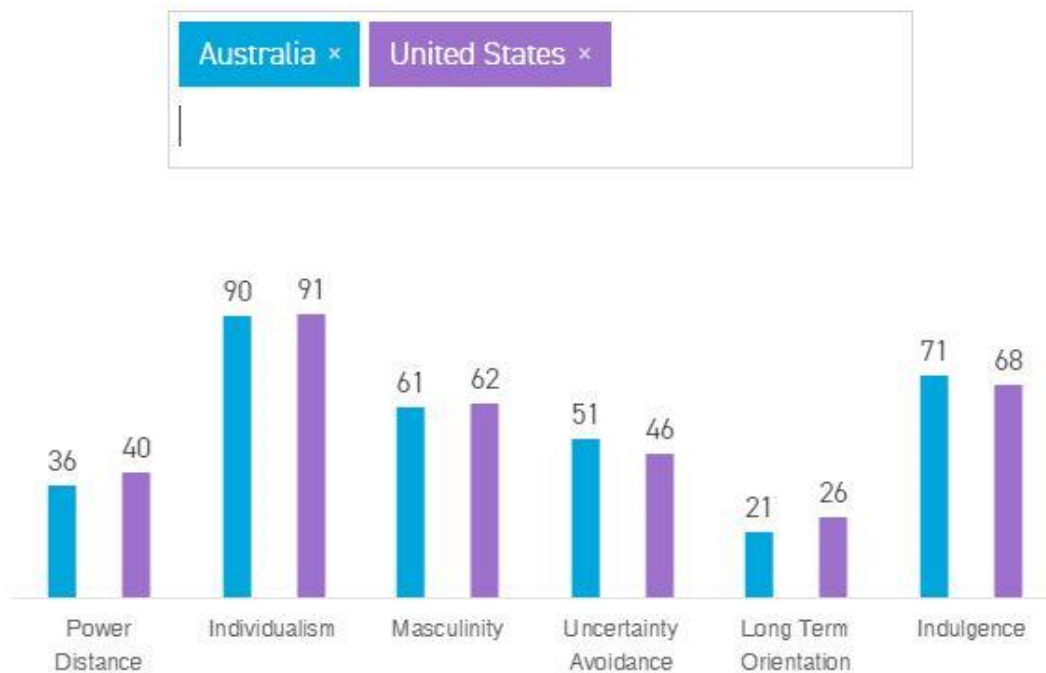


Figure 4: Hofstede Insights n.d. (2018) show similarities with Australian and the United States.

Hofstede Insights n.d. (2018) show Australia is extremely *individualistic* (90), like Nike's homeland of the United States. According to Hofstede Insights n.d. (2018) this indicates a 'loosely-knit society in which the expectation is that people look after themselves'. These traits are displayed in the challenge the self-reliant James Tedesco gives himself in escaping the museum.

The Asics (2018) commercial also celebrates *individualism*. The Hero is an 'independent' salesperson whose best friend is a manikin. 'You're the best mate I got' he tells the manikin in a tender moment and, in another incidence, he tells himself in the mirror 'you are your own manifest destiny'.



Figure 8: Asics. (2018)

Australia also rates low on *long-term* orientation (21). Enjoying life, the outdoors and the tradition of mateship is important. The Travelling Salesman uses all sorts of opportunistic tactics to sell the jerseys and get quick results, to enjoy life.

The *indulgence index* reflects 'the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses' and Australia (71) scores highly (Hofstede Insights n.d., 2018). In the optimistic salesman's journey, we see lots of ways to enjoy life from outdoor barbecues to the footballers' party.

Cultural Differences Between the Creativity Difference of the Advertisements of Each Country

Long-term orientation was the key difference between the cultures. The lifestyle orientation of 'The Traveling Salesman' to the long-term achievement orientation of the athletes in 'Run it' presents this stark difference in the creative approaches taken.

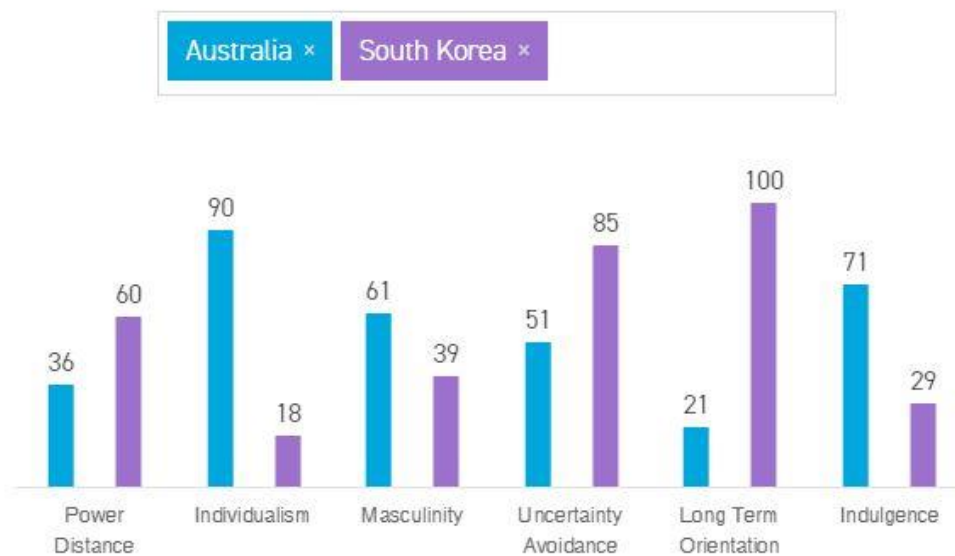


Figure 9. South Korea and Australia on Hofstede Insights n.d. (2018)

While high *individualism* is native to the Australian context, a type of *we/me individualism* seems to have migrated to younger generations in South Korea, albeit they are performing to bring honour to their country which is consistent with the warrior archetype. Gains (2013, p.138) advises, 'the warrior archetype works well for brands that help people achieve'. Despite the postmodern rejection of meta-narratives, archetypes also continue to resonate with audiences in both high context South Korea and low context multicultural Australia. According to Spink (2002, Paragraph 2) archetypes 'represent core aspects of the human condition and tap deep into our motivations and sense of meaning' Archetypes can then allow the brands to take on universally familiar personalities which transcend the significant cultural and historical differences between the two countries.

Conclusion

The differences between the creative symbolism used in the advertisements of the two countries are to a large degree influenced by the culturally distinctive characteristics.

The *high context* Korean advertisements rely on an understanding of the local cultural structure like the use of tattoos and the Jindo dog. In contrast, different creative approaches were employed in the *low context* Australian environment which used a more transparent, direct approach.

Individualism and *long-term* orientation differences were negotiated using culturally appropriate messaging and symbolism which told the brands' stories. The brands have responded to cultural differences while maintaining authentic to their core archetypal identities.

The results are a reminder of resonance of the Hero archetype and its ability to shape culture, and the need for practitioners to understand and respect distinctiveness.

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