

INDIVIDUAL AND CULTURAL VALUES AS PRECURSORS OF COSMOPOLITANISM

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ABSTRACT

In the modern world, both individuals and cultures need not be territorially-bounded, yet the conventional method of segmenting international markets has hitherto been at the country level. The unprecedented interconnectedness between economies, cultures, and individuals has blurred the traditional boundaries between 'home' and 'away'. Furthermore, a growing number of theorists contend that many individuals worldwide now develop bicultural identities, consisting of their local or traditional-culture identity with an identity connected to an emerging global culture. Researchers and practitioners increasingly recognize that consumer segments transcend national borders. Consequently the focus of international marketers should expand beyond deriving within- and between- country segments, towards identifying common groups of consumers irrespective of where they might live. Psychographic dimensions are suitable bases for international market segmentation, complementing the more commonly employed demographic approaches. Cosmopolitanism (COS) is a theoretical concept that is found in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and psychology, with growing applications in marketing and management. COS refers to a specific set of beliefs, attitudes, and qualities held by certain individuals, specifically an openness towards and appreciation of distinctive cultural systems, a willingness to engage with peoples from other cultures, along with personal competence in navigating different cultures. Global forces (e.g., mass media networks) have now made it possible for a wider variety of individuals to inculcate cosmopolitan values and to exhibit the traits of cosmopolitans, even without ever having left one's own country of birth. Thus, belonging to an elite class is no longer a prerequisite for COS. To date, the application of COS has been widespread yet chiefly theoretical. Among the few empirical studies, most have focused on the outcomes rather than the causes of COS.

In this research, we empirically examine the antecedents of COS, focusing on individual and cultural values. A survey-based methodology was employed (n=347 usable surveys, drawing from a multicultural sample of Canadians), utilizing the cosmopolitanism scale developed by Cleveland and Laroche (2007), Schwartz's (1992) motivational/cultural values survey, Hofstede's (1991) survey of cultural dimensions, as well as various socio-demographic measures. Twenty-six hypotheses were developed with respect to the individual- and cultural-level antecedents of COS, as well as the several demographic predictors. Factor analyses were conducted to verify the dimensionality of COS and the Schwartz values; Hofstede's indices were calculated using the appropriate formulae. A series of stepwise multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses. Among Hofstede's dimensions, only masculinity was significantly and inversely predictive of COS. Concerning Schwartz's 10 individual-level values, four significant antecedents of COS were found: universalism (+), achievement (+), tradition (+), and security (-). For Schwartz's 7 cultural-level values, intellectual autonomy and harmony were both positive predictors of COS. Foreign-born, multicultural, and/or multilingual respondents scored significantly higher on COS than their Canadian-born, monocultural, and/or unilingual counterparts. Numerous sex differences were also obtained, with respect to mean COS levels (females > males), and mean scores along many of Schwartz's individual- and cultural-level value dimensions. Separate regression analyses conducted on the male and female subsamples also revealed some notable differences with respect to the antecedent roles of the individual and cultural values on COS.

Linking individual and cultural values to COS can help international marketers to identify, across national borders, similar groups of world-minded consumers for segmentation purposes, and to predict where cosmopolitan dispositions are most likely to occur. Since cosmopolitans perceive themselves as less provincial, and more adept to foreign cultures, consumers falling into this segment would presumably be more responsive to global branding and positioning strategies. High COS consumers are unlikely to be consumer ethnocentric and therefore less prone to automatically select local brands over foreign/global alternatives. Beyond market segmentation purposes, research under this topic has applications in the areas of product positioning and the construction of brand personality, as well as in the formulation of communication appeals (e.g., message themes, content, and spokespersons).

References available upon request