

ARE CROSS-NATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN CONSUMPTION PATTERNS DIMINISHING?

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I. Background

The notion that industrialization and technological change have ramifications for all aspects of social life is not a new one--it can be traced back to philosophers of the 18th and 19th centuries (Simpson, 1975). More recently, however, a stronger case of "convergence hypothesis" has been advanced asserting that industrialism and that the logic of modern technology forces a common culture on those who employ it. As Kerr, Dunlop, Harbison and Myers (1961) put it, "The power of industrialism is destined to be the ever-lasting thread of the future. It is leveling the differences between continents, and between ways of life" (p. 113). This suggests that cultural differences across national boundaries are disappearing as a result of a trend towards uniformity; i.e., a widespread sharing of beliefs, values and tastes, cross-cutting groups and categories. According to Wilenski (1964) forces such as "popular education and mass literacy, high rate of social and residential mobility, the emergence of national markets and a national politics both making use of nationwide media of mass-communication and entertainment" (p. 178) help create cultural standardization through changing values, attitudes and life style of individual members of the society. But, it must be emphasized, that individual members of the society undergoing the process of industrialization will not be affected in a similar way. This is to say that some people will be more receptive to change while some others may resist

change (Sheth, 1979). This implies that, broadly speaking, individual members of the society may belong to one of two groups: 1) those who have adopted values and attitudes consistent with the process of industrialization, i.e., the moderns; and 2) those who have, to some extent, resisted the change, i.e. the traditionalists. The fact that "membership in a common culture or society does not necessarily imply similar response patterns" can be supported by several works in the area of consumer behavior. (Wind and Douglas, 1974, pp. 210-211). Within the context of a single nation, the works of Levy (1968), Martineau (1958), Nicosia (1966), and Engel and Blackwell (1982) show that different social classes within a given country tend to have different interests, life styles, and behavioral patterns. In the area of cross-cultural consumer behavior, several studies have demonstrated that life style influences transcend national and cultural boundaries and therefore, despite observable differences of consumer behavior from one country to another, one can also identify similarities both within and between countries. (For examples see Engledow, Thorolli and Becker, 1975; Urban, 1976; Douglas, 1976).

Based on the belief that common influences should produce greater uniformity, one may suggest that common life style patterns as a manifestation of modernizing influences at the societal level produce uniformity in consumption behavior at the individual level across national boundaries. This is to say that national and cultural influences on consumption patterns are less significant when compared with influences exerted by a modern

life style pattern. Hence, one would expect to observe large between-group differences of consumption patterns in a given country than what can be observed within groups across countries.

This line of reasoning may be intuitively appealing, but unfortunately no one has ever produced an empirical base to support or refute the argument. Therefore the purpose of this paper is to provide some empirical evidence to investigate the validity of such arguments. The specific hypothesis to be tested is: life style contrast will account for more variance in consumption pattern than the national contrast.

II. METHOD

1. Data: The data for this study was provided by Leo Burnett Advertising agency of Chicago, Illinois. National samples that reflected broad characteristics of the population were selected from France, Brazil, Japan and the U.S. to participate in large scale life style studies. The samples were drawn from the population of male adults between the ages of 18 to 45. Questionnaires were originally developed in English, and later translated and retranslated to arrive at a "culturally equivalent" version to suit the spoken language in each country. Furthermore, questionnaires vary in length and content. On the average, each questionnaire consisted of about 250 activities, interests, and opinion (AIQ) items, 25 demographic measures, use and ownership data on about 50 product categories, and information on respondent's media habits, including TV, newspaper, radio, and cinema.

2. Components of a Modern Life Style: It was necessary, for the purpose of this paper, to construct a common measure of life styles across the four countries included in this study. A review of the literature in the area of social psychology (Eshghi, 1983) had indicated that such a common measure can be constructed by reference to the theory of individual modernity. The theory of individual modernity has been discussed elsewhere (Eshghi, 1983) and will not be elaborated here. It will only suffice to say that individual modernity refers to a set of attitudes and ways of feeling and acting required for effective participation in a modern society (Smith and Inkeles, 1966). Such attitudes and values can be exemplified among others by readiness for new experiences, democratic orientation, faith in science and technology, emphasis on nuclear family, value for urban life and so on.

In order to construct a measure of modern life style each country questionnaire was carefully screened and those items that represented a major value of modernity and at the same time were common across the four countries were selected to form the component of a modern life style. This resulted in an initial pool of 18 items which were then item analyzed to determine the set of items to be included in final version of the scale. Through successive iterations, 12 items from the original pool of 18 were retained to form the components of a modern life style. These are shown in Table 1. (For details of scale construction see Eshghi, 1984).

3. Modern/Traditional Life Style Groups The life style measure as constructed in this study was used to classify all respondents regardless of their national identity into modern and traditional groups. More specifically, an average life style score was computed as follows: (a) each respondent's score on every item in the measure was standardized within a given country; (b) a total life style score was computed by summing respondent's scores on all items; (c) an average life style score was then computed by dividing the total score by the number of items in the measure. In order to insure maximum variability it was decided that only those respondents who were most modern in their life style pattern, i.e., those who responded to all or most of the items in a modern way should be classified as modern and those who responded to all or most of the items in a traditional way should be classified as traditional. This resulted in classifying the top 20 percent of respondents in the modern group and the bottom 20 percent in the traditional group.

4. Test of Hypothesis: The hypothesis of this study stated that "life style contrast will account for more variance in consumption behavior than the national contrast." An appropriate method for performing this analysis is an analysis of variance design.

Dependent Variables: The dependent variables in this analysis consist of six consumption variables in dichotomous form (users versus non-users and owners versus non-owners of stereo equipment, soft drinks, fruit juices, alcoholic beverages, cars and deodorants.) Each of these variables are used as a dependent variable in separate analysis of variance design with two

independent variables.

Independent Variables: The first independent variable is the nominal level variable life style at two levels: modern versus traditional. The second independent variable is the country variable at four levels: United States, Japan, France, and Brazil. Although the data are in essence dichotomous (users versus non-users/owners versus non-owners), ANOVA is an adequate analytical technique. The work of Collier (1985) as discussed by Pressly and Tuillar (1977, p. 109) suggest that the use of such data entails only a minimal loss of power in the analysis of variance.

The analysis consisted of six 4×2 factorial fixed-effect designs. This design resulted in unequal cell sizes which indicates that the two explanatory variables (i.e., modern life style and country) themselves are related. Under such conditions, Iversen and Norpoth (1976) suggest that it is more difficult to investigate the effects of independent variables on the dependent variable. This is because a given independent variable influences the dependent variable in two ways. First, it influences the dependent variable directly and second, it influences the dependent variable indirectly through the other independent variable.

The number of observations in the various cells differ in this study as shown in Table 2. Since neither the cell entries nor the percentages for the two life style levels are equal in the four countries, the two explanatory variables may well be correlated. In order to determine whether the observed

differences in cell sizes amount to a statistically significant difference, a Chi-square test was performed. The data in Table 2 gave a Chi-square value of 10.52, which is significant at .05 level with three degrees of freedom. Therefore, the two explanatory variables are correlated.

One way to analyze this data, given the conditions of this study, is to perform the analysis in two steps as suggested by Iverson and Norpoth (1977, pp. 62-3). In the first step, one of the independent variables, life style, is introduced into the analysis and then the second independent variable, country, is entered after life style has been allowed to explain as much of the total sum of squares as it can. The sum of squares for interaction will be found after adjusting for the independent variables. In the second step, we turn the analysis around and let the country variable enter first and then allow the life style variable to explain as much as it can of the remaining variation. The sum of squares for interaction will be found as before.

Since country and life style are correlated, the results of the two steps are expected to be different. By entering the country variable after the life style variable, we get an estimate of the effect of national differences on the dependent variables (in this case, various consumption variables) which would be observable if the four countries were equal in life style. By the same logic, when the life style variable is introduced after the country variable, we get an estimate of the effect of life style on the dependent variable with country variable held constant. Furthermore, by examining various sums

of squares obtained in the two steps discussed above, we get an estimate of the part of sum of square that is shared by the two independent variables. We now turn to the results obtained from this analysis.

Table 3 shows consumption patterns in various product categories by life style and country. The numbers included in Table 3 represent percentage of users in each group. As can be seen from the table, a fairly substantial difference exists between various groups. To determine if these differences are significant, we turn to analysis of variance tables for each product category.

Table 4 shows the result of the two-step analysis of variance for deodorant. As can be seen from the table, life style and country both have significant effects on the dependent variable. When life style is introduced first, the F-ratio is as large as 48.44 which is significant at the .001 level. But when the life style variable is left to pick up after the country variable, the sum of squares drops from 7.16 to 4.49 and the corresponding F-value drops to 30.59 which is still significant at the .001 level. Table 4 also shows that when the country variable is introduced first, its sum of square amounts to 91.36, but when the country variable is entered after the life style variable, its sum of squares drops to 88.69 with a corresponding F-value of 199.80. As pointed out earlier, by entering the country variable after life style, one gets an estimate of the effect of national differences on use of deodorant which would be observable if the four countries were

equal in their modern life style. When the levels of country variable is held constant, the direct effect of life style on the use of deodorant is reduced greatly, but it is not eliminated. In both cases, the reduction in the sum of squares from when the variable is entered first to when it is entered second equals 2.67. This is the part of sum of squares that is shared by the country variable and life style variable.

Furthermore, Table 4 shows the interaction of country and life style to be significant at .031 level. This means that life style has greater influence on deodorant usage in some countries and less influence in some others. Specifically, the percentage of deodorant users in modern groups in Japan and France is substantially higher than traditional groups (almost double) in these countries; whereas, the difference between modern and traditional groups in terms of percentage of deodorant users in the U.S. and Brazil is not as great.

When all the effects are taken together, the overall R^2 amounts to .39 which indicates the percentage of variance accounted for by the independent variables. It is also obvious from Table 4 that most of the 39 percent variance explained is due to the country variable rather than the life style variable. The relationship between the country variable and deodorant usage is not only significant but also strong since E^2 (Country) = .37 as compared with E^2 (Life Style) = .03 which indicates a weak relationship between the life style variable and deodorant usage.

Table 5 presents the results of analysis of variance of stereo equipment. In this case, as can be seen from the table, both main effects are significant at the .001 level while the

interaction effect is significant at the .013 level. As before when the life style variable is allowed to enter after the country variable, its sum of squares is reduced. The reduction in the life style sum of squares from when it is introduced first is more severe in this case than the deodorant case. As the numbers in Table 5 indicate, the life style sum of squares is reduced from 7.57 to 2.48, a two-thirds reduction. The difference between the two sum of squares, as discussed before, is the part of sum of squares that is shared by both independent variables. It appears that the life style syndrome has a far greater influence on ownership of stereo equipment in Brazil than in other countries. The independent variables taken together account for 26% of variation in the data. It is also obvious that the country variable explains much of the variations and is more strongly related to ownership of stereo equipment than the life style variable.

Table 6 presents the results of analysis of variance for automobile ownership. Again, life style and country variable influence car ownership significantly. The interaction of country and life style is also significant at .001 level. The life style variable is less affected when it is entered second after the country variable meaning that a smaller part of sum of squares is shared by the two independent variables compared to previous cases. The presence of a significant interaction effect indicates that life style has differential impact on car ownership depending on what country one lives in. Examining the means reported in Table 3 reveals that it makes a greater

difference for car ownership when one belongs to traditional versus modern group in the United States than in other countries included in this study. Apparently, the independent variables account for only 10 percent of the variation in the data. But, the country variable is still responsible for much of the variation explained.

The results of analysis of variance of soft drinks are reported in Table 7. As in the previous case, both main and interaction effects are significant at the .001 level. It appears that life style has greater influence on consumption of soft drinks in France (quite substantial) and Brazil than in the U.S. and Japan (see means reported in table 5.) The overall $R^2 = .19$. Again most of the 19 percent variance explained is due to the country variable rather than the life style variable.

When the fruit juice variable was analyzed, the results shown in Table 8 were obtained. This case is very similar to previous cases where both main effects and the interaction effects are significant. Modern Life Style's influence is greatest in France than in Japan, U.S., and Brazil. The overall R^2 is .13 with the country variable explaining most of the variation in the data.

Finally, Table 9 reports the results of analysis of variance of alcoholic beverages. In this case, main effects are significant at the .001 level, while the interaction effect is not significant. The independent variables apparently do not account for much of the variance in the consumption of alcoholic beverages, as evidenced by a relatively small R^2 . But, again, most of the 10 percent variance explained is due to the country

rather than the life style variable.

III. Discussion

The results of ANOVA indicated that life style influences are significant in explaining consumption behavior, but the effect is not very strong. The data suggest that national and cultural influences continue to determine the consumption patterns across the countries examined. But it must be emphasized that the inclusion of national identity as an independent variable in the analysis does not eliminate the effect of modern life style. Therefore, one may argue that the effect of modern life style is there but it is not strong enough at this point in time.

Furthermore, all the variance that was accounted for by the country variable can not be attributed to cultural and national differences because a number of situational factors, unique to a given country environment, may influence the level of demand and availability of certain product categories. For example, government economic policy may encourage (discourage) consumption and production of specific product categories such as alcoholic beverages.

Legal constraints such as quality standards may influence availability of certain products in a given country. Furthermore, a number of market specific conditions may also affect the level of demand and availability of certain product categories. For instance, stage of product life cycle, degree of competition and the nature of market structure will affect

consumers' response to alternative marketing strategies and hence the level of demand for certain products. Therefore, to isolate the effect of national and cultural differences, one should select product categories that are free from the impact of these confounding variables.

As to why life style influences did not show a strong influence on consumption choices in this study may be explained in at least two ways. First, it is possible that the measure of modern life style as constructed in this study was not well explicated. This is to say that perhaps certain important dimensions of a modern life style was not captured by the scale developed in this study. This implies that without further research on measurement, it would be difficult to rule out the effect of modern life style on consumption patterns. Second, it can be argued that individual differences within the modern group produced more within group variance than between group variance. This argument particularly makes sense because life style patterns transcend across many social groups in the society and hence the reason for large within-group variance.

In sum, it appears that the hypothesis of this study cannot be supported by the data. It is evident from the analysis just performed that the life style effect is significant, but the effect is not strong enough to wipe out the national and cultural influences which continue to exert a significant and strong influence on consumption patterns.

TABLE 1
VALUES OF MODERNITY AND CORRESPONDING ITEMS IN THE
SCALE OF MODERN LIFE STYLES

Modernity Value	Lifestyle Items Included in the Scale
Readiness for New Experience	
U.S.:	(+) I like to buy new and different things.
Japan:	(+) I always buy newest products.
France:	(+) More novelties welcome.
Brazil:	(+) When I see a new product, I'll buy it.
U.S.:	(+) The new styles turn me on.
Japan:	(+) I am sensitive to fashion.
France:	(+) I am one of the first to adopt a new fashion.
Brazil:	(+) I like everything that is modern.
U.S.:	(-) I have old fashioned tastes and habits.
Japan:	(-) I hate men's long hair.
France:	(-) I have old fashioned tastes and habits.
Brazil:	(-) Men should wear short hair.
Weakening of Family Ties	
U.S.:	(-) I am a homebody.
Japan:	(-) My family is my life purpose.
France:	(-) I like to spend my time at home.
Brazil:	(-) I would rather spend my time at home.
Democratic Orientation	
U.S.:	(+) Movies should be censored.
Japan:	(+) If pornography was made legal, sex morals will not digress.
France:	(-) There should be censorship of press and TV.
Brazil:	(-) Movies that present nudes should be censored.
U.S.:	(+) ERA should be added to the constitution.
Japan:	(-) It would be a problem if women became stronger.
France:	(+) I am in sympathy with women's lib.
Brazil:	(-) It is silly for women to study too much.

Table 1 Continued

Modernity Value	Lifestyle Items Included in the Scale
U.S.:	(-) Women's place is at home.
Japan:	(-) Women should not have jobs outside.
France:	(-) Women's place is in the kitchen.
Brazil:	(-) Women's place is at home.
U.S.:	(+) Women are capable of combining their career with marriage and children.
Japan:	(-) It is impossible for women to combine work and marriage.
France:	(-) It is too hard when a mother works.
Brazil:	(-) It is difficult to have a successful marriage when the wife has a job.
Value for Urban Life	
U.S.:	(-) A small town is the best place to live.
Japan:	(-) It is best to live in the province.
France:	(-) Life in the country is better.
Brazil:	(-) If I could, I'd live on a ranch.
Nuclear Family	
U.S.:	(-) All couples should have at least one child.
Japan:	(-) Marriage without children is incomplete.
France:	(-) It is scandalous to get married and not want a child.
Brazil:	(-) People who avoid children are right.
Personal Efficacy	
U.S.:	(+) I expect to be a top executive within the next 10 years.
Japan:	(+) I have a goal to accomplish within the next 5 years.
France:	(+) I hope to have a job with more responsibilities in the future.
Brazil:	(+) I have a splendid future.
U.S.:	(-) My opinion on things does not count in today's world.
Japan:	(-) My attitude doesn't count in today's world.
France:	(-) People like me can't influence what is happening in today's world.
Brazil:	(-) My opinion on things doesn't count in today's world.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS IN EACH CELL
AND ROW PERCENTAGES

	U.S.	Japan	France	Brazil	Total
Traditional	193 (38.7%)	190 (36.1%)	105 (20.0%)	38 (7.2%)	526 (100%)
Modern	207 (41.3%)	134 (26.7%)	118 (23.6%)	52 (8.4%)	511 (100%)

TABLE 3
 PERCENTAGE OF USERS IN EACH PRODUCT CATEGORY
 BY MODERN LIFE STYLE AND COUNTRY

Category/ Country	Traditional	Modern	Means
<u>Deodorant</u>			
U.S.	.89	.94	.91
Japan	.18	.39	.27
France	.23	.41	.33
Brazil	.71	.88	.80
Means	.50	.67	.58
<u>Stereo Equipment</u>			
U.S.	.90	.83	.85
Japan	.16	.28	.21
France	.14	.25	.20
Brazil	.16	.50	.34
Means	.22	.42	.32
<u>Car</u>			
U.S.	.57	.86	.72
Japan	.53	.53	.53
France	.81	.85	.83
Brazil	.37	.45	.41
Means	.59	.74	.66

Table 3 Continued

Category/ Country	Traditional	Modern	Means
<u>Soft Drinks</u>			
U.S.	.76	.60	.62
Japan	.81	.90	.85
France	.21	.61	.42
Brazil	.74	.93	.84
Means	.67	.63	.75
<u>Fruit Juice</u>			
U.S.	.41	.54	.48
Japan	.70	.88	.77
France	.48	.87	.68
Brazil	.29	.40	.35
Means	.52	.70	.61
<u>Alcoholic Beverages</u>			
U.S.	.19	.33	.26
Japan	.55	.63	.59
France	.41	.63	.59
Brazil	.26	.45	.36
Means	.38	.49	.43

TABLE 4
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF DEODORANT

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	F-Ratio	Significance
Modern Life Style	7.16	1	48.44	.001
Country After Modern Life Style	88.69	3	199.80	.001
Interaction	1.32	3	2.97	.031
Residual	147.08	994		
Total	244.27	1001		
Country	91.36	3	205.32	.001
Life Style After Country	4.49	1	30.39	.001
Interaction	1.32	3	2.97	.031
Residual	147.08	994		
Total	244.27	1001		

$$E^2 (\text{Modern Life Style}) = .03, E^2 (\text{Country}) = .37, R^2 = .39$$

TABLE 5
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF STEREO EQUIPMENT

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	F-Ratio	Significance
Modern Life Style	7.57	1	46.87	.001
Country After Modern Life Style	33.82	3	69.76	.001
Interaction	1.76	3	3.63	.013
Residual	118.29	732	.16	
Total	161.45	739	.21	
Country	38.91	3	80.27	.001
Modern Life Style After Country	2.48	1	15.35	.001
Interaction	1.76	3	3.63	.013
Residual	118.29	732	.16	
Total	161.45	739	.21	

E^2 (Modern Life Style) = .05, E^2 (Country) = .24, R^2 = .26

TABLE 6
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF CAR

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	F-Ratio	Significance
Modern Life Style	5.41	1	27.23	.001
Country After Modern Life Style	16.45	3	27.58	.001
Interaction	4.09	3	6.86	.001
Residual	195.58	984	.19	
Total	221.54	991	.22	
Country	17.57	3	29.48	.001
Modern Life Style After Country	4.28	1	21.55	.001
Interaction	4.09	3	6.86	.001
Residual	195.58	984	.19	
Total	221.54	991	.22	

E^2 (Modern Life Style) = .02, E^2 (Country) = .08, R^2 = .10

TABLE 7
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF SOFT DRINKS

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	F-Ratio	Significance
Modern Life Style	6.38	1	42.42	.001
Country After Modern Life Style	30.06	3	66.59	.001
Interaction	3.68	3	8.15	.001
Residual	148.53	987	.15	
Total	188.66	994	.19	
Country	28.85	3	63.91	.001
Modern Life Style After Country	7.59	1	50.48	.001
Interaction	3.68	3	8.15	.001
Residual	148.53	987	.15	
Total	188.66	994	.19	

E^2 (Modern Life Style) = .03, E^2 (Country) = .15, R^2 = .19

TABLE 8
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF FRUIT JUICE

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	F-Ratio	Significance
Modern Life Style	7.36	1	35.80	.001
Country After Modern Life Style	23.61	3	38.27	.001
Interaction	2.69	3	4.36	.005
Residual	199.70	971	.20	
Total	233.38	978	.23	
Country	20.94	3	33.94	.001
Modern Life Style After Country	10.03	1	48.80	.001
Interaction	2.69	3	4.36	.005
Residual	199.70	971	.20	
Total	233.38	978	.23	

E^2 (Modern Life Style) = .03, E^2 (Country) = .09, R^2 = .13

TABLE 9
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	F-Ratio	Significance
Modern Life Style	3.25	1	14.71	.001
Country After Modern Life Style	22.15	3	33.39	.001
Interaction	.63	3	.95	N.S.
Residual	218.26	987	.22	
Total	244.30	994	.24	
Country	20.44	3	30.82	.001
Modern Life Style After Country	4.96	1	22.43	.001
Interaction	.63	3	.95	N.S.
Residual	218.26	987	.22	
Total	244.30	994	.24	

E^2 (Modern Life Style) = .01, E^2 (Country) = .09, R^2 = .10

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