

# The Analysis of Customer Behavior across Cultures Based on Marketing Activities of Dove Chocolate

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**Abstract:** *Dove is a famous chocolate brand worldwide, whose marketing activities are excellent as same as its smooth texture and delicious taste. To analyze the influence of customer behavior across cultures on Dove's marketing activities, two TV advertisements are compared, broadcasted in US and China separately. Both describe well-designed stories with various core connotation, created in different cultural backgrounds, to satisfied customer's expectation ultimately. Besides, an outstanding event activity named Choc Bar held in Beijing will be shared to show how motivation and needs influence the Dove's marketing activities. The study is based on Maslow's model of hierarchy of needs, showing the impact of belonging and love needs on the customer behavior, as the key to success for Dove's marketing activities. Recommendations are mentioned at the end.*

**Keywords:** *Marketing Activities, Customer Behavior, Motivation and Needs*

## 1. Introduction

MARS is a worldwide food processing factory established in 1911, which becomes famous for the creative product, milky way bar in the US at that time (Wikipedia,2017). Nowadays, it is a family-owned business as well as a global company with more than 100000 associates in over 80 countries all over the world. Meanwhile, it obtains billions of consumers and reaches significant sales of more than \$35 billion with its six different aspects in global business, Petcare, Chocolate, Wrigley, Food, Drink and Symbioscience (MARS,2017a).

Dove is one of the chocolate brands owned by MARS, which aims at creating a perfect memory and feeling for its customers when they enjoy Dove chocolate with its distinctive silky smooth texture and delicious taste (MARS, 2017b). In addition, it entered in the US and China market in 1985 and 1989 respectively with a great performance in both markets with totally different culture backgrounds (Wikipedia, 2016).

The aim of this report is to discuss the influence of culture and one specific aspect of customer behavior, motivation and needs, on the Dove's marketing activities. First, the comparison between two TV advertisements broadcasted in US and China will be illustrated to evaluate the impact of culture in these two countries for Dove. Next, the essay will focus on the Choc Bar held in Beijing to show how motivation and needs influence the Dove's marketing activities. Ultimately, proper recommendations will be given for each part.

## 2. Culture

Culture defines a human community for both its individuals and social organizations by a series of control principles, such as plans, rules, instructions and recipes, which can also be used to analyze and explain the differences in consumption and customer behavior (Mooij, 2011). Therefore, marketers of international companies need to pay attention to the impact of culture when designing marketing activities to match each culture. This part will discuss cultural differences between US and China in terms of TV commercials that Dove chocolate has delivered to its target customers in these two countries.

### 2.1 TV Commercials in US and China

According to David and Fiona (2013), advertising has a powerful impact on consumers since it can create awareness of a brand to target audiences and alert consumer's attitudes effectively. There are two

different advertisements of Dove chocolate published in US and China which deliver distinctive beliefs to suit each culture. The paper focuses on one advertisement named 'Each and every day' in US and another named 'Enjoy the silky smooth texture' in China as a comparison.

## 2.2 Comparison of TVC between two countries

### 2.2.1 Theories to analyze advertisements

The model of national culture developed by Hofstede (2017) consists of six dimensions, power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term/short-term orientation and indulgence/restraint. According to Mooij (2011), it is useful to illustrate essential cross-cultural value differences in customer behavior, which is likely to be a significant guideline to analyze cultural differences between two advertisements.

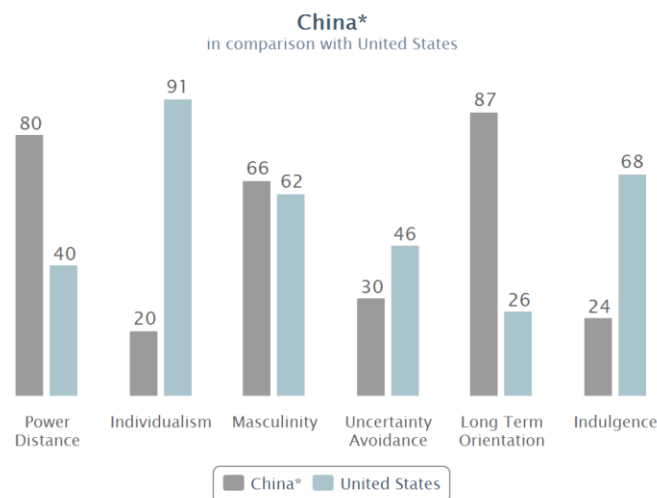


Figure 1: The comparison of the US and China in 6 dimensions of national culture.

The pie chart above illustrates the comparison of the US and China in 6 dimensions of national culture. For power distance, the scale of China is double than what US obtains, which means Chinese are prone to accepting and give authority and have a strong dependency relationship between less powerful and more powerful social members. By contrast, Americans are likely to concentrate on the equality in rights and chances with the critical mind. There is a significant gap between Americans and Chinese in individualism since Americans are typical individualists and Chinese are typical collectivists. Specifically, it means the former pursuit variety, adventure, freedom, self-actualization and they are likely to have special and distinctive personality, while the latter prefer to the harmony with social members and they regard face is an important thing. Moreover, both Chinese and Americans obtain a score around 65 in musicality, which reflects both of them are fond of achievement and success rather than quality of life or caring for others (Mooij, 2011). For uncertainty avoidance, Chinese are more likely to be comfortable with ambiguity and chaos, although both receive a low score in this dimension. In addition, result-orientation is suitable for each society of two countries with less rules, and humor can be seen in both advertising (Hofstede,2016). For time orientation and indulgence, two countries belong to opposite types. Chinese are of long term orientation as pragmatists and they invest in future and wait for a slow result, viewing indulgence as wrong, shaped by the social norms. In contrast, Americans are normative since they focus on the past and the present with a quick result and they have the willingness to enjoy their life as well as realize the desires (Mooij, 2011).

Moreover, the communication in Chinese society is emotional instead of explicit since it is in a high-context communication culture. They are likely to use symbol or non-verbal communication to show the expression indirectly. However, as a low-content society for the US, they prefer to use verbal communication to express directly with high value (Mooij, 2011). This difference can be seen in two advertisements obviously.

### 2.2.2 Differences

In the American's advertisement, it describes a girl's whole life in 24 hours. A little girl wakes up, standing in front of a full-length mirror, dressing a blue skirt and smiling. When she goes out, she grows

up. A teenager plays the skateboard and draws a smiley face on the window of a car. Then she grows up as a beautiful lady, coming into a café drinking the tea and eating chocolate with her friends. She plays the darts but breaks a vase. Moreover, she cuts the bang by herself, kissing a soldier, dancing at high altitude. When she comes back home, standing in front of the mirror again, she becomes a graceful old lady. She eats Dove chocolate and sleeps with smile and satisfaction. Next day, she becomes the little girl as a circle. At the end of the advertising, a sentence shows at the center-‘Live each day as if it’s the only one’, ending up with a logo of Dove.

Since American is a characteristic low-content society, the expression of its TV advertising is direct and explicit in a logical way to tell a story with many details. Meanwhile, the topic of this TVC also shows at the end of the advertising. In addition, it matches the American culture perfectly by focusing on some dimensions of Hofstede model, including individualism, short-term orientation and indulgence. The pursuit of variety, adventure and freedom showing by the girl’s different activities is a significant factor for individualists. Meanwhile, she is so brave and causal to do things following her heart, reflecting the willingness to realize her impulses and enjoy life and leisure time, which is typical for indulgence dimension (Mooij, 2011). Moreover, the topic of the advertising is to persuade people to put pleasure first in life without regrets and make life full of pleasure in each and every day (Dove, 2017), matching the short-term orientation to focus on the present. Although the advertising is suitable for the American’s culture and emphasizes the brand’s aim in US market, a lack of product information is likely to have a negative influence on the decision-making process for customers.

In China’s advertising, the way to describe the story and its topic is completely different. It shows an appointment between a girl and a boy sitting on a bench of a garden in the winter, while they are far away with each other due to bashfulness. Then, the girl finds the Dove chocolate bar and tries to touch it. At that moment, the bench is inclined and the boy slips to the girl with the season changing to summer. The girl asks the boy whether it is so silky and eats the chocolate. Ending up with a piece of chocolate silks fabric surrounding with them, the topic of the ads shows at the center of the screen – ‘enjoy the silky smooth texture’ with an image of Dove chocolate bar.

Although the two advertisements are of the same length, China’s TVC obtains less information since China is a high-context society and the communication is more emotional instead of explicit. Specifically, it uses the environmental elements such as snow and flowers as symbols to create the atmosphere to express the feeling between two protagonists. Meanwhile, the advertising match Chinese culture properly as well as emphasize the brand image in China market, which is established by a love story. A large number of young generation regard Dove as ‘Do you love me?’, using it to express their emotion (Baidu, 2017). Power distance, uncertainty avoidance and restraint are the main factors to design this advertisement. At the beginning, the young girl and boy are too shy to have an eye contact, which reflects they restrain their desires, controlling their behavior with the norms in Chinese society (Mooij, 2011). In addition, the girl’s question has an ambiguous meaning for both the chocolate and their relationship, which stands out the characteristic of products as well as promotes the development of the plot. Moreover, they have not said any words to show their love, but it can be seen from the whole advertisement according to the environmental change or music, which is a typical performance for the society with high uncertainty avoidance. Besides, protagonists of this advertisement are two popular stars with many fans since China is of high power distance and Chinese respect authorities as well as they are likely to be influenced by celebrities. However, Dove chocolate can pay more attention to the individualism dimension in consideration of Chinese as collectivists.

### **2.2.3 Similarities**

Although both US and China belong to masculinity society, the pursuit of achievement and success is not the focus on Dove’s advertisements. The ads show the brand belief in each country respectively, quality of life and love, ignoring detailed information of products. Specifically, Dove has a priority to build brand image and deliver its beliefs to their target customers.

### **2.3 Recommendation**

In spite of Dove’s great performance in each market, there are still some improvements to attract customers. For US market, its advertisement is fascinating and impressing, therefore, providing more useful information about its product is a significant way to help customers to realize their desires of chocolate. For China market, the usage of celebrities is important to appeal relevant groups due to the collectivism. Although China is of high uncertainty avoidance, ambiguous meanings are likely to misleading its customers in some situations. Therefore, the extent to use implicit imply is important.

### 3. Motivation and needs

Motivation is goal-directed energy moving person and it is the drive for human behavior since it impels people to attain what they want. Moreover, needs stemming from the gap between the current and desired state provides the drive of motivation, which determines different customers (Jill et al. 2010). Therefore, it is significant for marketers to understand the motivation and needs of target consumers, offering superior products to satisfy target buyers' desires efficiently. The following section will discuss the event marketing held by Dove chocolate to analyze the influence of motivation and needs on marketing activities.

#### 3.1 Event marketing for Dove chocolate

Event marketing is the marketing activity conducted by a company to increase profits or use as a strategic tool to realize the multiple goals for the company. In addition, event marketing as a method of marketing communications obtains more focus from companies or organizations. Moreover, a successful event is consideration of the same success level between the event and product with the power to transfer the feeling of pleasure among the target customers who participants in the event (Anne et al, 2007). According to this criterion, Dove chocolate held a successful event marketing activity in Beijing from 12 Sep. to 2 Oct. in 2017 as a Choc Bar.

The Choc Bar was a theme exhibition of Dove chocolate appealing a large number of chocolate fans and potential customers. Firstly, a wall filled with stories of 3000 years' history of chocolate culture, especially the love story of Dove brand, used to welcome visitors. Then, the process of making chocolate could be seen in the open kitchen for visitors to learn more about chocolate. In addition, visitors had the opportunity to enjoy 11880 different types of DIY chocolate to find their own styles. Besides, participants were likely to eat delicious desserts from the Dove menu designed by a chef who had worked for three-Michelin-stars restaurant. Next, sweet love sentences shown on the Dove interactive wall. In the area of dressing room, there were distinctive high-heeled shoes, perfume bottles and lipsticks, which were made of Dove chocolate, to achieve the dream of becoming princess for each girl. At the end of the exhibition, all the classic products of Dove chocolate could be found (Sina, 2017). Ultimately, Dove invited two popular stars to spread this event marketing to appeal customers to enjoy the Choc Bar.

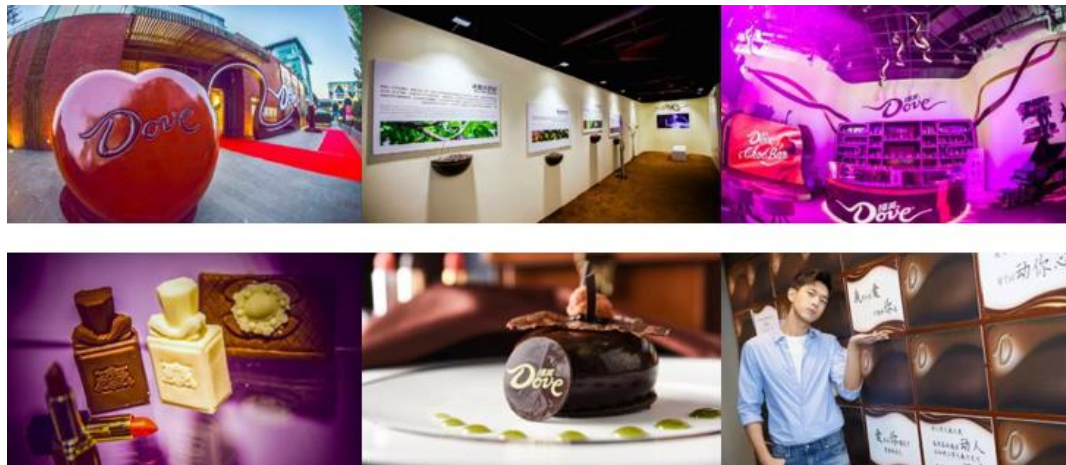


Figure 2: Dove 's 'Choc Bar' event.

#### 3.2 Evaluation and analysis of Choc Bar

The marketers of Dove chocolate have done well in terms of event marketing, the Choc Bar to appeal to target audience to realize the brand value and special products of Dove. Nowadays, young generation pay more attention to their leisure time pursuing the pleasure of both physiology and psychology. Therefore, Choc Bar provides the opportunity for the young generation to enjoy the chocolate culture in a relaxing atmosphere with their friends or lovers. As the line in film Chocolate 'You cannot refuse chocolate just as you cannot refuse love', chocolate is regarded as the symbol of love, especially for the Dove with brand meaning 'Do you love me?'. Specifically, the Choc Bar is attractive for lovers or young girls who are seeking for love. On the other hand, the publicity of stars with high popularity has the significantly positive influence on Dove's promotion for their fans. According to Stella and Yip (2009),

the impression of celebrities' image and behavior are likely to be a drive in the decision-making process for fans, so they are prone to visiting the Choc Bar due to their idols. There are main motivations for potential customers to go and enjoy Choc Bar activity.

Based on Maslow's model of hierarchy of needs (Jill et al. 2010) which consist of physiological needs, safety and security needs, belonging and love needs, esteem and ego needs and self-actualization needs, marketers of Dove chocolate held the Choc Bar with focusing on belonging and love needs for target audiences. Since chocolate as a snack is not designed for meeting essential physiological and physical safety concerns as well as the highest-level needs of self-actualization, belonging and love needs is the most suitable factor to design the marketing activity. Human as a social member has the needs to receive love and affection from friends and family. To achieve this goal, people purchase products which are well-regarded by other members in the same community to obtain the following sense of belonging (Jill et al. 2010). The Choc Bar provided different areas for people with middle-to-high-level of life quality, people who loves arts and young generation especially for lovers and bosom female friends to satisfy distinctive needs in each group and created the sense of belonging of their own group. Ultimately, they received the belonging sense of the Dove chocolate.

### 3.3 Recommendation

Although Dove has held a successful marketing activity, there are still some improvements to make it better. Firstly, Dove chocolate uses the Sina microblog and WeChat account to publish the message of Choc Bar rather than an official website, which has a limitation of the spread of activity information. It is an efficient way to use the official website to contact target customers and deliver important message as well as provide the channel to purchase product online simultaneously. Next, since the Choc Bar activity has the geographic limitation, publishing advertising on the subway station of Beijing and other nearby cities is more efficient than making it nationwide. Ultimately, opening time of this activity covered the first two days of the holidays of National Day, which is likely to be better to cover the whole holiday to provide visitors more time to participants in.

## 4. Conclusion

This report has discussed two core concepts of customer behaviors, culture as well as motivation and needs in terms of the marketing activities held by Dove chocolate. It has been shown that US is more low-context, individualism, short-term orientation and indulgence while China is more high-context, high power distance, low uncertainty avoidance and restraint according to the comparison of two Dove's advertisements published in each country. Meanwhile, based on Dove's marketing activity Choc Bar, the report has shown the influence of belonging and love needs on the customer behavior. However, marketing activities of Dove chocolate have a good performance in each country, there are still some recommendations for improvements.

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