

Impact of Cultural Distance on Global Marketing

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Section 1. A Critical Evaluation of Hofstede's Model on Cultural Distance.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Model (Hofstede, 1980; 2001; 2010), is recognised as 'pioneering' (Blodgett, Bakir and Rose, 2008), viewed as 'the benchmark for cultural analysis for the last three decades', (Orr and Hauser, 2008) and even been labelled as a 'revolution in the social sciences' (Clark, 2003).

When analysing scholars' views of Hofstede's Model (Hofstede, 1980; 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010) it is evident that despite its popularity it is heavily criticised. Through the analysis, seven critical themes¹ have emerged and subsequently will be discussed in this section: 1. Defining and measuring culture; 2. Nations as a units to study culture; 3. Dimensions restrictions; 4. Research model flaws; 5. Sampling limitations; 6. Age of study; 7. Ethnocentrism and researcher bias.

McSweeney (2002a) is arguably Hofstede's greatest critic due to his in-depth criticisms which sparked a public debate (Hofstede 2002; McSweeney 2002b; Williamson 2002). McSweeney (2002a) distain resides in Hofstede's 'arrogance' in his claims to have successfully 'uncover[ed] the secrets of entire national cultures' (Hofstede, 1980, p.44). McSweeney argues that Hofstede's Model is fundamentally flawed because there is no clear definition of culture and Hofstede is 'misguided' in attempting to 'measure the unmeasurable' (McSweeney, 2002a, p.90; in reference to MacIntyre, 1971; Smelser, 1992). In direct response, Hofstede (2002) found McSweeney 'unnecessarily abrasive' and concludes McSweeney has completely misunderstood, not just the term culture, but the entire study; this was also concluded by Williamson (2002). De Mooij (2013), although ironically challenged for her own contradictions by Venaik and Brewer (2013), suggests that this misunderstanding of culture is common and often erroneously results in direct criticism of Hofstede, De Mooij suggest that before rejecting Hofstede's works, researchers should first work on fully understanding the term 'culture' (De Mooij, 2013; Blodgett, Bakir and Rose ,2008).

Baskerville (2003) (later known as Baskerville-Morley, 2005) was labelled as an 'enemy' by Hofstede (2013) in another direct counterargument, similar to McSweeney's (2002). Baskerville-Morley challenges rigidity of the model, arguing that there are huge limitations in assigning numerical dimensions and matrices to an entire nation, and labelling it as culture, thus 'Hofstede makes heroic assumptions of ethnic homogeneity' (Baskerville, 2003); a viewpoint which is echoed by others (Ailon, 2008; McSweeney, Brown and Iliopoulou, 2016). Steenkamp (2001) contests, stating cultures *can* 'validly be conceptualised at national level'. Kirkman, Lowe and Gibson (2006) summarise that Hofstede 'failed' entirely to capture the 'malleability of culture' although one may question if indeed this is possible given the complexity of the subject matter.

Baskerville further argues that Hofstede fails to understand: cultures aren't bound by nations, and therefore aren't the best unit of study, evidencing that there are quantifiably more cultures than nations i.e. in the Middle East, Africa, western Europe and North America (Baskerville, 2003, p.6). Furthermore, culture has been successfully referred to long before Hofstede's Model, through ethnography and anthropology *without* the need to attribute indices. In response, Hofstede (2013; 2001; 2002) has repeatedly counter-argued that although nations may not the best units of study, they are however 'the only units available'. De Mooij (2013) and Steenkamp

¹ For reader clarity, the themes listed are not finite nor official themes/topics. Themes are naturally interconnected.

(2001) are in agreement, stating those who have attempted to define and measure cross border or within-country segments based on cultural characteristics have so far failed (De Mooij, 2015), adding 'the difference between nations tend to be much larger than within nations' (De Mooij, 2015) thus, Hofstede was not wrong in his approach.

Another argument of restriction is that Hofstede has 'oversimplified' culture, the five dimensions² are 'too superficial to capture the intricacies of world views beliefs and conduct', a nation is not homogeneous (Ailon, 2008, p.895). On the contrary, Søndergaard (1994), in tandem with Minkov and Hofstede (2010), argues that the dimensions *are* valid and have an 'interdisciplinary nature' that allows for 'wide application', such as proven by theorists Beugelsdijk, Maseland and Van Hoorn (2015). Validation of this can be found in Blodgett, Bakir and Rose's (2007) empirical study, which concluded that when tested, cultural scores are relatively stable over time, therefore the Hofstede's Model and the designed dimensions are still very much valid; also agreed by De Mooij (2015). Hofstede, as proponent of the model, remains loyal to its validity raising the argument that the dimensions have 'centuries-old roots' and have been validated many times (Minkov and Hofstede, 2010; Hofstede, 2002), but agrees that additional dimensions should be added and 'candidates are welcome to apply' (Hofstede, 2002). Steenkamp (2001) summarises both sides the argument, suggesting that 'no limited set of dimensions can exhaustively describe the culture of societies in their full richness and complexity' (Steenkamp, 2001, p.9) but Hofstede, and other dedicated cross-culturalists, are committed to finding a way; Steenkamp (2001) adds, Hofstede was the first to 'unpack' the 'complexities' of culture, and therefore should be commended.

Critics have not only challenged Hofstede's Model itself, but also the research methodology and study design. Ailon (2008), in his research paper dissects 'Cultural Consequences' (Hofstede, 2010) through a mirror, discovering that there are a plethora of issues Hofstede's work, most notably: researcher bias and ethnocentrism, sampling limitations and research method limitations. Other theorists are in agreement (Orr and Hauser, 2008; Baskerville 2003; McSweeney, 2002a; Myers and Tan, 2002; Clark, 2003; Kirkman, Lowe and Gibson, 2006). The sample was flawed: all participants were employees of one company (IBM), men of the working and middle classes who had been trained to adopt the same 'western corporate culture' (Gernon, 1993; Myers and Tan, 2002) and the sample size is too small 'to equate to an entire nation', argues McSweeney (2002a). McSweeney (2002a; 2002b) and Gernon (2003) conclude 'there is a huge and unbridged conceptual chasm between micro local (IBM) [culture] and the nation [culture]' (McSweeney, 2002a p.100). Signorini, Wiesemes, and Murphy (2009) argue that these restrictions make Hofstede's study only relevant to the 'time and space' in which it was conducted; concluding the model to have limited applicability.

Researcher bias is argued by Ailon (2008) to reaffirm 'international inequality' by favouring 'western cultural hegemony' (Ailon, 2008, p.897) and treating other cultures as '*others*' (*op. cit.* p.899). Moulettes (2007) similarly proclaims that Hofstede was androcentric, his own biases resulting in women's voices being 'entirely silenced', and a study permeated with stereotypes. Referring back to De Mooij's (2013; 2015) point: the study was only ever about high-level culture and it is a huge error to 'extend cultural level findings to the individual-level' (De Mooij, 2015). De Mooij further raises the argument that the designed dimensions are often misinterpreted (De

² it should be noted that the sixth Cultural Dimension was not added by Hofstede until 2010.

Mooij, 2013; 2015), particularly Masculinity dimension, which is considered 'not as an individual characteristic' (Hofstede, 2011).

Clark credits Hofstede for openly acknowledging the 'considerable Western bias in the entire research project' (Clark, 2003, P.152), which could arguably be justified by the notion that 'communication is complex across nations' (Blodgett, Lu and Rose, 2001). Hofstede adds that these challenges do not negate the validity of his work, which has been verified through many 'significant and independent' validations and citations [Hofstede, 1980; 2001]' (Hofstede, 2002, p.1358). Hofstede also negates any errors in his research or sampling methods, nor 'creative accounting in the way I [he] treated his data', arguing 'I followed common practice... [of] statistical inference' (Hofstede, 2002 p.1360), a method which has also been justly used in other 'test-based cross-cultural studies' (Hofstede, 2002). In contrast, Clark (2003) argues Hofstede was myopic, the loyalty towards his work coupled with his bias for 'only review[ing] literature that supports his framework' and the reluctance to update his works (Clark T, 2003 P.153) is enough as McSweeney (2002b) argues, to renounce Hofstede as a scholar.

Through the analysed literature, it is evident that Hofstede's model has been applied to many fields of study: mostly business, social sciences, marketing and advertising (i.e. Magnusson, Wilson, Adravkovic, Joyce and Westjohn, 2008; Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson, 2006). Concerning the validity and relevance of the study, however, the most prevalent criticism of Hofstede's Model is not regarding application, but actually its age. Orr and Hauser (2008) call for the model to be entirely re-examined to fit 'within the context of the 21st century: 'Cultural Consequences' was first published in 1980, with data collected between 1966 and 1973 and since then the political landscape has changed (Orr and Hauser, 2008) and developments in technology have enriched globalisation (Steenkamp,2001). Conclusively, Venik and Brewer (2013) suggest that 'researchers and practitioners need to be very cautious in applying [Hofstede's Model]' due to its constraints such as the seven themes arisen from the literature, suggesting the model should be remerged 'the benchmark for cultural analysis for the last three decades' (Orr and Hauser, 2008) but moving forward, culture should be approached with an 'open mind with few pre-conceived notions, biases, and stereotypes' (Venaik and Brewer, 2013, p.477).

Section 2. Mazda 3, Sweden vs USA, advertising analysed using Hofstede's Model.

Mazda3 is a mid-range car, designed by the Japanese, global company Mazda Motor Corporation (Mazda). Mazda's advertisements for the 'All New Mazda3' in Sweden and the United States of America (USA) will be compared and analysed using Hofstede Model of Cultural Distance (Hofstede, 1980; 2001; 2010); the six dimensions: Power Distance (PDI); Individualism (IDV); Masculinity (MAS); uncertainty avoidance (UAI); Long Term Orientation (LTO); Indulgence (IVR).

When using the country comparison tool to compare Sweden with the USA (Hofstede Insights, 2019), MAS showed the highest contrast of 5 compared to 62 respectively. Sweden's low score [5] makes it one of the most feminine countries, holding values such as having a high quality of life and a healthy work-life balance. The Swedish advert (MazdaSverige, 2018) is arguably even feminine in design: carefully composed with soft cinematography and an atmospheric and uplifting classical soundtrack, it is presenting as more a piece of art than an advert.

Instead of being product focussed, the advert prioritises curiosity, exploration and experiencing life from the opening scene of the sun rising above the clouds (fig. 1) to the point where the soundtrack reaches a crescendo where the sun sets over a green field (fig. 2), this reflecting both MAS [5] and [high IVR score 78],



Fig. 1: Advert opening sunrise scene. (MazdaSverige, 2018)



Fig. 2: Sunset over a field. (MazdaSverige, 2018).

In stark contrast to the Swedish advert, the American advert (Mazda USA, 2018) appeals highly to a masculine, competitive society [62] by keeping the brand (fig. 3) and the product (fig. 4) at the focal point of the advert from opening shot (fig. 5) to closing image (fig. 6). In the Swedish advert product features were omitted and the brand lacked presence.



Fig. 3: Brand placement. (Mazda USA, 2018).



Fig. 4: Product focussed. (Mazda USA, 2018).

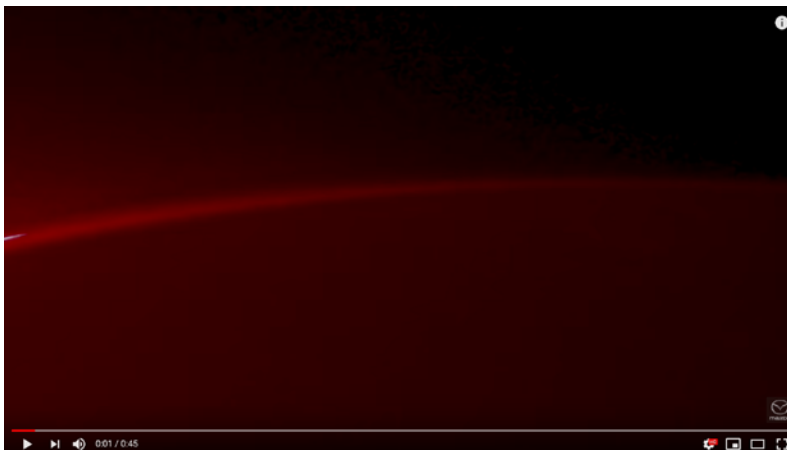


Fig. 5: Opening shot, curves of the car. (Mazda USA, 2018).



Fig. 6: Closing shot, image of the Mazda3. (Mazda USA, 2018).

The focus on brand and product is a representative of high UAI [46] combined with MAS [6] and 'one of the highest individualist drives in the world' [93] (Hofstede Insights, 2019); this combination makes Americans outwardly competitive and materialistic individuals. Mazda USA's website (Mazda (2019b)) also advertises to this combination, using strong imagery with focus on the products, features and technical specs and also show professional figures looking towards the car in admiration (Fig. 7a; Fig. 7b; Fig. 7c)

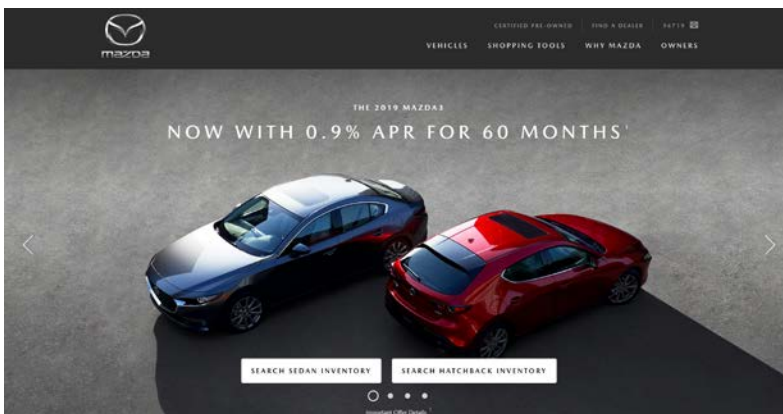


Fig. 7a: Website image 1. Product focussed (Mazda, 2019b).

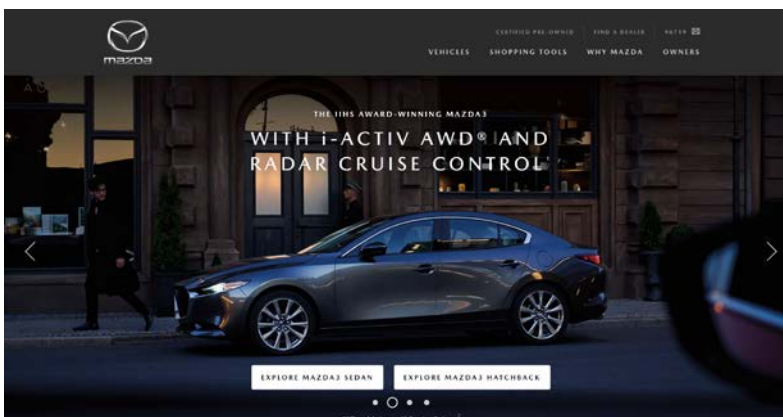


Fig. 7b: Website image 2. Looking back in awe. (Mazda, 2019b).

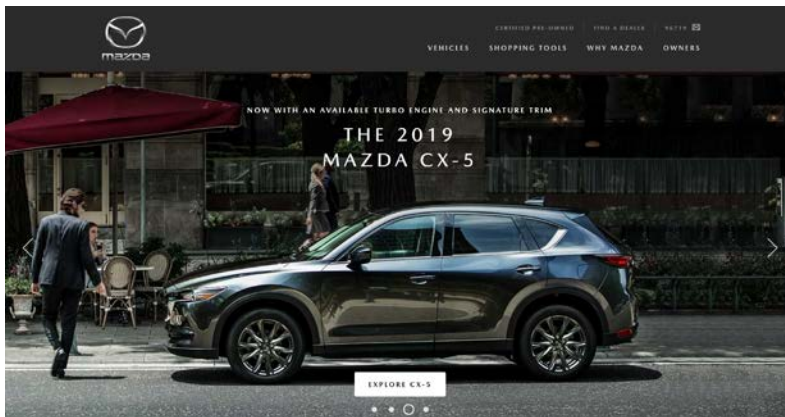


Fig. 7c: Website image 3. Product features (Mazda, 2019b).

Sweden's Mazda Website (Mazda, 2019a) also contains an advertising strategy to engage and appeal to their Swedish 'feminine' [MAS 5], individualist [71 IDV] and high indulgence [78 IVR] audience. In contrast to the USA website, instead of focussing advertising on products and their attributes, they instead place emphasis on the importance of caring for one another and having a high quality of life, through a full-page video on the home screen (fig. 8a; fig. 8b; fig. 8c) with words translating to 'explore' across the centre.



Fig. 8a: Website video still 1. Hand enjoying the breeze. (Mazda, 2019a).



Fig. 8b: Website video still 2. Enjoying life. (Mazda, 2019a).



Fig. 8c: Website video still 3. Enjoying the moment. (Mazda, 2019a).

Mazda have also appealed to the Swedish preference for a more 'feminine' caring society through a spoken narrative at the beginning of the advert where a supportive male voice wishes "good luck" to a female voice, who responds with "thanks... you have an amazing day too".

Unlike the supportive conversational exchange at the beginning of Sweden's advert, the USA speech, is suited to the combination of high MAS [62] an UAI score of 46, focussing on competitive success through a grand unveiling of the product by a senior Mazda employee saying "Now let us unveil the leading product of a new generation, all-new Mazda3" (fig. 9).



Fig. 9: Product launch speech building anticipation. (Mazda USA, 2018).

Mazda USA directly engages their masculine, individualist, concerned and short-term orientated audience through the anticipatory build up, well-considered camera angles, intense soundtrack and focus on the present; even the length of the advert (45 seconds compared to Sweden's over two minutes) reflects the LTO index. The audience become part of the front-row at a prestigious grand unveiling event (fig. 10) full of competing, high-status men (fig. 11). The Mazda3 is placed on a pedestal as an object of desire that the audience must compete to own, so much so they are part of the front row, taking photos of it (fig. 5; fig.12) so to establish their own status, and compete even after the advert has ended.



Fig. 10: Grand unveiling of the Mazda3. (Mazda USA, 2018).

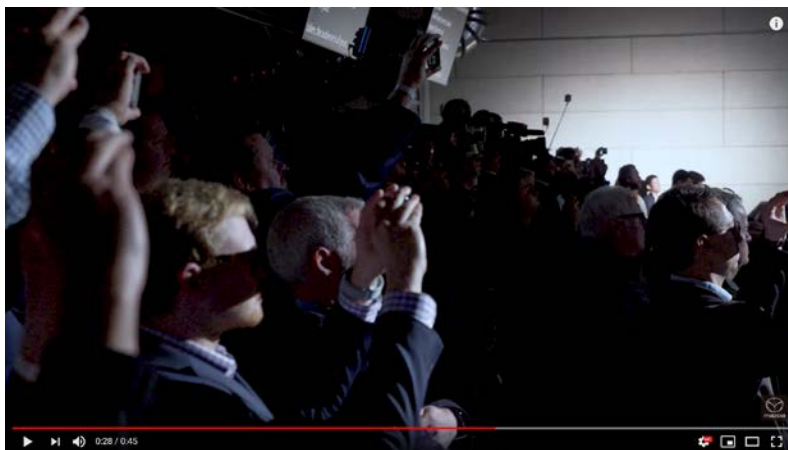


Fig. 11: Part of the in-crowd. (Mazda USA, 2018).



Fig. 12: An object of desire. (Mazda USA, 2018).

The Swedish score of 53 LTO, although not particularly high, is clearly distinguishable from the USA's score of 26. The Swedish advert appeals to the audience's combined LTO [53], low UAI [29] and high IDV [78], by emphasising curiosity and moving towards the future. This is highlighted by the scene of woman in heels walking towards (fig. 13) and stepping through large doors into the light (fig. 14); perhaps metaphorically stepping towards the future. The image behind the door is an ethereal sunrise landscape (fig. 15); once again suiting low MAS [5] and high IVR [78].

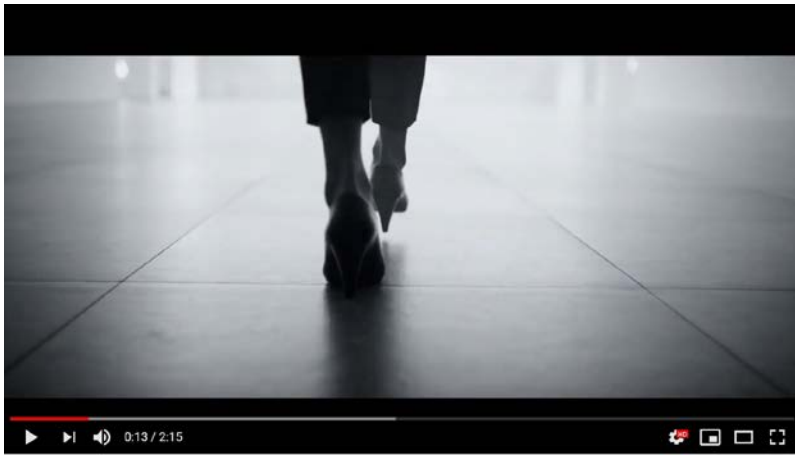


Fig. 13: Walking towards the light. (MazdaSverige, 2018)



Fig. 14: Opening the doors to the future. (MazdaSverige, 2018)



Fig. 15: An ethereal view. (MazdaSverige, 2018)

Finally, it is interesting to note that Mazda3 Swedish advert (MazdaSverige, 2018) also aired in the USA (and the UK), but the USA advert (Mazda USA, 2018) did not air in Sweden; although this may remain unanswered, perhaps the cultural distances of these two countries may have been a determining factor for Mazda.

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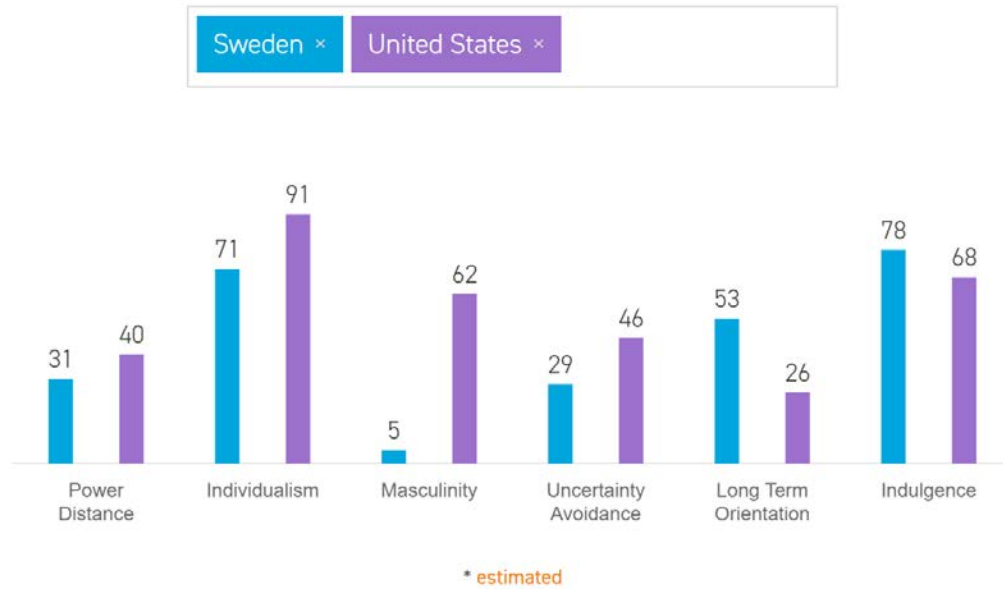
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Appendix

- 1. Hofstede Insights (2019)**
- 2. Reflective account**
- 3. Turnitin Reports 1, 2 and 3.**

1. Hofstede Insights (2019)

Hofstede Insights (2019) *Compare countries*. Available at: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/> (Accessed 16 October 2019)



2. Reflective account

My first Turnitin report was from my essay preparatory exercise upload (see below)

ORIGINALITY REPORT			
33%	11%	3%	32%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	Submitted to Kingston University Student Paper		21%
2	www.newchartistmovement.org.uk Internet Source		4%
3	thovo.se Internet Source		4%
4	www.repairmanualscatalog.info Internet Source		2%
5	pricebtc.blogspot.com Internet Source		1%
6	Klaus-Dieter Gronwald. "Chapter 8 Papers and Cases", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2017 Publication		1%

I went through this report in detail so that I could better understand how to get the most out of Turnitin, as a tool. Unfortunately, as I had dedicated so much time to reading and evaluating papers in my TAG analysis, my first upload was mostly in note-form and so all the report showed me is that many others have used the same sources as me. From this, I understood I was on the right track with my sources, and I learned the basics on how Turnitin could be used.

My second originality report was generated from my partially completed section one of the essay (see below)

ORIGINALITY REPORT

9%

SIMILARITY INDEX

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INTERNET SOURCES

2%

PUBLICATIONS

8%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

Submitted to Kingston University

Student Paper

6%

2

G. Hofstede. "Dimensions Do Not Exist: A Reply to Brendan McSweeney", Human Relations, 11/01/2002

Publication

1%

3

Marieke de Mooij. "Cross-cultural research in international marketing: clearing up some of the confusion", International Marketing Review, 2015

Publication

1%

4

Submitted to University of Edinburgh

Student Paper

1%

5

Tsotra, Danai(Brooks, L and Fitzgerald, G). "Emergent culture in global IS/IT outsourcing", Brunel University, School of Information Systems, Computing and Mathematics, 2014

1%



When I first saw the 9% reading, I was surprised at such a low number compared to my previous 33%. When going through the report, although there was not much to review, the highlighted colour coded sentences allowed for me to double check my own notes and citations. First, I checked that the coding corresponded with my own references and not incorrectly cited, then I checked that I had enclosed the quote and cited it correctly using the KU Library citation guide. From my cross-checking I did find that one of the highlighted references could have been quoted a little clearer - my reference to the paper was at the beginning of the sentence, and not placed at the end of the direct quote. I also noticed that another one of my quotations was a little disjointed, broken up by text, so I subsequently also re-worked that.

My third originality report was of my completed section one (see below).

ORIGINALITY REPORT			
10%	6%	6%	9%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	Submitted to Oxford Brookes University Student Paper	2%	
2	www.emeraldinsight.com Internet Source	2%	
3	Submitted to Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Student Paper	1%	
4	Submitted to University of Birmingham Student Paper	1%	
5	Submitted to Colorado State University, Global Campus Student Paper	1%	
6	Submitted to University of Newcastle upon Tyne Student Paper	1%	
7	G. Hofstede. "Dimensions Do Not Exist: A Reply to Brendan McSweeney", Human Relations, 11/01/2002 Publication	1%	
Marieke de Mooij. "Cross-cultural research in			
8	international marketing: clearing up some of the confusion", International Marketing Review, 2015 Publication	1%	
9	Submitted to University of Edinburgh Student Paper	<1%	
10	International Marketing Review, Volume 30, Issue 3 (2013-05-27) Publication	<1%	

I was glad to see my final score for my completed section one at 10%. When reading through the report findings, I was glad to see my previous amendments to no longer be highlighted. I also found one new quotation which was cited correctly but the citation was in the wrong place; I amended this.

Overall, I am pleased with my results from the Turnitin report. I feel this is a useful tool in order to check references and eliminate the possibilities of any accidental plagiarism from incorrect citations. I will definitely be using Turnitin as a tool to support me during future assignments.