Press advertisements for food in Spain: Cultural orientations and communicative style

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Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of cultural values on the design and communicative style of Spanish graphic advertising for food and beverages. More specifically, the influence of Hall's (1976: 101) "context dependence" and Hofstede's (1994: 51) "individualism index" is surveyed. Guillén-Nieto's (2009) table of hypothetical correlations between culture and communicative style is adapted for the analysis of 100 Spanish advertisements at the macro- and microlinguistic levels. The study is organised in two stages: (i) a qualitative examination of the communicative strategies found in the sample; and (ii) a quantitative analysis of the previous findings in order to identify significant patterns statistically. The findings indicate that context dependence and the individualism index can be traced in the texts in relation to the verbal and non-verbal elements, the explicitness of the communicative style and the purpose of the message. A set of multimodal communicative strategies is offered at the end of the paper aimed at advertising professionals and students as well as LSP practitioners.

Keywords: context dependence, intercultural pragmatics, communicative styles, cultural values and orientations, individualism index.

Resumen

Publicidad gráfica de productos alimenticios en España: orientaciones culturales y estilo comunicativo

Este artículo explora la influencia de los valores culturales en el diseño de la publicidad gráfica de productos alimenticios en España. En concreto con relación a la "dependencia contextual" (Hall, 1976: 101) y al "índice de

individualismo" (Hosftede, 1994: 51). Con este fin, se adaptó la tabla de correlaciones hipotéticas entre los valores culturales y el estilo comunicativo de Guillén-Nieto (2009) para el análisis macro- y microlingüístico de 100 anuncios españoles. El análisis se organizó en dos fases: (a) un estudio cualitativo de las estrategias comunicativas halladas en la muestra, y (b) un análisis cuantitativo de las estrategias descubiertas en la fase anterior con el objetivo de comprobar su significancia estadística. Los resultados indican que la influencia de la dependencia contextual y el índice de individualismo se ven reflejados en el uso de elementos verbales y no verbales, la proporción de información explícita/implícita, y el objetivo del mensaje. El artículo concluye con un conjunto de estrategias comunicativas dirigidas a profesionales y estudiantes de publicidad, así como a los especialistas de lenguas para fines específicos.

Palabras clave: dependencia contextual, pragmática intercultural, estilos comunicativos, valores y orientaciones culturales, índice de individualismo.

Introduction

In the current international trade context, most companies are involved to a certain extent in worldwide transactions. The globalization process and the improvement of communications over the last decades have prompted the need to establish common ground for those involved in international business activities.

In this setting, intercultural competence is generally seen as crucial in the contemporary business world, and several research projects and publications have explored the abilities of business professionals to manage intercultural communicative situations. For instance, the ELISE project (*European Language and International Strategy Development in SMEs, 1996-1998*) and the ELUCIDATE project (*Business Communication Across Borders – A Study of Language Use and Practice in European Companies, 1999-2000*) identified the lack of intercultural skills as the major obstacle for trade at the European level (Hagen, 2001), and pointed at Spain as one of several countries with substantial business loss due to communicative obstacles in intercultural settings. In 2005, the results of the ELAN project (*Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise, 2005-2007*) suggested that companies need to be encouraged to enhance their employees' linguistic and intercultural skills. In fact, a report produced in the framework of that project stated that a company that invests in the linguistic and intercultural skills of their staff "achieves an export sales proportion 44.5% higher that one without those investments" (CILT, 2006: 7).

Several researchers have provided evidence indicating that lack of success in international business operations is usually caused by failure to recognise and adapt to different ways of thinking and acting, rather than by inadequate professional practice (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992; Adler, 2002; Ferraro, 2010). Thus, of late, business professionals have been trying to improve their intercultural skills. In the specific area of marketing, practitioners and agencies are trying to find ways to effectively adapt their campaigns to foreign target audiences. Accordingly, theory and practice need to join forces so as to enhance the effectiveness of trade across borders, as well as the design of advertising campaigns.

The body of academic research with a focus on the inherent characteristics of different cultures and the impact that those features have on other areas of human behaviour has grown over the last years. As a matter of fact, several researchers from a range of disciplines have formulated theories and models to survey and explain cultural differences. In the context of social anthropology and social psychology, for example, Hall (1959, 1966, 1976 & 1990), Hofstede (1980, 1991, 1994, 1998, 2001 & 2005), or Trompenaars and Wooliams (2003) have provided insights into the values and orientations of different socio-cultural groups. Meanwhile, intercultural pragmatics research has concentrated on the study of the culture-specific pragmalinguistic conventions in different languages and cultures (Díaz Pérez, 2000, 2003 & 2009; Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2008; Günther, 2008; Pavlidou, 2008). Nevertheless, these two research areas seem to have advanced in parallel and, as Guillén-Nieto (2009: 36) claims, joint efforts should be made by researchers in the fields of intercultural pragmatics, social anthropology and other related disciplines to achieve a deeper understanding of the connections between cultural values and communicative styles at the macro- and microlinguistic levels.

Starting off the idea that any text, as a cultural product, will reflect some of the cultural values and orientations of the community in which it was created, Guillén-Nieto (2009) tries to establish connections between the value dimensions recognised by Hall (1976) and Hofstede (1980 & 1991), and the language-specific behaviour that correlates with them, as supported by recent research in intercultural pragmatics (Loukianenko Wolfe, 2008; Prykarpatska, 2008). The result is a table of hypothetical correspondences between cultural values and communicative style (Guillén-Nieto, 2009).

The present article, which is part of a broader study comparing British and Spanish samples, adapts Guillén-Nieto's (2009) model in order to analyse 100 Spanish advertisements for food at the macro- and microlinguistic levels. A preliminary study was carried out to narrow the scope of this study, and the categories of context dependence and the individualism/collectivism index were identified as particularly relevant for the genre of press advertising. "Context dependence" and "individualism/collectivism index" have been respectively defined by Hall (1976) and Hoefstede (1994) as follows:

> High context transactions feature pre-programmed information that is in the receiver and in the setting, with only minimal information in the transmitted message. Low context transactions are the reverse. Most of the information must be in the transmitted message in order to make up for what is missing in the context. (Hall, 1976: 101)

> Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. (Hofstede, 1994: 51)

This choice has been supported by previous studies. Vatrapu and Suthers (2007) argue that the ratio of verbal and visual components of a message correlates to the context dependence index of its author(s). Considering the strong presence of visual elements in the genre of press advertising, as well as their combination with the verbal, context dependence seems to offer interesting potential findings for the present study. Furthermore, Prykarpatska (2008) establishes connections between the individualism and collectivism indices and the degree of implicitness or explicitness of a particular community's verbal behaviour.

The overarching goal of the present study is to provide communicative guidelines to aid advertising professionals wishing to advertise their products in Spain, as well LSP practitioners working with the genre of press advertising. To achieve this goal, the paper first explores and explains the possible influence of cultural values on the design and communicative style of Spanish graphic advertisements for food and beverages, particularly in relation to Hall's (1976) dimension of context dependence and Hofstede's (1994) individualism index. After that, a set of intercultural communicative strategies will be proposed.

Research questions

As suggested by the literature, the culture-specific behaviour of any given society will have an impact on the production of their oral and written texts (Guillén-Nieto, 2009). This is so, since members of a linguistic community share a series of socio-cultural expectations about how particular functions are to be carried out by means of their linguistic behaviour. Therefore, the present study is triggered by the general hypothesis that culture will affect the design of press advertisements for food and beverages in Spain. More specifically, the cultural categories of context dependence and the individualism index are explored. The following research questions are addressed:

1. Can context dependence be traced in the design of press advertisements for food and beverages in Spain? If so, does it reflect on the communicative conventions of the genre?

2. Can the individualism index be traced in the design of press advertisements for food and beverages in Spain? If so, does it reflect on the communicative conventions of the genre?

Method

Given the multifarious nature of the aspects explored in the present study, namely the way cultural values and orientations affect the communicative strategies – verbal and non-verbal – used in the genre of press advertising, an eclectic model of analysis is needed. Consequently, research from different disciplines provides the theoretical basis required. In particular, concepts and categories are borrowed from the areas of cross-cultural communication (Hall, 1959; Hofstede, 1991 & 2001); advertising (Resnik & Stern, 1977; Pollay, 1983; Frazer, 1983; Ahmed, 1996; De Mooij, 2004; De Mooij & Keegan, 1994; Dahl, 2004); contrastive rhetoric and genre analysis (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993, 1997 & 2004; Connor, 1996 & 2004; Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001; Hyland, 2003; Flowerdew, 2008; Loukianenko Wolfe, 2008); and intercultural pragmatics (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Scollon & Scollon, 2002; Spencer-Oatey, 2000 & 2008; Díaz Pérez, 2000, 2003 & 2009; Walker, Walker & Schmitz, 2003; Hickey & Stewart, 2005; Guillén-Nieto, 2005 & 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006; Pavlidou, 2008; Prykarpatska, 2008). Additionally, Guillén-Nieto's (2009) model of analysis is adapted for

the identification of possible correlations between the culture-specific and the language-specific behaviour observed in a sample of press advertisements.

Table 1 illustrates the hypothetical correspondences between the cultural dimension of context dependence, the individualism index, and the Spanish communicative style. The left column shows the two value dimensions selected for the present study, namely context dependence and the individualism index. The central column displays the culture-specific values for Spain for the two cultural value dimensions listed on the left. In other words, this column offers additional information as to the values assigned by previous studies to the Spanish culture in each category. Finally, the right column lists the language-specific behaviour that previous research (Scollon & Scollon, 2002; Walker, Walker & Schmitz, 2003; Loukianenko Wolfe, 2008; Prykarpatska, 2008) has identified as related to the selected value dimensions. Thus, readers can browse through the table, and match the linguistic or language-specific behaviour that correlates, hypothetically, to the value dimensions selected (left column) in relation to the Spanish socio-cultural community.

Value dimension	Culture-specific value	Language-specific behaviour
Context dependence	Fairly high context	Promotes implicitness Relies on contextual cues and non verbal codes
Individualism index	Average	Form of reference to self as a group Uses involvement strategies

Table 1. Hypothetical correlations for context dependence, individualism index, and language-specific behaviour for Spanish culture, based on Guillén-Nieto (2009).

As shown in Table 1, Spain has been rated as relatively high in relation to context dependence by previous studies in the field of social anthropology (Hall, 1959). In line with the literature in intercultural pragmatics, high context dependence seems to promote implicitness and reliance on contextual cues and non-verbal elements as far as the communicative style is concerned (Vatrapu & Suthers, 2007). In relation to the individualism index, Hofstede's (1994 & 2001) empirical studies have ranked the Spanish culture as a fairly collectivistic culture, especially when the values are contextualised in relation to other cultures. In connection to this index, intercultural pragmatics research supports the fact that people in Spain are likely to identify themselves as members of small groups, such as a company or a

family (Guillén-Nieto, 2009), which is reflected, for example, in their preference for plural (*nosotros*, *vosotros* – "we", "you") instead of singular pronouns (*yo*, *tú* – "I", "you").

Additionally, politeness strategies may also differ. In fact, the literature (Díaz Pérez, 2009) indicates that, typically, Spanish speakers are more likely to use involvement politeness strategies which try to create and maintain social relations with other interlocutors. Therefore, when applied to the genre of press advertising, these patterns translate into the following hypotheses:

1. Spanish press advertisements may show a fairly high ratio of non-verbal elements in relation to verbal content.

2. Spanish press advertisements may feature a communicative style that leans towards implicitness.

3. Spanish press advertisements may present the advertised companies as groups.

4. Spanish press advertisements may display an inclination for involvement politeness strategies.

Regarding the process of analysis, the study is organised in two different stages, namely, a qualitative part and a quantitative part. The aim of the qualitative phase is to characterise the features of each individual text at the macro- and micro-linguistic levels. At this point, the language-specific features hypothesised by Guillén-Nieto (2009) as reflecting context dependence and the individualism index (see Table 1, right column) are used as categories for the analysis. For the purposes of this study, these language-specific aspects are considered from an exploratory perspective. In other words, rather than assuming the hypotheses are correct and examining the texts in search of evidence of an implicit communicative style, the sample is analysed using the dichotomy explicit/implicit communicative style. Thus, the complete list of the textual aspects examined is as follows:

1. Verbal/non-verbal codes: The presence of visual and verbal elements in the advertisements selected is analysed using Bhatia's (2005: 213-225) move structure of promotional texts. Bhatia's model is useful because it facilitates the division of each advertisement into smaller parts for their analysis which, in turn, makes it easier to calculate the number of instances found for each category.

2. Symbolic language/contextual cues: In the present study, symbolic language refers to the explicit mentions to objects, concepts or ideas, whereas contextual cues can be defined as the implicit references that rely on the participants' shared knowledge so as to be interpreted. An advertisement containing symbolic language would explicitly mention or show the product being promoted. On the other hand, a message that referred to, for example, a cow, but never mentioned the product itself, would exploit contextual cues; the members of the audience would have to resort to their world knowledge to understand that the advert is for milk, even if they could not read the word "milk" or see any milk in the commercial.

3. Explicit/implicit communicative style: An explicit communicative style is characterised by presenting the information in a straightforward manner. An implicit communicative style relies on the audience's ability to grasp the main message, even if that message is not openly announced in the text. For example, a commercial text that reads "you should buy this product because it is good for your health" uses an explicit communicative style; the message is spelled out for the audience. However, a person's testimonial stating "I started feeling better after two weeks taking this product" makes use of an implicit communicative style. Ultimately, the message is the same in both cases, but the reader has to deduce what the latter text means, because it is not explicitly said.

4. Task-oriented/people-oriented: This dichotomy refers to the main purpose of the message; that is, whether a text seeks to achieve a specific goal – such as providing information – or whether it aims at establishing a social relation with its audience. For instance, a text that presents factual information about a product is categorised as task-oriented. On the contrary, an advertisement that reads mainly as a joke is people-oriented, as its role is mainly social.

5. Involvement/independence politeness strategies: Involvement politeness strategies seek to establish and maintain social relations between interlocutors by including the interlocutors in the message or activity. Independence strategies mainly seek to respect each participant's personal space and freedom of action.

6. References to the company as group/individual: This category focuses on the use of linguistic references to the advertised company. Do companies describe themselves as individual entities or as groups of people? This can be observed, for example, in the use of singular/plural verb forms or pronouns.

The qualitative stage makes use of ATLAS.ti software in order to systematise and annotate the sample. Additionally, this computer program produces a series of tables containing the number of hits for each category. At this point, two external researchers replicate the analysis on part of the sample. This contributes to the present study's reliability and internal validity.

Data

A corpus with internal comparability is needed so as to collect a sample for this study. This condition may seem a simple matter at first sight; however, as a result of the current degree of segmentation of markets, it is extremely difficult to gather a statistically significant collection of promotional texts due to all the marketing variables that influence advertising design. In other words, in the current state of retail markets worldwide, marketing and advertising companies need to narrow their target audiences to include the slightest details. For example, it is no longer enough to talk about teenagers; now companies need to acknowledge the existence of subcultures or urban tribes as defined by Maffesoli (1996), and select which specific group their products are aimed at, for instance, gothics, skaters, B-boys, emos, etc.

Returning to the main hypothesis of this study, the model of analysis relies on the assumption that culture seeps into any kind of verbal or non-verbal behaviour performed by the individuals in a specific culture, including their communicative styles. In this sense, texts are ultimately seen as cultural products and, as such, they should reflect their culture-specific communicative patterns. Thus, these patterns could, in theory, be tracked down in the texts produced in that group's professional writing culture, for example press advertisements. It is not being suggested here that any text could be used as a sample, though. On the contrary, the texts should have been produced by members of the same community, using similar channels of communication, and addressing similar audiences. Thus, in order to achieve the maximum degree of similarity among the advertisements in the sample, it has been decided that all the texts should target the Spanish middle class segment and should promote mid-range food and beverages.

The professional publication Anuncios.com has been selected as source for the sample since, as claimed in its home website, this is the leading advertising journal in Spain. Every year, Anuncios.com publishes an annual compilation of the previous year's best Spanish advertisements in terms of effectiveness and creativity. The issues containing the advertisements for the period 2000-2009 are used, and 100 food advertisements have been randomly selected for this study. The first eight issues were originally published as print documents, whereas the compilations for 2008 and 2009 were digitally produced (CD-Rom). The decision to include a ten-year period seeks mainly to allow for a relatively big sample. Given that each issue includes advertisements for all types of products, a significant number of years has been needed so as to collect 100 advertisements for food and beverages.

Results

In this section, the most outstanding features observed in the corpus are presented, along with some sample advertisements which serve as illustrations. After that, the results produced by the statistical analysis are offered and discussed.

Qualitative analysis

To begin with, the use of verbal and visual elements is considered. As far as the images are concerned, these do not necessarily portray the products themselves. Sometimes small groups of people enjoying a social gathering are depicted; whether these scenes include the products or not seems to be a matter of choice among the advertisers. Consequently, while some texts do not show the products at all, others picture them explicitly or implicitly. In other words, sometimes the presence of the goods is suggested by the food on the table, the drinks in the glasses, or by some other alternative visual strategies, as illustrated by Figure 1. These suggestions are usually noted to work in combination with the verbal message. Other times, instead of displaying the products integrated in the scene, they are presented in their respective packaging, aside from the main image.

Figure 1 illustrates *Baqué*'s advertisement for coffee. As the reader may observe, the product itself is not shown; nevertheless, there is a play on words that, in combination with the image, implicitly suggests what is being

advertised. In other words, although the merchandise itself cannot be seen, the phrase *nuestra marca de café* ("our coffee trademark") works in combination with the image of a coffee cup stain on a tablecloth to suggest that this advertisement is about coffee.
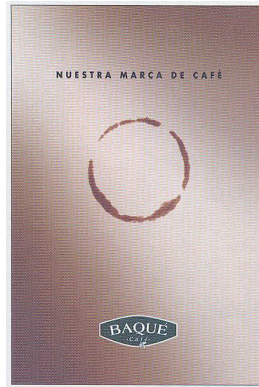

Figure 1. Advertisement for *Baqué* coffee.

The message plays with the fact that the Spanish word *marca* has the meanings of both "brand" and "stain", just like the term "mark" in English. Thus, the whole phrase *nuestra marca de café* could refer to "our brand of coffee" or "the stain left by our coffee". The disambiguation process is solved when the verbal is combined with the visual, a coffee stain. In the mind of the reader, this option becomes too obvious to be the real meaning. Thus, "the stain left by our coffee" turns into a humorous double meaning, while "our brand of coffee" is perceived as the core message.

Additionally, the qualitative analysis reveals an unexpected fact, namely that the organisation of the verbal and non-verbal elements on the page seems to run on a diagonal axis – or structure line (Leborg, 2006) –, particularly from the left top corner towards the right bottom. This particular disposition leads the audience's eyes towards the right bottom corner, which has been identified by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 180) as the space for key information. Further observation of specific examples (see Figure 2) shows that the company's logo and name are usually placed in that specific area.
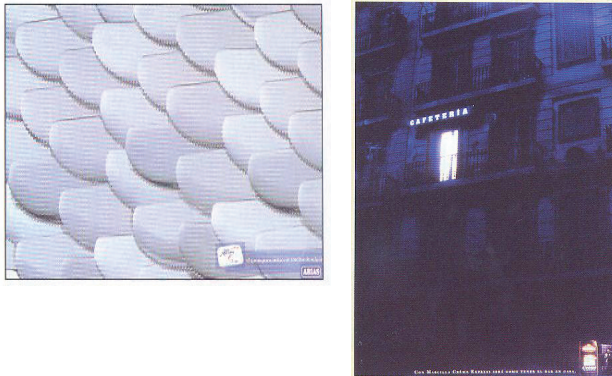
Figure 2. Display of verbal and non-verbal elements on diagonal structure lines.

Regarding the transmission of information, the present study has tried to identify the orchestration of symbolic language and contextual cues. In that sense, the former category refers to the information conveyed by the text itself, while the latter is made up of the references to the external context. In most cases, contextual cues are resorted to in order to convey the main message; that is, the most significant information in the whole advertisement is usually expressed by referring to some external element. Besides, some advertisements combine both symbolic language and contextual cues. When this is the case, the contextual cues tend to refer to the products, while the symbolic language is introduced in order to create some humorous effect. A less significant amount of texts, however, use contextual cues with two particular aims, namely (i) to embed multiple referents and information in single utterances, and (ii) to refer to background information or cultural referents.

Figure 3 reproduces *Silueta*'s advertisement for bread. The first characteristic that may catch the readers' attention is the fact that no verbal elements are present other than the name of the brand, *Silueta*. Nevertheless, this advertisement is loaded with implicit meanings that convey the characteristics of the product.

At first sight, the advertisement seems to show two slices of bread, placed one next to the other, with an empty space in between. This space, however, is not unpremeditated. In fact, it is this white area that conveys most of the message's implications when combined with the brand's name. *Silueta* – Spanish for "silhouette" or "figure" – works with the white area, shaped as

a slender lady's body, to trigger two main ideas: (i) that empty space is the silhouette of a slender lady, and (ii) *Silueta* bread helps people achieve or keep a slender figure. Therefore, the only thing left is to include the product image, so that the prospective customers can identify it in the supermarket.
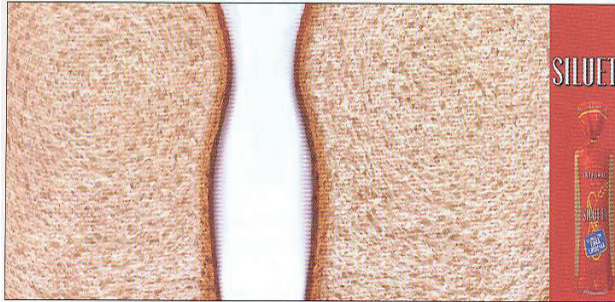

Figure 3. Advertisement for *Silueta* bread.

Moving on to the purpose of the texts, their main goal appears to be the establishment or maintenance of a social relation between seller and buyer, as well as to draw on emotional responses, rather than providing factual information about the products. The two different strategies identified in the sample are: (i) invoking something familiar to the audience so that they can relate it to the brand, and (ii) providing entertainment.

Figure 4. Advertisements for *Carbonell*'s olive oil (left), and *Cruzcampo*'s beer (right).

An interesting example that combines both strategies can be seen in Figure 4 (right advertisement), which reproduces a campaign designed for *Cruzcampo*, a well-established beer brand in Spain. In it, *Cruzcampo* imitates *Carbonell*'s brand image (left advertisement). *Carbonell* is a Spanish olive oil brand established in the mid-19th century; thus, *Cruzcampo* takes advantage of *Carbonell*'s fame, and introduces humour by disguising their beer as olive oil. The humorous effect is reinforced by the slogan *En carnaval nada es lo que parece* – "In Carnival time things are not what they seem to be".

Quantitative analysis

The aim of this part is to try to identify significant patterns in the macro- and micro-linguistic features of the sample. As shown in Table 2, these include the use of verbal and non-verbal codes, symbolic language, contextual cues, explicit/implicit communicative style, people-/task-orientation, involvement and independence strategies, and forms of reference to the company.

Category	Valid Texts	Total instances
Verbal codes	100	147
Non-verbal codes	100	100
Symbolic language	100	29
Contextual cues	100	83
Explicit communicative style	100	16
Implicit communicative style	100	45
Task-oriented	100	0
People-oriented	100	98
Involvement strategies	100	40
Independence strategies	100	0
Company as individual	100	0
Company as group	100	8

Table 2. Statistical results for the Spanish sample of print advertisements.

In relation to the presence of verbal and non-verbal elements, the analysis of the corpus indicates that each advertisement contains an average of 1.47 verbal elements for each image, which is a rather low ratio. Table 3 below depicts the distribution of written elements in the sample. Thus, it can be seen that most texts contain one or two instances of verbal language, while only three texts where found to include three instances. Additionally, four advertisements were observed to include no verbal elements at all.

Instances per text	No. of texts	Percentage (%)
0	4	4.0
1	48	48.0
2	45	45.0
3	3	3.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 3. Distribution of the verbal elements in the Spanish sample.

Moving on to the relation between symbolic language and contextual cues, the statistical data suggests a preference for the latter (see Table 2). In fact, while 83 contextual cues are identified in the corpus, there are only 29 instances of symbolic language. Besides, these results should be interpreted in combination with the communicative style used, that is, explicit or implicit. Specifically, 45 advertisements in the sample use an implicit communicative style, whereas 16 opt for an explicit style. As a result, it appears that the average presence of implicit messages in the sample is higher than the amount of explicit ones. Thus, it can be inferred that there is a tendency to choose implicitness over explicitness.

As far as politeness strategies are concerned, the analysis suggests that involvement strategies are present to a certain extent in the sample. More specifically, 40 instances are found in a total of 35 texts, five of these texts containing two instances. Among the politeness strategies found, the most representative realisations are: (i) giving advice, (ii) including the audience within the company's identity or activities, and (iii) offering gifts in the form of information about the history of the company or recipes that can be prepared using the product being advertised. Closely connected to the politeness strategies used, the overall orientation of the texts must be considered. In that sense, the quantitative results seem to indicate that Spanish advertising is prone to the production of people-oriented messages (98%), as opposed to texts that focus on information transfer.

As for the forms of self-reference – that is, references to the company – only 8 instances are present in the sample. Consequently, the statistical significance of the quantitative data is virtually nil. Nevertheless, all of the cases found make use of plural pronouns and plural verb forms that refer to the company as a group. In consequence, it cannot be stated that the results are statistically significant, although there seems to be a common tendency to refer to the company as a group.

Discussion

This section tries to draw connections between the results of the qualitative and the quantitative analyses and the Spanish cultural values identified by previous studies. Then, some practical implications for the design of print advertising aimed at Spanish audiences are sketched.

On the one hand, the findings suggest that the visual components tend to be foregrounded, while the verbal codes seem to remain in the background. On the other hand, there seems to be a preference to use contextual cues to convey the most relevant information in the texts, whereas symbolic language is typically resorted to in order to introduce added meanings, such as humorous effects or puns. When combined, these features, which coincide with those identified by De Mooij and Keegan (1994) and De Mooij (2004), create an implicit communicative style that relies upon the receiver in order to accomplish the communicative purpose of the text. This extra effort imposed upon the addressees, however, provides them with a reward in the form of entertainment or emotional incentives.

Following the literature, the aforementioned features may be explained in correlation to Spain's high context dependence index and moderate individualism (Varner & Beamer, 2005; Guillén-Nieto, 2009; Ferraro, 2010). More specifically, high context cultures tend to rely on non-verbal elements, such as visual or external factors, in order to convey their messages (Walker, Walker & Schmitz, 2003). In fact, Vatrapu and Suthers (2007) state that communication in high context cultures contains a high emotional load, and messages are designed to be enjoyed by both producer and receiver. Moreover, explicit information does not seem to be so central for these cultures, since the most relevant contents are embedded in the context.

High context cultures promote social gatherings which, in turn, facilitate the transmission of information, mainly through face-to-face talk. In this regard, Oliveras Vilaseca (2000) suggests that the system works given the cultural organization of interpersonal relations. In other words, high context cultures are typically characterized by their emphasis on personal relations and social interaction where information is shared by the different members of the group. This is reflected at a microlinguistic level by the use of involvement strategies that establish or maintain a social relation between the advertiser and the audience. Furthermore, in high context cultures, social interaction promotes the creation of a shared background knowledge that can be resorted to in subsequent messages, allowing for a higher amount of

implicitness. As a consequence, communicative activities tend to include substantial exchanges devoted to the maintenance of social relations, which encourage the creation of people-oriented messages. Thus, these cultures tend to display an implicit communicative style with a strong people-orientation, which is reinforced by the use of involvement strategies and a heavy visual load (as opposed to verbal communication).

The previous ideas have a series of implications for the design of press advertisements aimed at a Spanish audience. Table 4 summarises the main socio-cultural expectations identified in this paper. As the reader may observe, the first column on the left corresponds to the two value dimensions selected for this article, that is, context dependence and individualism index. The second column contains the language-associated behaviour that previous research has linked to the value dimensions explored (Trompenaars & Wooliams, 2003; Walker, Walker & Schmitz, 2003; Guillén-Nieto, 2009; Díaz Pérez, 2003), and that have found empirical support in the present study. Finally, the column on the right summarises the language-specific behaviour found to be characteristic for the Spanish national culture in the genre of graphic advertising of food and beverages.

Value dimension	Language-associated behaviour	Language-specific behaviour
Context dependence	Implicitness/ Explicitness Contextual cues/ Symbolic language Non-verbal codes/ Verbal codes	• Promotes implicitness for primary message (for example, details about product) • Promotes explicitness for secondary/additional messages (for example, humour) • Promotes contextual cues • Advertisements contain 1 image and 1-2 verbal messages
Individualism index	People-oriented/ Task-oriented Politeness strategies	• Promotes people-orientation • Involvement strategies are preferred

Table 4. Socio-cultural expectations for Spanish press advertising.

Additionally, the overarching goal of the present paper is to offer a set of communicative and multimodal strategies that might help advertising professionals who wish to promote products in Spain, as well LSP practitioners. Therefore, some suggestions have been extracted from the results of this study with the aim of summarising the main socio-cultural expectations identified in the sample. The guidelines listed below are based on empirical evidence, and are, of course, by no means prescriptive rules.

1. Try to provide an eye-catching visual element that makes the product look interesting and desirable.

2. Try to structure the elements on the diagonal axis, especially top-left to bottom-right.

3. Try not to convey your message too explicitly. The Spanish audience will expect the message to be conveyed in a rather implicit style.

4. Try to use explicitness for humorous effects.

5. Try to produce a people-oriented text.

6. Try to make your audience feel involved.

To sum up, the findings of the present study highlight the need to consider the socio-cultural expectations of the target audience in the design of press advertising; this seems especially relevant when the advertiser and the recipient have different socio-cultural backgrounds. In particular, this article has tried to shed some light on the specific conventions that apply to Spanish press advertising for food and beverages at the micro- and macrolinguistic levels, and has produced a set of communicative and multimodal strategies to aid those interested in addressing a Spanish audience. Nevertheless, the present research has faced certain limitations that need to be addressed in the future so as to broaden the collective understanding of the genre.

In terms of the questions asked, the present paper has concentrated on the influence that context dependence and the individualism index have on the realisations of press advertising. Future studies could expand the range of cultural values investigated. For instance, other culture-specific behaviours, such as uncertainty avoidance, masculinity or power distance, could be explored in order to find out the extent to which they influence the design of advertising campaigns at the micro- and macrolinguistic levels.

Regarding the sample, this paper looked at a very specific category of advertising texts. Future research could replicate this study on texts promoting other types of products in order to quantify the reoccurrence of the patterns observed. Similarly, another interesting possibility would be to investigate other media. While some scholars claim that print media still have a central role in advertising today (see, for instance, Ayanwale, Alimi & Ayanbimipe, 2005), it is undeniable that new media, such as social networks and mobile applications, are expanding the possibilities available to

advertising professionals. This, in turn, opens up interesting research lines as shown by the growing number of publications exploring issues of online commercial communication such as website design (Singh & Matsuo, 2004; Hermeking, 2005; Würtz, 2005).

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