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The Function of Cultural Dimensions in For-Profit Higher Education Marketing

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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MBA, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, 1992

BA, Newcomb College of Tulane University, 1986

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Despite allocating budgets to attract and grow worldwide student market share, increasing enrollments from targeted market international student pools remains a concern for private for-profit schools. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies that for-profit university business marketing leaders use to increase the enrollment of online Brazilian students. The first group with three participants was based in the United States and the second group, in Brazil, contained two participants. Cultural dimensions theory was the conceptual framework of this study. Data were collected in the form of interviews, website presence, social media, and e-mail message campaigns used to increase online Brazilian student enrollments. The data were analyzed for emerging themes via Yin's five-step process of analysis. The themes that arose from the findings included consumer intelligence, demographic profiles, the use of certain marketing channels, and call-to-action types of marketing campaigns. The implications for positive social change are reaching more prospective students with a marketing message that aligns better with cultural dimensions, which will lead to more enrollments.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my late mother Fulya O. Nuri, MD, and my late father Sengun O. Nuri, DDS, who always wanted me to be a doctor. I wish they were still here to share in my journey. I am sure they would have been happy to see me learn at this level. I also would like to dedicate this study to my husband Jeremy Clark, who gave me so much encouragement along this journey. Without his support, this would not have been possible.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Establishing marketing processes for a service sector business in different countries requires consideration of many factors. One factor, *national culture,* permits the comparison of cross-cultural marketing strategy transferability across countries (Engelen & Brettel, 2011). I explored the function that national cultures had in the creation and execution of global higher education marketing strategy to increase the enrollment of online Brazil students.

Background of the Problem

By exploring national culture with marketing efforts, marketing strategists can study group-purchasing behavior via a lens of shared common attitudes ingrained in a population (Petersen, Kushwaha, & Kumar, 2015). Even within a single country, national culture is not homogeneous, and regional differences can affect the marketing of organizational services (Engelen & Brettel, 2011). By understanding the implication of national culture on marketing strategy, marketing leaders could be more effective in the allocation of funds to their marketing mix and increase enrollments.

In this doctoral study, I explored how two for-profit schools' business marketing leaders executed their strategies to penetrate a South American consumer market consisting of Brazilian higher education students. I studied the role that national culture served, if any, when marketing leaders formulated a country-specific market penetration strategy. I hoped to discover how business marketing leaders executed a cross-cultural marketing strategy differently in a U.S.-based global school versus a local Brazilian university with an online presence.

Problem Statement

Marketing managers commoditize higher education globally while ignoring the importance of culture and intellectual independence of a target nation (Altbach, 2015). In 2017, private for-profit schools in the United States represented 59.9% of the total market share of exclusively distance education programs, 0.9% of their student population attended programs while residing outside the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The general business problem is that in the United States, despite allocating budgets to attract and grow worldwide student market share, increasing enrollments from targeted market international student pools remains a concern for private for-profit schools. The specific business problem is that some for-profit university business marketing leaders lack country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies to increase the enrollment of online Brazilian students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this doctoral study was to discover the country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies that business marketing leaders use to increase the enrollment of online Brazilian students. I chose a qualitative multiple case study to analyze this population of global marketing leaders to expand the understanding of cross-cultural marketing business practices. I collected data from for-profit university marketing leaders in Columbia, Maryland; Amsterdam, Holland; and Rio Preto, Brazil.

I selected these locations because these sites have access to recruiting students globally. Data from this study might help higher educational marketing leaders identify the importance of specific cultural factors to consider when creating marketing

campaigns and choosing lead generation channels to recruit Brazilian students wanting to study online. If culturally sensitive marketing strategies allowed marketing leaders to select marketing channels and to improve the marketing message conveyed relative to a specific culture, social change could occur as more Brazilian students find university programs that better fit their educational goals.

Nature of the Study

The qualitative method allows researchers to gather in-depth data, discover the meaning of the unknown, and reconstruct the stories of participants on a conceptual level (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). A quantitative methodology represents a rigorous approach to determining relationships between multiple variables (Hoe & Hoare, 2012), but surveying marketing leaders at various higher education institutions was beyond the scope of this study. A mixed-method study combines both qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies (Caruth, 2013). A mixed-method study, such as Ke and Kwak (2013) conducted, to explore the influence of culture on attitudes toward online learning might have provided a deeper understanding of many different marketing strategies.

Both quantitative and mixed-method research were inappropriate for this study as no surveys were conducted to collect data, nor did I examine relationships between variables through statistical analysis. By exploring country-specific marketing strategies, I sought to ascertain if business marketing leaders approached target markets in a similar way domestically and abroad. A qualitative research method was the most appropriate for this study and allowed me to discover how marketing leaders modify their marketing channel selection for new student recruitment, from new media to print media, when

creating country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies. A quantitative method study could identify measurable differences related to increased enrollments because of a marketing message toward a target enrollment nation and could recognize any regional differences that may exist (Wu, 2014). Hofstede (1980) designed cultural dimensions theory to be applied at the national level, not at the individual level (Brewer & Venaik, 2012). Such a study could provide researchers rich data.

I chose the comparative case study approach instead of conducting either a narrative or grounded research design; narrative would be too narrow in scope for this study and grounded research would be too broad. I did not choose a phenomenological design that would have analyzed lived experiences, as Skiba and Disch (2014) did in their study. A true ethnographic research design would have required that I stay in Brazil for a longer duration of time than the scope of this project would allow, to be exposed to the culture and gather observations of participants over time. Case study qualitative research was the most used approach chosen across 199 international business (Brewer & Venaik, 2012).

Research Question

The central research question is: What country-specific and cultural-specific marketing strategies do some for-profit university business marketing leaders use to increase the enrollment of online Brazilian students?

Interview Questions

The interview questions I used, which can be found in Appendix A, were:

1. What country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies do you as a for-profit university business marketing leader use to increase online enrollments of Brazilian students?

2. How does your country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategy vary in characteristics from market to market?

3. When determining a country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategy, do you focus on a specific demographic profile or cultural group within a country?

4. How do you define the target market?

5. What country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies do you use to determine the driving factors for potential students to enroll online?

6. How do you determine which marketing channels to choose to engage potential online Brazilian students?

7. What are the main sources of market feedback you collect from potential students about the effectiveness of your country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies to enroll online Brazilian students?

8. How do you adjust your country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies based on market feedback from potential online Brazilian students?

9. Do you have any additional comments you would like to share regarding the country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies you use to recruit online Brazilian students?

Conceptual Framework

Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory described how people's cultural orientation influences awareness and understanding of the world around them. Engelen and Brettel (2011) discovered that in 60% of the cross-culturally oriented marketing studies they reviewed, researchers used this theory. These cultural dimensions represented either indices or ranges in relation to two terms on a 0 to 100 scale in Hofstede's preliminary cross-cultural study (Hofstede, 1980). The first four dimensions included (a) power distance index, (b) individualism versus collectivism, (c) masculinity versus femininity, and (d) uncertainty avoidance index, (Hofstede, 1980; O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 2004) to which (e) long-term versus short-term orientation and (f) indulgence versus restraint were subsequently added (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, & Vinken, 2008). I chose Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory as part of the conceptual framework for this study to help demonstrate the importance of culture in defining attitudes at a national or regional level and because of its role as a conceptual framework in many studies related to cross-cultural marketing.

Operational Definitions

The terms Hofstede used to describe cultural dimensions are specific to his work and are used as the basis for my study. They are grouped here to represent two extremes of a spectrum of cultural dimensions.

Collectivism versus individualism: In a collectivist-centric nation, the group is the primary unit and represents a tight societal structure; thus, what is best for the group drives actions. Collectivist societies are group oriented in decision-making, and social

relationships define the ideas of the group and the meaning of life and how members of the group expect to be cared for by the group. Conversely, national cultures that embrace individualism consider the individual the most significant unit and represent a loose societal structure. Individualistic societies are self-oriented, and the needs, ideas, or preferences of the individual drive the decision-making process (Hofstede, 1980).

Ecological fallacy: The error made when researchers attribute to an individual generalizations that pertain to a culture at a national level (McSweeney, 2013).

Indulgent versus restraint: An indulgent society is one in which the expression of desires and feeling is allowed and condoned, primarily as they relate to pleasure and leisure pastimes. Conversely, restraint represents a society that controls gratifications, and the expression of desires and feelings are not allowed or condoned (Arenas-Gaitán, Ramírez-Correa, & Rondán-Cataluña, 2011; Hofstede, Jonker, & Verwaart, 2010).

Long-term orientation versus short-term orientation: Long-term orientation represents societies that place more value on future rewards concerning persistence and frugality, and short-term orientation places value on the present and past giving weight to tradition and satisfying social responsibilities (Arenas-Gaitán, Ramírez-Correa, & Rondán-Cataluña, 2011; Hofstede et al., 2008; Hofstede, 2010).

Masculinity versus femininity: A masculine society is one where defined and distinct social gender roles exist for men and women and characteristics, such as assertiveness, wealth acquisition, and power-seeking, drive society. In contrast, a feminine society is one where a significant distinction does not exist between gender

roles, role overlap exists, and society emphasizes quality of life over competitiveness and materialism (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 1983).

Power distance index: Power distance describes how the less powerful members of society accept the inequitable distribution of power between themselves and those in positions of power and how the most powerful in society view their power stance (Hofstede, 1980).

Uncertainty avoidance index: Uncertainty avoidance describes the degree to which participants in a society feel threatened by unknown, vague, or fluid situations and the steps these members take to minimize factors of uncertainty by creating employment stability, adhering to rules, not accepting deviance of mindsets, and embracing absolute truths (Hofstede, 1980).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions define the fundamental characteristics of a study (Simon, 2011). Certain assumptions to conduct this study included the view that Brazilians' perceptions toward online learning contributed to their selection of a university program. I assumed that factors such as Internet access and the availability of computers to potential participants in distance learning at the university level were adequate for my study. I did not explore the importance of the cost of online programs in university students' selection process. I briefly examined the assumption that the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) of Brazil did not completely recognize online learning as an acceptable modality of learning for accreditation purposes. Another assumption made was that marketing

leaders had the requisite authority to execute the marketing strategies and that the participants would be truthful in their responses.

Limitations are identified as possible weaknesses of a study (Simon, 2011). One limitation was not conducting this study over a longer time. If I had more schools to choose from, I could have gathered more insight from a larger pool of data. By interviewing three individuals from two for-profit university marketing teams targeting Brazil, rather than marketing leaders from many schools, I encountered a potential weakness. A more extensive pool of data may have helped to identify regional differences that may exist or differences between private and public schools, but such an endeavor was beyond the scope of this study. If I had chosen a larger group of schools to participate in this study, the results would have more closely reflected the marketing strategies of all higher learning institutions' marketing teams. By not examining the marketing strategies of all higher education options marketing in Brazil, I did not capture differences that might exist on attitudes toward online learning in many parts of the country.

Ecological fallacy will occur if Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory is interpreted at the individual level rather than at the national level (Brewer & Venaik, 2012). I only drew conclusions from the cultural dimensions theory at the national level, rather than at the individual level, to prevent erroneous results (Brewer & Venaik, 2012). I avoided the misapplication of Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory to the individual.

Regarding delimitations, Svensson and Doumas (2013) posited that in the case study method of research, the purpose of delimitations is to describe the qualities most essential to the topic under investigation and those elements that help to define the scope of the study. By setting a delimitation of two on the main parameters I investigated, I chose a number appropriate to a comparative case study approach to research. Simon (2011) interpreted delimitations as the boundaries to a study. In this study, only three sets of marketing leaders were interviewed at each for-profit university, including the main marketing strategist, marketing plan executioner, and marketing brand manager.

Researchers should set delimitations that are relevant and well aligned to the phenomena under study to accurately interpret the findings (Svensson & Doumas, 2013). During my study, I did not investigate all institutions of higher learning recruiting in Brazil. The delimitation of this study arose from the scope of the number of schools participating in the study and the number of marketing leaders I interviewed. In each element, I placed a delimitation of two for-profit universities to cover the scope of my research: two schools where I interviewed two marketing leaders tasked with creating strategy, two marketing leaders responsible for executing marketing strategy, and two marketing leaders tasked with brand management to help triangulate the data.

I set a delimitation on this study by not focusing on attitudes toward higher education in an online learning environment in private for-profit schools, nor did I concentrate on marketing campaigns and attitudes toward traditional public institution campus-based programs. Last, I did not focus on the perceptions of online learning held by education providers, nor did I examine other psychological aspects of e-learning

assimilation, such as evolutionary psychology (Wu & Chen, 2012), to determine factors conducive to online learning adaptation. These topics were beyond the scope of country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies that for-profit university business marketing leaders use to increase global enrollment levels.

Significance of the Study

The percent of Brazilian students participating in private higher education programs was another reason to justify the location for this study. By 2008, 75% of Brazilian higher education students were attending private institutions (Schwartzman, 2011). By 2017, the for-profit distance higher education market in the United States derived 0.9% of its student population from students who attended programs while residing outside the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). For-profit university marketing leaders who lack country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies could benefit from the findings of this study and possibly increase global enrollment levels for students from Brazil. From a social impact perspective, market penetration through more country-specific and cultural-specific marketing campaigns could influence the number of students attending a higher education program (Alfinito, Siqueira, & Torres, 2016). In the current market for private higher education in Brazil, international participants were limited in the scope of their market penetration. Brazilian society could benefit from an increase in the number of minority university students enrolled in a program of study (Darby, 2010).

Contribution to Business Practice

Identifying what country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies some for-profit university marketing leaders use to increase global enrollment levels would be some of the knowledge gained from this study. This knowledge might be useful when formulating market penetration strategies to global online higher education candidates. For-profit higher education institutions' business marketing leaders and their teams could review the results of this study and choose to reproduce them. By reexamining the country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies that some for-profit university leaders use to increase global enrollment levels, other for-profit university marketing leaders could learn from these strategies and modify their approach to increase global enrollment levels.

Marketing leaders could acknowledge the country-specific and culture-specific marketing processes observed as useful by the main strategist, the main executioner, and the brand manager at two private for-profit universities to increase global enrollment levels. For-profit university marketing teams could create more powerful marketing campaigns aimed at country-specific and culture-specific learners by adapting their strategic vision, adjusting market execution channels, and developing stronger brand awareness from the knowledge gained through this doctoral study.

Implications for Social Change

If for-profit university business marketing leaders were able to create country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies that lead to an increase in global enrollments, more students worldwide would have access to higher education. University

students in Brazil who, under the current system, are either too far away from a school to attend or are unable to find a space available to them under the current national high school exam testing system (Schwartzman, 2011) could have access to higher education. Another audience that might benefit from this study is the MEC in Brazil, which seeks to offer higher education programs to a larger group of potential college students in more ways.

Positive social change could occur if more students accessed a college degree as a result of knowledge gained on cultural influence on higher education enrollments. Eventually, educational marketing leaders could learn from the data gathered here to penetrate different global markets, where programs of study generated by one country could be exported to another. More students could achieve the goal of higher education worldwide.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

When reviewing the literature on this area of cross-cultural marketing, I focused on sources that referred to Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory. By doing so, I examined the function of this conceptual framework in marketing strategies and sought out articles specifically addressing the for-profit education market. I aimed to discover if strategists consider culture in the creation of country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies. I first introduce the literature on the conceptual framework and observed its historic role in the formulation of marketing strategy.

Next, I present the main microcultures in Brazil, the domestic target market for one of the two schools participating in my case study, to discover how different

marketers created a marketing strategy for higher education in Brazil. I discovered some of the barriers to market growth in Brazil while gathering information on the influence of the MEC as well as consumer perception in purchase decision-making that business marketing leaders at for-profit universities could consider when crafting country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies. Last, I discuss literature on cross-cultural marketing in countries beyond the Brazilian target market to briefly broaden the scope of my review.

My strategy to develop this literature review was to maintain a focus on cross-cultural marketing, Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory, and for-profit education and marketing within that sector to narrow the scope of my research. I reviewed the reference section of articles relevant to these themes to find further resources to add to my review. This literature review is compliant with the objective of 85% peer-reviewed sources and 85% of articles within the last 5 years in line with rubric requirements.

Cultural Dimensions Theory and the Purchase Decision-Making Process

Researchers have cited Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory in a variety of social science settings from business to psychology. This theory has been relevant across disciplines **(**Taras, Steel, & Kirkman, 2012). Hofstede (1980) defined four of the five dimensions of cultural dimension theory as (a) power distance index, (b) uncertainty avoidance index, (c) individualism versus collectivism, and (d) femininity versus masculinity during his IBM study. Later Hofstede (1983) introduced a fifth cultural dimension, (e) indulgence versus restraint. In 2010, Hofstede added a sixth cultural

dimension (f) short-term versus long-turn orientation (Hofstede, 2010). By detecting these different cultural dimensions for a country, marketing managers can identify the characteristics of a target market. Differences exist in cultural dimensions between developed and developing nations along dimension features.

Two cultural dimensions often studied with consumer purchase behavior include individualism and collectivism. Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory aspects of individualism versus collectivism suggested that consumer mindsets varied along developed nations and emerging market lines (Pauwels, Erguncu, & Yildirim, 2013). With purchase decision-making style, Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimension dominance varied from culture to culture (Leng & Botelho, 2010). Marketing managers who discovered which dimension was dominant in a culture for each trait could customize a marketing message more appropriate to a target market (Mainardes, Alves, Raposo, & Carvalho de Souza Domingues, 2012). Zaim, Benomar, and Bellafkih (2019) used data-mining tools to investigate the effectiveness of geotargeted direct marketing on consumer behavior and posited that consumers were more receptive to these messages than those of mass marketing. Brazilian culture follows a cultural dimension aligned with collectivism (Hofstede, 1980).

Collectivism is a Brazilian cultural dimension (Pauwels et al., 2013). In Brazil, the cultural attribute of collectivism gives rise to more brand loyalty and the need for prestige, which lead to a greater willingness to pay more for a product and fit with the culture, as well as a second cultural dimension where consumers exhibit an increased need to avoid uncertainty in purchase decision-making (Leng & Botelho, 2010).

Understanding the influence of collectivism and uncertainty avoidance in Brazilian consumer purchase behavior would allow marketing strategists to clarify how to formulate a market penetration strategy. Historically, scholars have developed methods to investigate the influence of culture on consumer purchase behavior (Cleveland, Rojas-Méndez, Laroche, & Papadopoulous, 2016; Leng & Botelho, 2010).

Cultural Theory's Impact on Marketing From a Historic Perspective

Various theories on cultural influence on purchasing behavior at a national level emerged in the latter part of the 20th century. Hofstede (1980) developed a theory where sets of cultural dimensions potentially differentiated global consumer behavior. These different cultural dimensions could be useful to marketers when studying how to market to different countries worldwide. Present thought on marketing to various regions—ranging from emerging markets, such as in Brazil, to a more developed one, such as the United Kingdom—again relied on cultural dimensions and referred to Hofstede's (1980) definitions (Pauwels et al., 2013). These two markets were different from one another in economic, regulatory, and cultural factors (Pauwels et al., 2013). Marketing strategists who use these cultural theories could stratify a target market, in part, along economic lines tied to cultural lines (Cleveland et al., 2016). Globalization and national identity have been instrumental in determining how to create a marketing strategy (Cleveland et al., 2016).

Both national identity and globalization are factors to consider when creating a marketing strategy. National culture differs in scope, ranging from a global perspective to microcultures, implying that cultural dimensions have many layers (Volkema, 2012).

When creating a marketing strategy, marketing managers need to be cognizant of the roles national identity and globalization perform in consumer product selection, and depending on the product marketed, one of these factors could be a more relevant consideration than the other (Cleveland et al., 2016).

In the realm of higher education, Latin America and the Caribbean lagged behind the rest of the world when forming internationalization strategies to attract both international students and scholars to educate the population (Gacel-Ávila, 2014). Higher education marketing leaders who recognized the factors more prominent in an individual culture toward a product could address the needs of a target market from a cultural perspective and possibly increase global enrollments. Identifying some of the subcultures in Brazil would provide clarity about how specific target markets may make purchasing decisions.

Defined Microcultures in Brazil

Marketers must develop an understanding of the importance of the four principal subcultures in Brazil. Most of the economic growth originated from these four subcultures (Volkema, 2012). Differences and similarities existed between Paulistas (from São Paulo), Cariocas (from Rio de Janeiro), Mineiros (from Minas Gerais), and Gauchos (from Rio Grande do Sul), along five motivational factors: (a) achievement, (b) self-direction, (c) enjoyment, (d) security, and (e) restrictive conformity (Volkema (2012). Often the examination of subcultures within a culture could be more enlightening than contrasting across cultures at a national level to determine the impact of culture in the market (Engelen & Brettel, 2011). Generational subcultures were another relevant

way to define Brazilian culture, where Millennials demonstrated different cultural characteristics than the previous generation in their more individualistic stance (Ralston et al., 2015).

Brazilian culture is not monolithic; interconnection and differences of intentions and behaviors defined these different regional groups through the theory of planned behavior (Volkema, 2012). By understanding the history and the personality of these subcultural regions, as well as generational demographic differences, marketers could adjust their marketing messages to resonate with the cultural orientation of each subculture. Steenkamp (2019) contrasted global consumer culture to local consumer culture and found that in different parts of the world, countries were pulling back from interest in globalization, so local consumer culture became even more relevant to marketing message effectiveness with consumers and that local consumer culture was most accurate when discerning subcultures within a culture. Even cultures with an affinity for history or language could display different market characteristics about a similar market of higher education, as in, for example, the comparison of two Portuguese-speaking countries such as Brazil and Portugal.

Marketing Strategy for the Higher Education: Target Market Brazil

Despite the common language in Brazil and Portugal, marketers needed to adjust higher education marketing strategies to address country-specific factors that define the private education market in each country. As for likenesses, both Brazilian and Portuguese students treated higher education as a commodity, a common market trend (Mainardes et al., 2012). In Brazil, a sizable private sector higher education market

existed (Mainardes et al., 2012). By 2008, 75% of the Brazilian higher education market originated in private institutions (Schwartzman, 2011). Although entrance into the Brazilian public higher education system required passing a national exam that favored more affluent students who had attended private secondary school, the majority of private schools did not require prospective students to take such an exam (Schwartzman & Knobel, 2016). To remain marketable and to increase enrollments, institutions differentiated themselves by developing an image of value concerning an intangible product, education, with a variable pricing strategy while utilizing public relations and word-of-mouth to help create the appearance of value in potential students as part of their marketing strategies (Mainardes et al., 2012).

Another way to define value in higher education came through the setting of international standards, which allowed a highly competitive market for higher education to develop globally and where for-profit institutions were instrumental (Steiner-Khamsi, 2015). For-profit institutions who worked to international standards were able to increase market share through enrollment growth. To market value in services industries, such as education, consumers needed to have two-way rather than one-way communication, where universities connected with students and relayed their marketing messages through social media (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). Marketers perceived Facebook to be an effect network to reach consumers and to gather marketing analytics from their online selections and behavior (Markić, Bijakšić, & Bevanda, 2016; Moro, Pires, Rita, & Cortez, 2018). Higher educational institution marketers used branding as a mechanism to project value and to reach prospective students from beyond their local market, by

developing a unified image across stakeholders and promoting a positive academic

reputation (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014; Drori, 2013), rather than creating a country-

specific or culture-specific marketing image exclusive to different stakeholders. Both

stakeholders buy-in and perceived reputation of a higher education institution were traits

that led to the school as more competitive in the global education market (Pucciarelli &

Kaplan, 2016).

Relative to online learning, students sought ease of use and socialization as traits

that provided value (Boling, Hough, Krinsky, Saleem, & Stevens, 2012; Garrett, 2019;

Machado-Da-Silva, de Souza Meirelles, Filenga, & Brugnolo Filho, 2014). Through

identification of country-specific target market characteristics, marketers could reach

specific markets more readily. An historic perspective of the scope of the role of culture

in the creation of marketing strategy would provide marketers with an opportunity to

determine how their marketing efforts could fit into the overall marketing landscape

(Engelen & Brettel, 2011).

Examining Findings About Cross-Cultural Marketing Studies

Scholars did not always view the definitions of cross-cultural marketing methods

of other researchers to be effective. Different scholar teams approached how cross-

cultural marketing research should be conducted from a variety of contradictory

perspectives. Each group was often critical of how others had interpreted the cross-

cultural landscape before them (Craig & Douglas, 2011). Cross-cultural marketing

studies conducted from the 1990s through 2008 were either North American or

European-centric, and the proportion of South American authorship of such studies was

too small to be reported (Engelen & Brettel, 2011; Rumbley & Proctor, 2019). Researchers only examined South America in 9% of the 99 cross-cultural marketing studies conducted (Engelen & Brettel, 2011). Researchers concerned with market segmentation strategies aimed at emerging markets needed to take into consideration the role of a socioeconomic class level rather than simply regarding regional homogeneity in a market (Schlager & Maas, 2013). Consumers in emerging markets did not differentiate in perception between local and international brands in market segmentation and viewed both as carrying value, but on the contrary, product segmentation still needed to occur (Tanusondjaja, Greenacre, Banelis, Truong, & Andrews, 2015). For-profit university business marketing leaders would need to take into consideration variables such as socioeconomic factors and market segmentation characteristics in addition culture to create country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies increasing global enrollments to Brazil.

Craig and Douglas (2011) reviewed the work of Engelen and Brettel claiming that some of the results rendered were attributable to the selections the researchers chose to examine. By limiting the journals under investigation to only those based out of North America and Europe, Engelen and Brettel (2011) had formed a study group that was English based and white-centric to review, in a world where many other countries that chose to publish in languages other than English were overlooked in the sample under study (Craig & Douglas, 2011).

Those involved in the formulation of cross-cultural marketing research questions, and those posing the questions, often had an ethnocentric bias related to their cultural

dimensions, and as such, they contributed to a significant error of understanding of the market (de Mooij, 2015). Engelen and Brettel concluded that many of the other scholars were predominantly North American trained, and as a result would carry that bias while Craig and Douglas argued that although professionally trained in North American many of these researchers originated from other continents, often Asia possibly adding a second bias. Craig and Douglas addressed issues with a cross-cultural perspective that Engelen and Brettel overlooked. Cultural dimensions pertained to a national level and not an individual one; researchers mistakenly used Hofstede's cultural dimensions to analyze consumer behavior at an individual level, while this theory pertains to evaluation at a national level (Brewer & Venaik, 2012; de Mooij, 2015; McSweeney, 2013). The term *ecological fallacy* described the error made when researchers attributed to an individual, generalizations that pertained to a culture at a national level (McSweeney, 2013).

To test if Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory could be applied at the individual level rather than the national one, Mazanec, Crotts, Gursoy, and Lu (2015) conducted a study and revealed their CVSCALE scale based on Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory was valid at the individual level. Where regional differences existed, these were not significant and studying culture at a national level was reliable. Different groups of scholars examined the same group of cross-cultural marketing studies and rendered varying opinions on the significance of researchers' cultural bias. The use of cultural dimensions theory could provide guidelines to marketers when formulating country-specific marketing plans.

Understanding Cultural Dimensions Theory's Impact on Global Online Education

Marketing leaders tasked with growing global enrollments needed to understand factors deemed to be valued by the target market when formulating a market penetration strategy. Relative to Brazil, access to higher education included barriers such as the lack of ability of potential students to attend a university program because of a shortage of adequate space in brick-and-mortar schools, or of great geographical distances to reach a university (Schwartzman, 2011). Identifying the key features and benefits that a target market seeks in a higher education program could help marketing managers position their offering more effectively (Mainardes et al., 2012). Having an international higher education marketing strategy was not sufficient for global success if schools do not dedicate resources to monitor and to evaluate marketing campaign outcomes in a strategic fashion (Marinoni & de Wit, 2019). Marketing managers must examine barriers to entry in detail to find solutions to major objections (Ulrich, Hollensen, & Boyd, 2014).

Impediments to Market Growth

Relative to Brazil, some barriers to market entry have continued to exist over decades, especially in online for-profit higher education; however, the specific barriers shifted over time. In the 2014 study by the National Institute for Higher Education Studies and Research (the Instituto Nacional de Estudio e Pesquisas Educacionais, INEP), the biggest challenge to online education market growth came from students dropping out of programs, which averaged as high as 25% of enrollments per the study, with a peak dropout rate of 75% (Associação Brasileira de Educação a Distância, 2014). Students dropping out of programs was the greatest challenge from 2010 through 2014

(Associação Brasileira de Educação a Distância, 2016). Another market entry obstacle that researchers discovered while conducting the 2014 INEP survey was of teacher pushback against online learning as an effective teaching method. This was an obstacle the Brazilian market must overcome. Through socialization at the occupation level, more Brazilian educators were developing an acceptance of distance education (Renda dos Santos & Okazaki, 2015). By the 2015 and 2016 studies, the main challenge had shifted from drop out concerns to the ability to innovate pedagogically and administratively while maintaining cutting edge technologically (Associação Brasileira de Educação a Distância, 2016).

In a global study surrounding for-profit distance education, educators did not embrace a static classroom agenda nor the lack of ability to customize course content as ethical concerns (Natale, Libertella, & Doran, 2015). Countries did not share course designs or disseminate online programs internationally to efficiently collaborate (Alumu & Thiagarajan, 2016). Programs created for a global student body did not always embrace the national values or learning styles of the various cultures (Altbach, 2015). Global online learning remained a small segment of the 5,000,000 pool of international students at traditional schools as a result of regulatory issues, personal preferences of students, and technological constraints (Garrett, 2019).

By 2010, online learning marketing in Brazil had not gained the traction needed to bridge this supply and demand gap in higher education (Leite, 2010). There existed a shortage of PhD level instructors for the local market demand (Pacheco, 2015). Despite the growth of online learning as a viable method, of course delivery in Brazil, attitudinal

impediments existed to the adoption and recognition of online learning programs (da Cruz Duran & da Costa, 2016). By 2010, for-profit higher education in Brazil comprised 32% of the overall higher education system, which consisted of major domestic participants as well as international schools penetrating this target market (Salto, 2014). Attitudes toward online learning did not differ significantly from country to country.

In the United States, online students with higher-levels of education had lower satisfaction levels toward online programs than those at lower-levels; meanwhile, ethnicity did not determine satisfaction toward online course delivery (Ke & Kwak, 2013). For-profit online institutions represented 32% of the United States online higher education market in 2013, and those enrollments occurred predominantly at schools that were not selective, offering a lower cost per student option for education (Deming, Goldin, Katz, & Yuchtman, 2015). Instructors were paid less than their counterparts in public and non-profit private higher education institutions and often were not allowed to become tenured employees (Berry & Blanchette, 2015). For-profit university business marketing leaders may have created country-specific and cultural-specific marketing strategies to increase global enrollment levels by addressing Brazilian students' cultural concerns toward online learning, some of which was a result of governmental regulation.

Some of the negative perception influencing the growth of the online higher education market stemmed from the policies of the Brazilian MEC (Squaiella & Righi, 2016). CAPES, a Brazilian federal agency, oversaw the accreditation of higher education programs nationwide (da Cruz Duran & da Costa, 2016; Guimarães & de Almeida, 2012). Multiple barriers to market entry existed in the Brazilian online higher education

market from both the educator and student perspective. Nonetheless, transnational online education had bridged the gap for older students who had not attended traditional domestic higher education institutions to gain needed marketable skills (Knight & McNamara, 2015).

In the United States, employers did not prefer students from for-profit schools over those who had attended community college, when hiring personnel (Darolia, Koedel, Martorell, Wilson, & Perez-Arce, 2015; Denice, 2015). They did not appear to care if a prospective employee had been to a community college, for-profit college, or fictitious one, as long as workers had a degree at that level (Deterding & Pedulla, 2016). At the bachelor's level of academic qualifications, employers hired for-profit school alumni in equal numbers to their public-school counterparts (Denice, 2015).

Human resource personnel, in hiring new employees, often did not value an online degree to the same level as one that came from a traditional school (Natale et al., 2015). For United States based institutions planning to penetrate the Brazilian higher education market, a comparison of some key cultural dimensions across cultures would provide marketers with guidance on how to customize a country-specific strategy for a market beyond the domestic one and would need to address some of these barriers to acceptance, such as via online modality. When attempting to penetrate an emerging market, such as Brazil, often the foreign multinational company would attempt market penetration by forming strategic alliances with a local company that was well-versed in the cultural norms of the target market (Ulrich et al., 2014).

Cultural Dimensions Theory: Comparison Between Different Cultures Over Time

Some difference in cultural dimensions factors between the United States and Brazil that existed around the first decade of the 21st century continued to have meaning more than a decade later. Four identifiable differences in cultural values existed for Brazil when compared to the United States: (a) For Brazil, power distance was high, where for the United States it was low; (b) Brazil was a more collective society while the United States was more individualistic; (c) Brazil tended to be evenly balanced between masculine and feminine while the United States was more masculine; and (d) in Brazil uncertainty avoidance was relatively strong while in the United States it was relatively weak (O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 2004).

By examining the United States and Brazilian business relations in the 21st century O'Keefe and O'Keefe (2004) revealed that some of the breakdown in communication stemmed from the differences that these two groups exhibited with respect to Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory. Using information gained from cross-cultural marketing in the broader business arena provided guidance to higher education marketing leaders on how to formulate a marketing message that addressed some of these key cultural dimensions' differences. Marketing leaders needed to consider a variety of factors when formulating a global higher education market penetration strategy. Some of the cultural factors that influence adaptability and acceptance of online learning as a viable and credible method of delivering classes stem from Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory (Taras et al., 2012).

Factors such as the level of technological readiness of a culture from both a cognitive and affective nature were grounded in cultural dimensions (Ferreira, da Rocha, & da Silva, 2013). Most research on cultural dimensions and a technology acceptance model (TAM) were either United States centric or lacked an attempt to incorporate culture into a survey (Nistor, Lerche, Weinberger, Ceobanu, & Heymann, 2014). TAM was used to study online learning adaptation in Brazil (Okazaki & Renda dos Santos, 2012). By mastering the cultural dimension predisposition of a country, marketing leaders could focus efforts on overcoming barriers created by a certain technological predisposition associated with that culture (Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2018). Next, I investigated the size of the online higher education market in Brazil, and how this market is stratified.

Defining the Market: Overview of the Brazilian Online Higher Education Market

The Brazilian government tracked online higher education trends through the INEP. From the 2016 survey results, INEP discovered that corporate and non-corporate open courses in Brazil reached 2,956,045 enrollments across programs (Associação Brasileira de Educação a Distância, 2016). This total represented 79.15% of the total enrollments reported from the 2016 survey of participating institutions where accredited programs were the remaining 20.85% of the total (Associação Brasileira de Educação a Distância, 2016). See Table 1. By comparison, most online higher education studies in Brazil occurred through open courses, while year over year enrollment in non-corporate based courses trended higher. When compared to accredited programs via MEC and CAPES, online programs outside of the accreditation system represented most of the

distance learning market. Online learning, as a recognized mode of course delivery, could

provide education to many underserved communities presently unable to reach a campus-

based university (Porto & Berge, 2008). Through the Open University System (UAB),

which did not confer degrees, but which consisted of efforts ranging from state to federal

governmental involvement, distance education reached a wide audience of prospective

students (da Cruz Duran & da Costa, 2016). The MEC was instrumental in the shaping of

consumer attitudes toward online learning in Brazil.

Table 1

Comparison of Overall Education Market to For-Profit Market

Year	Online education market size	Online open course % of total enrollment volume	Year over year % increase in open noncorporate courses market	For-profit market % of private education market	Noncorporate courses as a % of open course market	Dropout rate of open noncorporate course market
2010	2,961,921	69.0%				22.30%
2011	3,589,373	75.0%		60.5%		23.60%
2012	5,772,466	74.4%	52.2%			10.05%
2013	4,044,315	71.7%	53.0%		22.7%	17.08%
2014	3,868,706	75.0%	59.0%	34.0%	37.0%	25%–75%
2015	5,048,912	78.0%				26%–50%
2016	3,734,887	79.1%				11%–25%

Brazilian Governmental Attitudinal Influence Toward Online Learning

In the case of Brazil, to understand university students' attitudes toward online

learning in a cultural context, I needed to examine the historical role of the MEC. The

MEC perceived online learning to be a format to bring classroom education to a larger

percentage of their population; however, this same educational governing body had a

restrictive view on the scope of how online programs should be delivered (de Freitas &

Bandeira-de-Mello, 2012). In Brazil, the highly regulated and bureaucratic MEC was

slow to develop strategies to embrace the adoption of online learning as a viable way to

educate and hindered its growth potential (da Cruz Duran & da Costa, 2016). Many

schools were made to deliver online programs in the same way that the subject matter

would have been presented in a face-to-face environment (de Freitas & Bandeira-de-

Mello, 2012). In Brazil, both educators and students resisted acceptance of online

programs because of a widespread belief that online programs were not the same caliber

as those delivered by traditional brick and mortar schools (da Cruz Duran & da Costa,

2016; Leite, 2010). Meanwhile, the current education system did not provide enough

vocational education programs for potential students, which created a gap between the

need for, and availability of, educated personnel in vocational middle level jobs

(Schwartzman, 2011). The influence of the ever-changing environment of social

institutions, such as governments, helped demonstrate that culture was a dynamic entity

(Leng & Botelho, 2010). A regional network called the Partnership for Educational

Revitalization in the Americas (Preal) that developed in the 1990s also influenced the

direction of educational policy and best practices in both public and private institutions in

Brazil, including for online education (Shiroma, 2014).

Typically, Preal members consisted of former Ministry of Education participants

from the participating countries (Shiroma, 2014). The MEC was the main governmental

entity that influenced attitudes toward distance education assimilation in Brazil.

Governmental control was a factor in the consumers' decision to study online; cultural predispositions also contributed to formulating consumer behavior.

Cross-Cultural Marketing Effects on Consumer Perceptions Studied

Many scholars studied the influence of culture on purchase decision-making, and how culture affects acquisition decision-making choices, in Brazil. Consumer mindset orientation toward marketing messages varied from mature to emerging markets and tested along regulatory, cultural, and economic dimensions (Pauwels et al., 2013). Various methods of defining online market decision-making characteristics emerged.

Global studies of culture and country-specific marketing strategies produced divergent results from country to country. By studying learning styles of a culture, businesses could profile potential students and gather consumer purchase behavior information, to create programs geared toward their target market (Squaiella & Righi, 2016). Multinational corporations that did not adjust their marketing strategy based around national culture parameters gave away opportunities to maximize advertising efforts (Petersen et al., 2015). In the case of for-profit higher education in the target market under observation, marketing leaders who did not understand cultural dimensions would not maximize global enrollments of Brazilian students. Based upon different cultural orientations, African and Norwegian students perceived an online learning program differently, where the Africans in the group viewed education differently after the distance learning experience, while the Norwegians were not as significantly influenced by the distance learning environment (Rye & Støkken, 2012). As a result, a risk existed that developing nations would be exposed to educational imperialism, where

ideas flowed more from the more developed nations to the lesser developed ones, and if the cultural perspective of developing nations was not addressed there was a risk that global education platforms online would possess a cultural bias (Rye & Støkken, 2012).

In Brazil, where an environment of weaker consumers regulatory protection existed, consumers themselves were tasked with the responsibility of vetting a product's worth, thus, more value was put on marketing communication and word-of-mouth than in the UK, with its stringent regulatory controls (Pauwels et al., 2013). By understanding the main cultural dimensions theories, and their effects on a specific market, marketing teams could establish a more targeted type of marketing strategy. The for-profit higher education target markets in the United States and Brazil shared similarities such as positive market share growth.

For-Profit Higher Education Market Growth in the 21st Century

Both the United States and Brazil revealed significant for-profit education market share growth in the early part of the 21st century. Since 2000, for-profit education enrollments in the United States had tripled (Deming, Goldin, & Katz, 2013). Enrollment into for-profit education programs outpaced those efforts in public education (Deming et al., 2013; Denice, 2015). Since 2010, the for-profit higher education sector saw a decline in enrollments, which were attributed to growing competition from public schools and an improving jobs market (Marcus, 2019). Administration personnel at for-profit education institutions modified program offering and staffing, pursuant to market demands for specific employment growth sectors, much more adroitly than counterparts in public education (Gilpin, Saunders, & Stoddard, 2015; Iloh, 2016).

Some educators believed that for-profit administrators sacrificed quality of education for the profit motive (Booton, 2016; Marcus, 2019). For-profit was not always synonymous with lesser quality, as some higher learning institutions created economies of scale or saved in revenues by not offering some of the physical facilities that traditional schools did without sacrificing the quality of education rendered (Bernasconi, 2013; Kinser, 2013; Levy, 2013). Other for-profits brought innovation to the higher education marketing both via more sophisticated marketing techniques as well as through metrics that measured student success rates to help at risk students improve performance and to increase retention efforts (Marcus, 2019). In the Canadian for-profit higher education market, as in the United States, marketing efforts focused on delivering a message based around developing marketable practitioner skills that employers sought in a convenient modality for students (Pizarro Milian & Quirke, 2016). The typical distance learner in the United States is over 25 years of age and who typically had completed a first degree at a traditional school and who possessed the self-discipline to follow through with assignments in an asynchronous learning environment (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016).

By 2010, 75% of Brazilian higher education institutions were private and of that 67% were for-profit (Andrade et al., 2013) per the 2016 INEP report; open courses saw three to four times the enrollment numbers of accredited courses (Associação Brasileira de Educação a Distância, 2016). India, the United States, and Brazil together accounted for 40% of the global private higher education market (Levy, 2019). The Brazilian government legalized for-profit education in the 1990s to collect taxes from those institutions that at times practiced dubious income distribution practices (Levy, 2013).

Brazilian higher education students trusted private schools over public ones. Female students tended to rely on the school resources more than their male counterparts. In either case, the longer the student remained in a program, the less they trusted the school (da Rosa Borges, Carvalho de Souza Domingues, & da Silva Cordeiro, 2016).

This Brazilian target market also had a different expectation when comparing public to private school from a consumer satisfaction point of view. Students expected private institutions to offer greater individual care in facilities and more flexible accommodation for working students with families. This expectation was different from their expectations of public institutions, which were typically free of cost and less accommodating (Alfinito et al., 2016). In both countries, the for-profit higher education market share grew in the millennium.

Nationalistic priorities in the United States under the Trump administration discouraged international students from enrolling in US based programs when compared to enrollment figures under prior administrations especially in master's degree and undergraduate programs, which traditionally brought cashflow to higher education institutions (Usher, 2019). In Brazil, President Bolsonaro's administration cut operating budgets for federal public universities by 30% and there was a greater emphasis placed on programs that would lead to job placement more quickly such as in engineering and medicine over social sciences and other disciplines (Knobel & Leal, 2019). One channel that aided this global market share expansion was the use of social media in the formulation of marketing strategy (Menon, 2018).

The Use of Social Media Channels in Cross-Cultural Marketing

The global use of social media varied in both contents shared, and as a tool to relay marketing messages within a community. Social media became an effective mode of communication through a technological platform (Menon, 2018; Tess, 2013). Countries that were more collectivist tended to have broader communities of followers, who tended to place value on the disseminated message in purchase decision-making (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014). Advances in technology such as smartphones created instant, continuous, global market connectivity; however, omnipresent commerce did not take into consideration the differences in culture toward both the marketing message and sovereign rule of Internet access (McGuigan & Manzerolle, 2014). Those in the realm of education could use social media as a tool bridging the digital gap between developed countries and emerging nations (Sobaih, Moustafa, Ghandforoush, & Khan, 2016). Social media allowed prospective students to get a feel for a school and its student body before deciding to attend but was deemed to be a lesser influence than traditional methods of school selection such as campus tours (Shields & Peruta, 2019). With the increased use of technology in the creation of marketing strategy, more channels emerged. For-profit higher education marketing leaders may not have understood country-specific cultural dimensions, how the target market would interpret a marketing message, as well as the importance of access to technology in acceptance of the marketing message.

Transition

In the Section 1, I investigated the role of culture in the field of marketing through an analysis of different studies (Leng & Botelho, 2010; Pauwels et al., 2013). I also

presented the background and nature of my study to demonstrate why this research would be relevant to for-profit higher education business marketing leaders, and the possible positive social impact on Brazilian society. The findings of my study may help global online higher education marketing leaders gain an understanding of how to formulate a marketing strategy by examining my global marketing leaders' feedback via the interviews to be conducted.

In Section 2, I present my background as the researcher, and possible predispositions from encounters with Brazilian culture that I may possess. I examine how I plan to provide an objective presentation of the data and the interpretation thereof. Next, I discuss the participant groups for my study and the selection process. I also examine my research method and design, as well as data collection and organization techniques, and how I address reliability and validity in this study.

After completing my study, I have presented the findings in the final section, where I also outline areas for future studies. I described how the results of my study could potentially influence for-profit institution business marketing leaders in the practice of developing culturally sensitive marketing campaigns. I also reminded what some of the implications for social change may be, while lastly suggesting some actions that for-profit education marketers could take because of the findings of my study.

Section 2: The Project

In this section, I revisit the purpose statement for this study. Next, I review my role as the researcher and discuss how my background and experience could influence the results had I not been cognizant of the potential effect of these factors. I also describe my participants, the research methodology I chose, and the rationale.

I state the data collection, organization, and analysis techniques I selected. I explain how I ensured that my study was conducted in an ethical fashion while assessing how I confirmed that my study would have reliable and valid results. I posit how future researchers could ascertain dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability of this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this doctoral study was to explore country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies that higher education leaders use to increase student enrollments from Brazil. I was the primary research instrument; the secondary research instruments were the interviews and reviews of the marketing campaigns' materials and channels. I collected the data via interviews with business marketing leaders at a U.S.-based and a Brazil-based online university tasked with the creation of a marketing strategy, and I triangulated the data by conducting a second series of interviews with marketing leaders responsible for the execution of the marketing strategy, conducting a third series of interviews with marketing leaders tasked with brand management, and reviewing marketing messages presented to potential students via different marketing channels.

Many people are unable to participate in the current higher educational system (Schwartzman, 2011), which provides a focus for the social impact of this study. University students in Brazil could benefit from more culturally sensitive education marketing (Rodriguez & Boyer, 2018). The findings of this study could help identify if marketing leaders consider cultural dimension factors and the role of national culture when creating different types of marketing campaigns to penetrate an international market or a non-U.S. domestic one. The examination of a country-specific marketing strategy represents a way to ascertain if business marketing leaders approach target markets in similar ways domestically and abroad.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher conducting this comparative case study, my role was to collect data through interviews. I conducted interviews with five global business marketing leaders at two different for-profit higher education institutions with an online component. Yin (2017) described focused interviewing as an interview conducted typically in an hour with a specific line of case study protocol questions in place to guide the discussion. I chose focus interviewing as my interview technique, as this type of interview best aligned with the scope of my case study. In conjunction with these interviews, I also examined current marketing collateral, channel choice, and messages delivered to this target market. Direct observation is a valuable way to collect evidence in case studies (Yin, 2017). I directly observed through my review of specific marketing collateral and channel selections at each institution.

Welch et al. (2011) examined how researchers could theorize from case studies in four ways that fall under different typologies. One typology, contextualized explanation, encompassed both context and causality, which Welch et al. (2011) viewed as contradictory terms. I maintained this type of approach, while balancing both contextual factors related to this study being centered around a Brazilian target market and causality of the effects of country-specific or culture-specific marketing campaigns created by for-profit higher education marketing leaders to increase global enrollments of Brazilian students. Researchers needed to think profoundly as to what theory the case study approach should take and consistently maintain the choice of theory in a specific case study (Welch et al., 2011).

I studied whether some for-profit university business marketing leaders lack country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies to increase global enrollment levels from Brazil through my interview interactions. In my current role as an international enrollment advisor to a U.S.-based online for-profit school of higher education, I have certain day-to-day interactions with potential students from Brazil. When conducting my research, I based my findings on the triangulation of data as part of the investigatory process in this doctoral study, while remaining mindful to refrain from interjecting any bias present from working as an enrollment advisor at an online school.

I had not worked with any of the participants prior to this study; professional contacts from different schools helped to facilitate the logistics of conducting this research. I ensured that participant selection was conducted in an ethical fashion in compliance with the Belmont protocol. I obtained written consent from the participants in

advance of conducting the interviews, while verifying that participants had full disclosure to the purpose of my research. Gaining voluntary consent from participants is a required step researchers must complete prior to data collection (Sobaih et al., 2016). I advised participants of their ability to withdraw from participating in this study by confirming their intent to me in a written notice prior to the disclosure of my findings. I did not seek participation from any vulnerable groups.

I am not from Brazil, but I did visit there as a summer exchange student with the American Field Service during high school and subsequently learned how to communicate in Portuguese. I formed some of my early impressions of Brazilian culture during that period of cultural immersion. However, I maintained objectivity by staying true to the contextual and causal nature of the data that my study rendered, rather than reverting to prior notions of Brazilian culture and attitudes.

Participants

An examination of the significance of culture in forming potential online students' market opinion may present readers an understanding of how best to market to Brazilian university students. I offered future researchers with two cases studies of two marketing strategy creation leaders in conjunction with two marketing execution leaders and two brand managers to discover the significance of culture in marketing and to clarify if some for-profit university business marketing leaders lack country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies to increase the enrollment of online Brazilian students. One school was from the United States marketing to Brazil and the other was a Brazilian school to contrast an international and domestic approach to marketing strategy

for the same target market. I was the primary research instrument. The secondary research instruments were the three sets of interviews.

By this means, I collected the data via interviews with business marketing leaders tasked with creating a marketing strategy at a U.S.-based and a Brazil-based online university. To triangulate the data, I interviewed a second set of marketing leaders with the role of executing marketing strategy and a third set of marketing leaders tasked with brand management. In addition, I reviewed marketing messages presented to potential students and the channels where those messages were delivered to identify country-specific and culture-specific elements of the marketing strategies and to take note if any cultural dimensions were incorporated into those marketing messages.

The broader population of potential interview candidates would have been all for-profit university marketing leaders tasked with creating country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies to increase global enrollment levels from Brazil and those marketing leaders executing marketing strategy and brand management at the same institutions. I first set the selection criteria for the participants to be interviewed. The first interviewee was a marketing leader responsible for creating marketing campaigns to recruit students from the Brazilian higher education market. During the interviewee selection process, I discussed candidate selection with members of the two organizations well informed on the topic of identifying personnel tasked with creating a marketing strategy to enroll Brazilian online students for their respective institutions.

I consulted a director at each school who interfaced with their respective marketing department to identify the correct candidates. The directors recommending the

appropriate marketing leaders came from those who I either know from a working

relationship or my LinkedIn contacts. One marketing leader was based in the United

States and the other was in Brazil. Both sets of interview candidates were subject area

experts in for-profit higher education marketing to potential international students.

Simultaneously, via my LinkedIn network and business connections, I sought a

marketing business leader candidate to interview at a Brazil-based university with an

online program. Information on the scope of my research and the number of participants

needed were details I provided these colleagues and contacts to assist me in coordinating

the interview stage of my study. I sent an introductory e-mail to all potential participants

to present the structure of the interviews to be held, the duration, and the consent form

they needed to execute in order to participate in this study. Obtaining informed consent

from participants prior to collecting data is a required step in the data collection process

(Alumu & Thiagarajan, 2016; Boling et al., 2012; Sobaih et al., 2016).

Both sets of interviews consisted of the same questions and had a similar amount

of time to respond to limit variance in response that could be attributable to changes in

these factors. I chose these two marketing leaders with the goal of answering the research

question: How do for-profit university marketing business leaders create country-specific

and culture-specific marketing strategies to increase enrollments of Brazilian students? In

advance of the interviews, I explained the purpose of my research to both sets of

marketing leaders and built a rapport with them via e-mail and phone conversations as

needed to address any pre-interview questions they may have had (see Appendix B).

Participants need to understand the interview protocol and be allowed to seek

clarification to questions in advance of data collection (Boling et al., 2012; Houghton,

Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Morse, 2015). These two sets of participants were

instrumental in helping to answer my research question.

I repeated the protocol just described to find and interview a second set of

marketing leaders from each institution this time tasked with the execution of a marketing

strategy and a third time with brand managers. The process consisted of building rapport

with these groups by making them aware of the main purpose of this study and the

overarching research question that I am attempting to answer. A brief introductory letter

presented via my business contacts followed by email contact and a phone call from me

served the purpose of providing to the participants an outline of the scope and purpose of

this study.

Research Method and Design

Through a qualitative method approach, I compared, and contrasted two for-profit

higher education marketing leaders' culture and country-specific marketing strategies

used to increase global enrollments of Brazilian students. Their institutions' marketing

presence and messages to potential university online learners in Brazil assisted me in

identifying if cultural dimensions factors were a component of marketing messages. I

compared if marketing strategy to the same target market varied if an international school

versus a domestic one conducts the marketing effort.

Research Method

Qualitative methods questions seek to render rich data toward answering the

research question, rather than exploring the relationship between independent and

dependent variables, in search of emerging themes and ultimately generalities (Cope, 2014). Had I chosen to conduct a quantitative method study, I would have posed descriptive statistics questions via surveys to test hypotheses and collecting data, as Tucker (2012) did in her study where she investigated how to develop social a presence in a distance learning environment. I chose not to conduct a quantitative method study, as that method would not have been as effective in addressing the research question posed as a qualitative method study. Instead, through a qualitative method design, I examined intent and execution via the interviews, and marketing collateral review.

In a mixed-method study, Ke and Kwak (2013) investigated how factors such as culture and age influenced student perceptions toward online learning. Although the authors revealed that quantitative method could provide generalizable results to the broader population, such a method would require surveying a large sample of students (Ke & Kwak, 2013), which is beyond the scope of this doctoral study project and the data obtained via surveying would not have addressed the research question as effectively as the rich data of interviews could. Nonetheless, the Ke and Kwak study provided a relevant example of how culture influences attitude toward online learning; therefore, I further examined that study to compare to this one. Had I conducted a quantitative method study I would have examined data through a survey of potential online learners to provide a comparison of attitudinal differences on a larger scale; however, both quantitative and mixed-method studies would have been beyond the breadth of this doctoral project and neither would have produced the rich data feedback that was gained via a qualitative study.

Research Design

Welch et al. (2011) formulated four typologies to help researchers define the variety of case studies to be conducted to help develop a broader view of how to interpret case study results. My choice of comparative case study research design to collect data provided me with an opportunity to build on some of the findings that Ke and Kwak (2013) presented in their study. Through this comparative case study, I examined and contrasted two sets of for-profit higher education marketing leaders' approaches to formulating country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies to increase the enrollment of online Brazilian students. One was of a U.S.-based global online school and the other a Brazil-based school with an online presence.

The comparative case study design approach would allow me to examine how to create cross-cultural marketing strategy (Huertas-Garcia, Casas-Romeo, & Subira, 2013) via interviews with the two sets of marketing leaders, implemented through the review of the marketing collateral. I chose to focus on comparing two sets of business marketing leaders at for-profit education institutions to examine the creation and execution of marketing strategy approaches and the value of the resulting collateral thus created.

Hampshire, Iqbal, Blell, and Simpson (2014) described an ethnographic narrative as a study in which the researcher obscures the lines between self and other, as the researcher becomes entrenched in the story of the narrator and becomes one with the narrator's world. This level of interaction with my participants is beyond the scope of my study. Wu (2014) noted that few scholars chose to conduct cross-border comparative

studies to identify quality service satisfaction between groups. I decided to interview two sets of marketing leaders from different countries to add to marketing knowledge in cross-border service quality satisfaction analysis.

I achieved data saturation by interviewing both sets of marketing leaders with the same research questions and continued the interviewing and reviewing documents until no additional information was gathered. Both participant groups gave similar answers to the interview questions and themes arose from the repetition of responses. The use of probing questions helped me to gather rich data during both face-to-face sections of the research design process and by examining the marketing messages used in detail in all forms available. I did not overlook any element of the marketing data in the data collection process.

Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) examined 83 qualitative studies searching for a standard in determining saturation point and discovered that no uniform standard existed among researchers in setting a number. They also noted that ambiguity was part of the nature of qualitative studies in this aspect. Saturation was determined when no new data emerged in the interviews and following document review. Participants from both groups gave similar responses to the interviews the questions and no new data were revealed that would have required further interview participants.

Population and Sampling

Robinson (2013) described techniques for determining how to define a population or sampling universe, based upon first selecting inclusion and exclusion criteria. In 2016, campus-based enrollment in Brazil reached 6,554,000 students across programs dedicated

to bachelor's studies, teaching degrees, and technical studies per the National Institute for Higher Education Studies and Research (INEP) findings (Associação Brasileira de Educação a Distância, 2016). The campus-based population was not representative of the type of sample needed for my study. This group was a part of the exclusion criterion. Instead, I focused on marketing managers at higher education institutions who created strategies to reach the population of students who would like to join the ranks of the 1,494,000 students enrolled in online programs for the same period (Associação Brasileira de Educação a Distância, 2016), which represents the sampling universe for the target market group section of my study as the inclusion criterion. The MEC authorized 2,358 institutions of higher education to teach university students (http://www.seruniversitario.com.br/busca.php).

I chose stratified purposeful sampling strategy as my sampling method of choice, as this type of sampling method would allow me to collect data on demographic and geographic parameters (Robinson, 2013). I defined demographic stratification by a commonality of the level of marketing experience interview participants possessed at formulating country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies to increase global enrollments of Brazilian students. All interviewees had previous experience at creating country-specific and culture-specific strategies at for-profit universities in the past. The geographic stratification occurred in that all interviewees, to be eligible to participate in the study, were tasked with marketing to a Brazilian higher education market as part of a for-profit university with country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies for increasing global enrollment levels of Brazilian students.

By using similar demographically and geographically stratified samples, my two contrasting case study sources for the interview elements of this study were homogenous. They displayed homogenous traits such as level of prior marketing experience, responsibility for global marketing strategy, and a desire for market penetration into online higher education. By seeking similar interviewees from both groups, data from two sets of marketing leaders regarding their approach to creating and executing two unique marketing strategies for a single market could be studied. Using the same criteria to select the interviewee participants from both groups helped to achieve trustworthy results (Elo et al., 2014).

No precise formula exists for determining sample size (Yin, 2017). Instead, researchers should determine the selection of the sample size from the research question and the number selected should reflect data saturation (Elo et al., 2014). I achieved data saturation by interviewing both sets of marketing leaders with the same research questions and continued the interviewing and reviewing documentation until no additional information was gathered. Both participant groups gave similar answers to the interview questions and themes arose from the repetition of responses.

I gathered data from two sets of business-marketing leaders, one from each for-profit school to represent the main marketing strategic vision of each institution; this formed the foundation for this multiple case study. I conducted a second set of interviews with marketing leaders whose role consisted of executing marketing strategy and a third set of interviews with the respective brand managers. I chose this sample size for my interviews, as a larger sized set of interviewees may have been too large to gather

information from the group in a cohesive manner while a smaller sample size may have been too small to provide adequate feedback to draw thematic relationships. The correct selection of sample size can vary depending on the research question posed and the rich data sought (Elo et al., 2014).

Ethical Research

I presented all business marketing leaders with an electronic consent form online before participating in this study. The consent form stated that participants freely chose to engage in the interviews. Participants may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without hesitation, up until the time of final analysis of results, by providing me with written notice of their intent to no longer participate in this doctoral study. There were no financial incentives used to engage the marketing leaders in interviews. A professional social network of scholars organized through LinkedIn.com helped me to assemble the individuals to coordinate the interviews in the United States, Holland, and Brazil.

The interviewees were made aware of the anonymous nature of their participation and that at no time would their personal information be exposed in this study. A clause was also be added that would prevent the interviewees from withdrawing from the study after the results were coded. To protect the identity of the participants, the data that I compiled were kept anonymous, and I will not disclose the names of the for-profit universities, to protect the privacy of all involved in this study.

The interview transcripts were encrypted and are stored for five years from the study date in a secure computer to protect the rights of the participants. If others would like to build on the results of the findings of this effort, they can use this study as a

starting point. All participants agreed to engage in this study voluntarily. The names and sites involved were masked to protect the participants' privacy, and I will only provide any access to the raw data in a format that will not allow other researchers to recognize the names or places from which I selected the participant groups. The final doctoral study manuscript includes the Walden University IRB approval number 09-14-18-0293368.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary research instrument, and the secondary research instruments consisted of the semistructured interviews conducted with two sets of for-profit higher education marketing business leaders to understand how they formulate and execute marketing recruitment strategies for new Brazilian university students. Next, I examined the marketing collateral and choice of marketing channels they used to reach this targeted audience. By triangulating the data, I gained an understanding, through interview responses, if the business marketing messages resonated with this target market. Yin (2017) suggested that triangulation of data occurs when a researcher examines various sources of data with the purpose of seeking convergence of phenomena. The triangulation of data results could supply insight to the prevailing marketing strategies employed by for-profit higher education marketing leaders to enroll online Brazilian students. Discovering whether some for-profit university business marketing leaders created country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies to increase the enrollment of online Brazilian students could lead to a more accurate understanding of message adaptations needed when addressing two potential student bases in Brazil from a global versus domestic marketing angle.

Through a comparative case study design, I presented a context for understanding consumer attitudes toward higher education programs across a single culture. This study was non-experimental and was not be broad enough in scope to cover the population of all universities in Brazil. To demonstrate validity, researchers need to state the process used to derive results specifically (Elo et al., 2014). To enhance the reliability and validity of my data collection process, I performed a transcript review to compare what was recorded with the written transcript to verify similarity of content. This step was followed by member checking with the two business leaders to ensure that what I transcribed was in line with what they said in the interviews. Member checking of data provides a two-step review to ensure the accuracy of data collected (Booton, 2016; Cope, 2014; Elo et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2013; Madill & Sullivan, 2018). Through member checking I was able to verify that my interpretation of what was said by the participants was in line with their intended responses to the interview questions.

Data Collection Technique

Face-to-face interviews and a thorough review of archival marketing collateral were the main data collection techniques. To address the research question, I first contacted two executive leaders at a for-profit higher education institution, marketing to Brazil, to identify the three most relevant marketing business leaders I should choose to participate in the interviews for this study from their institution. Two of those candidates chose to participate, and a third did not; however, the first two participants were able to suggest a third participant who agreed to move forward with this study and who was also a marketing leader.

The second participant group leaders I found via my LinkedIn network after sending introductory instant messages to over 200 contacts in search of a second participant group. I also reached out to possible contacts suggested by my LinkedIn contacts in search of the second institution. The second group took more time to arrange than the first group. The first school had a more in-depth internal institutional review board (IRB) process than the second one. No immutable rule exists for determining sample size in qualitative research when using interviews as a technique to gather data; researchers need to seek repeating themes and establish that by achieving redundancy of feedback, saturation occurs (Marshall et al., 2013). There were five marketing business leader participants in this study as the three marketing functions were shared by two people at the Brazilian school.

An advantage of the interviewing technique for gathering data was that the results of the interviews rendered written transcripts, which allowed me to review both sets of feedback more closely to identify repeating themes. By identifying themes as they emerged, I could adjust the data collection sampling strategy for future research. Transcripts of recorded interviews of the two sets of marketing leaders were the primary data collection technique to be used with the initial stage of my study. Member checking after an initial review of the data provided researchers a way to validate that the data are accurate (Booton, 2016; Cope, 2014; Elo et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2013; Madill & Sullivan, 2018). Through member checking I was able to verify that my interpretation of what was said by the participants was in line with their intended responses to the interview questions.

I planned to fly to Brazil and administer the interviews of the business marketing creation and execution leaders face-to-face; however, because of time constraints the interviewed were conducted remotely via Business Skype. During the interview sessions, I collected data via recordings onto my PC computer using an internal microphone via Business Skype. These data were transferred and housed on my Mac computer, backed up to an Apple Time Machine external hard drive, and upload to an iCloud space as a secondary backup. Next, each interview was transcribed into a written format, similarly with all interviews of the marketing leaders. Concerning the marketing collateral, I requested from the marketing leaders access to all forms of marketing messages delivered and the channels that both institutions used to reach this target market.

Once the collection of the marketing collateral, such as proprietary websites, email campaign templates, and social media presence in both markets was completed, I created NVivo data entries of the items used at both institutions to later categorize along thematic lines. The raw data I gathered is available for other researchers to review via a written request made to me directly. Yin (2017) posited that using multiple sources of evidence could provide an advantage in the triangulation of data. I visualized the messages created by the business marketing leaders firsthand through examining their marketing messages, choice of collateral, and marketing channels. Access to the marketing collateral was granted to me by the business marketing leaders who provided me with this material and to the strategies they used to create their marketing messages.

Data Organization Technique

I recorded the interviews with the for-profit higher education business marketing strategy creator, brand manager, and lead generation leader onto my PC computer via an internal microphone and transcribed the recordings in NVivo 12 to create a transcript of each session. I transcribed and coded the interviewees as P1 through P5, while coding the marketing data under the names of G1 and G2 to represent the two groups and added these documents under the thematic nodes, during the analysis of the data. This process allowed me to examine the responses in a written format and to break down the answers to my interview questions along thematic lines. I reviewed and logged these five documents into NVivo 12 for Mac as data to discover the various themes that emerged from the five interview sessions. The process of gathering data via interview allowed me to seek commonalities and variances in marketing techniques at a strategic level from a Brazilian and United States for-profit higher education marketing leadership perspective. At the Brazilian school the marketing strategist, the brand marketer, and the lead generators were two people who shared those three roles.

Next, I reviewed the marketing collateral that each institution produced to reach this target audience. During the interviews with the two marketing leaders, I requested access to members of their teams well versed in the respective marketing messages and channels of message dissemination to this target market. The goal was to examine how well each team collected feedback from the market to judge if their marketing efforts were successful. I kept a password protected folder of the marketing collateral reviewed and preserve the raw data in a password-protected section of my hard drive while backing

up to a Time Machine, and an iCloud drive. I will maintain these records for a minimum time of five years. Ultimately, the data collected during the triangulation of data allowed me to add to NVivo 12 for Mac a further layer of insight as to how the marketing leaders implemented strategies in the field.

By gathering data in three different methods of interviewing marketing leaders tasked with creating marketing strategy, developing brand management, and producing lead generation combined with the collateral analysis, I triangulated the data to identify reoccurring themes from each stage of the marketing cycle. These stages are conceptualization, execution, and the actual marketing message, and this technique follows the diversity in marketing research methods to achieve accurate triangulation of data (Davis, Golicic, Boerstler, Choi, & Oh, 2013). Locating evidence from different sources added validity to the triangulation of data process (Rooshenas, Paramasivan, Jepson, & Donovan, 2019; Yin, 2017). Although I collected the data via interviews and by reviewing marketing collateral, the organization of data was homogenous via PC and Mac computer interview tapings, and NVivo 12 for Mac logging to capture recurring themes.

Data Analysis

Triangulation of data sources was the chosen data analysis technique for my doctoral study. When researchers triangulated data, they produced higher quality evaluations than those who only used one source of data (Rooshenas et al., 2019; Yin, 2017). I created a case study database in NVivo 12 for Mac, a software tool specifically designed for collection and recording in qualitative research studies. Yin suggested that

case studies often lacked a formal database. I avoided this by using NVivo 12 for Mac, to house data in the form of transcripts of the interviews with the marketing business leaders, and to present the marketing collateral created by each school in my database. By creating such a database, future researchers can examine the data from my study to produce their end results.

   To gather and analyze the data, I followed the subsequent steps in the order listed. First, I conducted an interview with the marketing leader who created the marketing strategy, next interview the brand manager, followed by an interview of the lead generation leader via Business Skype meetings of the U.S.-based for-profit school in the Columbia, Maryland and Amsterdam, Holland. Next, I conducted the same scope of interviews with three marketing professionals from the Brazilian school in São Paulo, Brazil, as part of the study, by meeting with the second for-profit school business marketing leaders by Business Skype interviews and lead the subsequent one-on-one semistructured interview with the parties tasked with these same three marketing functions as those of the U.S.-based for-profit school. By gathering and recording data from the two sets of for-profit higher education institutions' business marketing leaders, and transcribing the semistructured interview conversations onto my computer, I gathered data using the same technique in two locations. I transcribed the taped interviews within a week and followed-up with the participants by Skype calls thereafter and reviewed with them the summaries of their responses to conduct member checking during that conversation.

Through the interviews with the higher education marketing business leaders, I gained an understanding of how two sets of marketing leaders approached formulating and executing strategy toward the Brazilian market for higher education. This understanding was gained through both an international lens and a domestic one. Gilpin et al. (2015) studied the workings of for-profit education institutions versus traditional education channels. They discovered that for-profit institutions worked from a more centralized decision-making model that allowed for more agile changes in program content. The data gained from my research could be readily utilized to modify program offerings in line with market demand.

Once I transcribed to NVivo 12 for Mac, an examination of the added transcripts revealed repeating themes in the data. Themes in qualitative analysis research would first emerge out of inference in the data and be demonstrated in the research by the mapping of major themes, also identify sub-themes, minor ones, while searching for the overlap of themes (Shochet, Montague, Smith, & Dadds, 2014). I conducted my research similarly by revisiting my inferences to determine major, minor, and overlapping themes and map these themes in NVivo 12 for Mac to identify the specific findings of my research.

By gaining access to the range of marketing collateral created from the business marketing leaders to their team members who were tasked with producing such marketing material, I examined the variety of the marketing collateral used by each school's marketing teams to attract potential candidates to their for-profit school. This material varied from online or multimedia messages to print collateral. I identified if country-specific and culture-specific elements existed, such as Hofstede's (1980) cultural

dimensions. I compared the marketing collateral between the two schools while seeking

recurring themes to code into NVivo 12 for Mac. By identifying repeating themes in the

data, an understanding of how marketing functions in the for-profit higher education

product in Brazil developed.

Reliability and Validity

Cope (2014) posited that the terms dependability, credibility, transferability, and

confirmability were to qualitative analysis research what reliability and validity

represented to quantitative research studies. That is, reliability and validity are required

perspectives to ascertain if the research conducted was in line with standards for that

form of research methodology. I reviewed these four terms concerning my study to

identify how to verify that I achieved validity with each factor in this study beginning by

examining dependability.

Dependability

To achieve dependability, Cope (2014) suggested that other researchers can

duplicate the results of different studies, and Houghton et al. (2013) defined

dependability as data stability. Coco (2015) described dependability like the Cope

definition, as the ability of subsequent researchers to come to the same results at a

different time. Within this doctoral study, I compared the results I obtained from the one

marketing strategy devised for the United States based school against those of the

marketing team's strategy for the school based in Brazil. By conducting a comparative

case study approach to gathering qualitative data from two unique sets of business

marketing leaders and the execution and branding by their teams, I had the chance to

review and identify reoccurring themes toward this market and duplicate the study in two markets.

Credibility

In qualitative research when others who had lived a similar experience could easily identify with the experience under examination, the researcher's results were deemed truthful. To achieve credibility a researcher needs to express a clear audit trail with a defined method used to gather observations (Cope, 2014; Houghton, Casey, & Smyth, 2017). Coco (2015) discussed credibility as results of a study, which were logical while maintaining correct alignment with both the phenomenon being studied and true to the participants' viewpoint. Houghton et al. (2013) posited that credibility of research was the result of conducting believable research.

I created an audit trail by triangulating the data. First, I reviewed the transcripts from both sets of interviews of the five marketing leaders to make a comparison of the five in search of possible emerging themes. Next, I examined the marketing collateral produced by the two marketing teams to observe how closely aligned the marketing message and the leaders' visions were. After that exploration, how I planned to achieve transferability through my study emerged. I also used peer member checking to verify that the results discovered were true to the perspective of the marketing leaders and not simply my interpretations.

Transferability

Houghton et al. (2013) described transferability of study as the ability not to lose the essence and meaning of a study when other researchers conducted a study that

mirrored the original study in setting and framework. Cope (2014) expressed that others who were not a part of a study, when reading the findings should identify the themes back to their experiences, and that such findings may not necessarily be transferable to another study but should align with the phenomena under observation. Morse (2015) posited that to achieve transferability researchers needed to provide abundant detail, which enabled subsequent scholars to replicate the findings in another context or participant group.

In this doctoral study, I provided sufficient examples via the two case studies under investigation to demonstrate consistency in my approach to gathering data. Data was gathered in the two cases to mirror each other in a target market, and to demonstrate that my qualitative analysis method was consistent and transferable in design. I addressed how I achieved confirmability.

Confirmability

Cope (2014) advised that researchers had to ensure the data represented what the participants expressed on the topic, and not the researcher's personal bias. Houghton et al. (2013) posited that confirmability of data came from an impartial view on the part of the researcher, which lead to unprejudiced findings. Coco (2015) added that confirmability was the reflection of the participants' perspective per the data obtained and not a repetition of researcher bias or prejudice.

To achieve confirmability, I ensured that I have the detailed transcripts of both sets of interviews with the four business marketing leaders. A review of all the transcripts sought to expose themes present within, and not represent an interjection of any

preconceived notions that I may have about marketing strategy toward Brazilian online learners. The same questions were posed for both sets of interviews with the objective of seeking a standardized approach for my data collection. I refrained from expressing my opinion during the discussions with these groups such that the business marketing leaders chose the direction of the data via their observations, not mine.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I presented my role as the researcher, while addressing the method in which I would choose sample participants, gather, organize, and store data, and how I would ensure the data were collected ethically. I discussed my choice of research methodology and the logic used to choose this methodology over other possible options. I also reviewed how I would address dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability in this study.

In Section 3, I state a brief overview of this study, before presenting the findings of both how this study could potentially affect the practice of marketing to a for-profit educational target market in Brazil and how positive social change may be achieved as a result. I conclude with recommendations for action followed by suggestions for future study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The objective of this doctoral study was to explore the country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies that business marketing leaders use to increase enrollment of online Brazil students. I chose a qualitative multiple case study to analyze data from a population of global marketing leaders to expand the understanding of cross-cultural marketing business practices. In Section 3, I present the findings and discuss their application to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action. In Section 3, I also provide recommendations for further research, reflections, and a summary of conclusions.

The data resulted from semistructured interviews of marketing strategy leaders, brand marketers, and marketing lead generators; one school was based in the United States and the other in Brazil. I reviewed the marketing collateral used to recruit potential online Brazilian students at two for-profit schools, including their proprietary websites, their social media presence, and e-mail campaigns encouraging prospective students to act, referred to as *nurturing email campaigns* by Participant Group 1.

Four themes emerged from the data that related to the overarching research question. The findings revealed that although business marketing leaders may have some understanding of different cultures when creating marketing strategies, culture does not serve as an intrinsic function in the creation of those strategies. Instead, business marketing leaders create strategies around consumer intelligence and demographics while using specific marketing channels and call-to-action messages.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question was: What country-specific and cultural-specific marketing strategies do some for-profit university business marketing leaders use to increase the enrollment of online Brazilian students? I was introduced to my two participant groups through my professional network both via face-to-face conversations with business leaders at for-profit schools and through my LinkedIn professional network. I gathered data via Skype interviews as the business marketing leaders were in several distant locations. I also explored data in the form of website presence, social media, and e-mail messages used to increase enrollments of online Brazilian students. I reviewed PowerPoint presentations for annual marketing strategy campaigns. I analyzed the data using NVivo 12, where I transcribed and coded the interviewees, as P1 through P5, and coded the marketing data under the names of G1 and G2 to represent the two groups. I added these documents under the thematic nodes during data analysis. I concluded with member checking after transcribing and summarizing the interview questions and responses. Member checking can provide insight on how the stakeholder reflections, the body of research conducted in a study, and the actual practice all come together to provide insight on a topic (Madill & Sullivan, 2018).

I achieved data saturation by interviewing both sets of marketing leaders with the same research questions and continued the interviewing until no additional information was gathered. Both participant groups gave similar answers to the interview questions and themes arose from the repetition of responses. Their responses aligned with what was present in the literature with respect to Brazilian culture in terms of Hofstede's (1980)

cultural dimensions theory. I triangulated the data by reviewing the interview transcriptions, the participant institutions' websites, e-mail marketing messages, as well their use of social media channels for marketing campaigns and their PowerPoint presentations of annual marketing plans, when available. By reviewing multiple sources of data to look for converging themes, the data results could be more credible and valid than had I only examined one source of data.

Four themes emerged from the data:

1. Consumer intelligence served a function in the creation of marketing strategies that consisted of topics, such as consumer behavior, consumer savviness, consumer expectations of customizability and personalization, and a reflection on Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory in relation to a Brazilian student base.

2. Business marketing leaders identified demographic profiles, such as affluence, level of education, location, and professional experience or age, as instrumental factors in the creation of marketing strategies.

3. Both participant groups used multimedia marketing channels ranging from websites to e-mail campaigns, and both relied on specific social media selection and word-of-mouth referrals to drive enrollments of online Brazilian students.

4. Both participant groups had call-to-action marketing messages disseminated either via websites or e-mail campaigns to increase enrollments of online Brazilian students.

These four themes emerged from the interviews and the marketing materials and were linked to the overarching question of this study. Through the data, I discovered a lack of country-specific and cultural-specific marketing strategies by for-profit university business marketing leaders in efforts to increase the enrollment of online Brazilian students. One theme that did evolve, however, was the function consumer intelligence served for-profit marketing business leaders in the creation of marketing strategies.

Theme 1: Consumer Intelligence

For-profit marketing leaders discussed the impact of consumer intelligence in relation to creating marketing messages and choosing marketing channels. Consumers in the technological age are tech savvy and seek an interactive transaction with businesses via the Internet (Menon, 2018). In different countries, the level of technological sophistication varied according to P1; where display ads may work for one market, they might be ignored in another.

P4 said, "When it's about online classes, we try to keep as simple as possible. So, it's basically the same advertisement for everyone." This approach contradicts what Mainardes et al. (2012) posited that once business marketing leaders understood the cultural dimensions of a country, they must then craft marketing messages customized along cultural dimensions lines. P5 suggested that although their message is the same initially to enroll students, their actual approach to education was customized to the students' needs and interests.

"Make it relevant to another country to then join the for-profit university," P2 interjected, demonstrating the need for personalization and customizability. P3 confirmed that G1 had a different approach when reviewing consumer intelligence. P3 stated,

> According to the culture of the geo-group that we target . . . so we target differently, the countries of Africa, in East Asia . . . the U.S. nonincorporated territories, also and with different messages, different images, different videos, and then also different way of targeting.

P4 mentioned the importance of placement tests for potential students and said, "I think placement tests are making our students comfortable and making them know that we care about them." This need to fit in and feel cared for is in line with Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, and the desire to feel a part of a group is part of Brazilian culture's collectivist and feminine cultured inclinations (Hofstede, 1980; Pauwels et al., 2013). Collectivist cultures tend to trust online purchasing sites less than those from individualistic cultures (Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2018). When engaging in high expense services, such as higher education selection, both collectivist and individualistic cultures value word-of-mouth or relationship marketing (Pergelova & Angulo-Ruiz, 2017).

In collectivist cultures, such as Brazil, word-of-mouth or referrals are intrinsic to build trust (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014; Mainardes et al., 2012; Pergelova & Angulo-Ruiz, 2017). P5 stated,

> Yeah, but here in our city, locally speaking, people . . . People need to trust you. So . . . they need other people to recommend. That's one of the characteristics of

the city where we're living. So, if I don't recommend the course, even though they pass in front of my school, they don't enter.

The observations by the G1 and G2 marketing leaders under Theme 1 described various forms of consumer intelligence. During the interviews, consumer intelligence various factors subdivided into consumer behavior, consumer savviness, and consumer expectations as displayed in Figure 1. These topics were further defined relative to the culture under examination. In the case of Brazil, consumer behavior is defined as a collectivist culture (Hofstede, 1980) that values word-of-mouth advertising, where technological adaptation is advancing, and where the student population seeks customizability and personalization in program offerings.
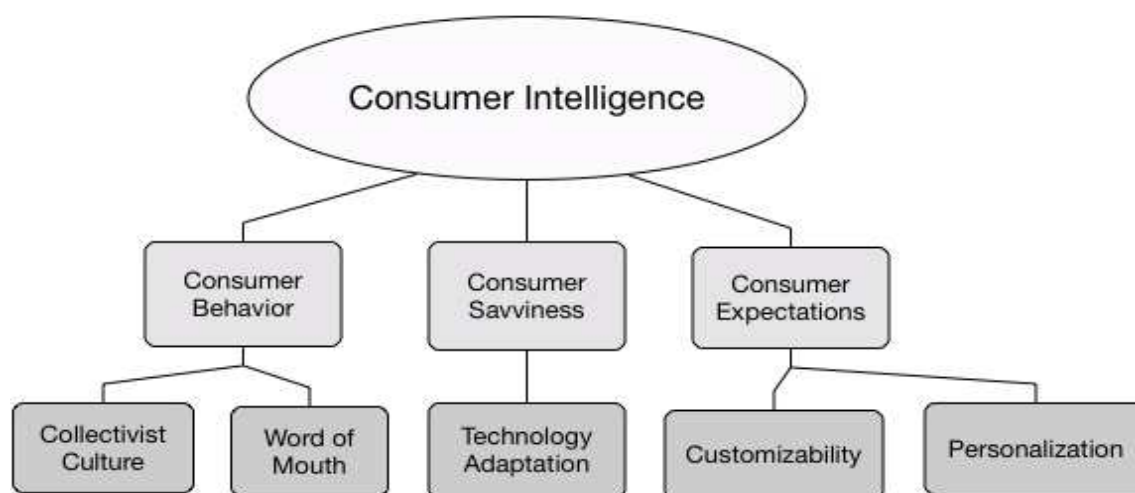
Figure 1. Mind map displaying visualization factors of consumer intelligence.

Business marketing managers at for-profit schools need to be cognizant of customer behavior, the level of customer savviness, and the level of expected need for customizability and personalization of the student experience. Marketers noted cultural aspects of a target market in the creation of marketing strategy to enroll online Brazilian students, even when the marketing message did not appear to be culture specific. Next, I

present the second theme: the function that demographics serves in the creation of for-profit education marketing strategy to online Brazilian students.

Theme 2: Demographic Profiles

To be most effective in creating a marketing strategy, business marketing leaders need to learn which demographic profiles best help define the target market for their online higher education programs. I observed the following demographic profiles factors described by P1 through P5: affluence, working professional, level of education, age, and location. I presented these demographic profile factors in the order of importance based upon the repetition of this theme from the interviews, email campaigns, and web presence of G1 and G2.

Affluence. Two demographic aspects that both participant groups mentioned the most were the level of affluence and working professionals as a target market. These two factors appeared to be the most relevant demographic factors cited by all the participants in target market selection. P1 noted that,

> Yeah so, we definitely do try to create different strategies from market to market and a lot of it depends on the country in the education space is based on affluence just because you have to be able to afford it . . . So, you know it's very niche strategy - marketing in that sense where we are trying to go after pockets or zip codes that we know tend to have more affluence than others.

P2 was of a similar opinion, commenting,

Unfortunately, Brazil is a country of very few haves and a lot of have nots. So, if

that's the case, you need to make sure that your campaign is targeted to that elite I

would say, you know, that would be able to attend school.

P5 was aware of the importance of affluence derived from working professionals as well

and affirmed,

So, our other students are basically working group. They work. They have a job.

They have a career. So, for them it's much better because they are looking for a

way to improve their skills, and they are able to pay for themselves.

Both G1 and G2 marketing teams realized that the target market of prospective

students needed to possess a certain level of affluence to enable participation in online

programs. Over a decade ago, Porto and Berge (2008) posited that online learning could

potentially bring higher education to populations who were unable to get to a physical

campus in a country where many were impoverished. A decade later, affluence is still a

driving factor in prospective student selection, where those who lack material resources

are not the target market of for-profit higher education schools' marketing teams. Instead,

global marketing teams for online higher education programs focus on working

professionals as their prospective student pool.

Working professional. Both G1 and G2 targeted working professionals who

represented a group with the means of attending an online program. G2 included

photographs of working professionals in their marketing campaigns via Facebook and

Instagram, as well as via email campaigns with many images related to business needs

for courses that might appeal to working professionals. G2 used images of professionals

in their marketing campaigns on social media to show ease of access to courses via

teleconferencing online as shown in Figure 2. Through the advertising message, "English

via videoconferencing: security, quality, comfort," G2 created a social media campaign

that aligned with working professionals' needs. Security is a trait appreciated by high

uncertainty avoidance cultures, such as in Brazil, and comfort relates to slightly feminine

cultural dimension orientation that the Brazilian culture possesses (Hofstede, 1980).

Figure 2. Social media image G2 used to attract working professionals to study.

Both groups used pictures of adults in suits representing working professionals or

in different professional uniforms on G1's proprietary websites and on G2's social media

campaigns. G1 focused marketing campaigns along program demographic profiles and

did not have a specific working professional demographic profile for Brazil. Relative to

the Canadian working professional market, P2 explained,

So, I'll give an example in Canada for example, you know, nurses, you know a lot

of the nurses in Canada are Filipino. So, we will make sure that we highlight that

we use a Filipino imagery . . . and so those kinds of differences that you may not

see in the States. You will have to make sure that you understand and presenting

in your ads or your copy or anything that you do in that country.

Kansal (2015) posited that when global companies marketed products online to

markets beyond their local market, customization of message to the target culture was a

success factor of how effective the message was received by that market. G1 had

discovered the demographic cultural profile of nurses in Canada to better market to them

via a Filipino cultural image to which many potential students could relate. However, G1

did not have a specific demographic target profile for the Brazilian online higher

education market. Both G1 and G2 linked the demographic trait of working professionals

to the prospective students' level of education.

Level of education. G1 focused marketing efforts around program specific

demographics relative to location, which tied into the level of education that prospective

students possessed. P1 explained,

> If it's relevant to the programs we offer, so we know . . . you know, there are
>
> cities that have high, like healthcare as a main industry, and we have a lot of
>
> healthcare programs, and that's somewhere to go after, but not so much as like a
>
> subset of people culturally it's more economic driven.

P3 made a similar observation when describing the selection of a demographic profile at

G1 based around the level of education of prospective students stating,

> So, for each level we set up some mandatory criterions such as the age, the
>
> language, the education for each program. And . . . and then, we target them
>
> specifically, specifically by program. So, if we want . . . If we want to target

mainly for the MBA program, then we consider also the target audience with

business education or interest in master's in business administration and so on.

P1 echoed the sentiment on the importance of the level of education as a demographic

factor by reflecting,

> We also look for places that tend to have highly educated areas of people or large
>
> university systems so for instance . . . Brazil a good one because it does have
>
> large areas of affluence and a higher education system.

Dant, Jin Jeon, Mumdziev, and Windsperger (2016) recognized the importance of

identifying the demographic profile of a target market in advance of creating global

marketing campaigns and that the lack of culturally specific messages in marketing

campaigns could lead to unsatisfactory results. The marketing professionals at G1

expressed that several groups at their institution conducted demographic marketing

research in relation to certain target markets beyond the marketing team; however, Brazil

was not specifically targeted. The age of a prospective student was more of a

demographic factor driving enrollments in G1's target market when compared to G2's

prospective student pool.

Age. G1 exclusively marketed to adult learners, while G2 marketed to all age

groups including adult learners and school aged youth. G1 used their proprietary website,

in conjunction with paid marketing campaigns via Google search and education portals

and social media presence to find working professional prospective students. Meanwhile

G2 was not focused on a specific age profile. P4 explained, "So, here at school . . . I don't

think we have a specific group of course like, because we have classes for kids,

teenagers, grown-ups." P5 described their main demographic target profile G2 by stating,

> We work with not with the cultural groups but more ages focus . . . We have more
> adults having classes with us . . . we look for people from these of the 20 to 40
> something years of age and those people are the ones we need the most . . .
> Because they are professionals.

> Ralston et al. (2015) posited that Millennials were more individualistic as an age

group in general, however in Brazil, from a socio-economic, and environmental

perspective Millennials held similar values to that of older generations, thus, similar

marketing message could resonate with various generations. Nonetheless, P1 reflected,

> The big thing now, it's like Millennials versus Baby Boomers versus Generation
> Z where they all, you know, we all use different modes of communication, and
> even like Facebook is actually something that's used by old, like Baby Boomers
> and older generations more than kind of Millennials or Generation Z especially to
> communicate.

> P1 focused on the significance of mode of communication for different age

groups where Ralston et al. (2015) suggested that based upon the Brazilian culture's

collectivist nature, the same message irrespective of the mode of transmission selected

would resonate across age groups. P1's observation gave greater value to the mode of

communication where Ralston et al. (2015) focused on Hofstede's (1980) cultural

dimension of collectivism as being more relevant than how marketers disseminated a

message.

Location. Another demographic factor addressed by the marketing professionals was location. G1 had different marketing strategies to reach expat populations than other populations.

> We were looking at Brazil ex-pats were a really good market for us because they were knowledgeable about America, they might have some connection to an American university so it's things like that that you kind of have to really pay attention to (P1).

G1 had specific microsites targeting potential students from the Caribbean, Ghana, and Nigeria but no specific microsite for Brazil. The images that G1 used to market to the former three cultures did not vary from culture to culture. The country-specific landing pages were identical except for the regional name.

G2 used their local address in many banner display images used via social media to draw a local client base. P5 recognized that their location strategy varied depending on the location targeted. P5 noted,

> We also have like different phone numbers to make it easier for people from other states to call us. So, we have a phone number for our district code hear in Rio Preto and another from São Paolo. So that makes it easier. I think basically, here, when we talk about online Brazilian students is to make it easier (P5).

P5 also recognized that the focus of what was important to a prospective student changed depending on the location. When discussing what was desired by a possible local student compared to one from São Paolo P5 noted, "Yes, word-of-mouth is very strong in here. Since the people we live . . . it comes with pride, since compared to São

Paolo capital . . . São Paolo capital . . . I have many students from the capital they do online classes."

At the local level, P5 suggested that the student population was in line with Hofstede's (1980) collectivist cultural dimension, where word-of-mouth was impactful. When the location of the student was further away, then what mattered more was the nature of the coursework over this collectivist cultural dimension. Even those of the same national culture did not display the same cultural dimensions propensity. The relevance of the collectivist cultural dimension depended on location and proximity of the student to the school.

Demographic profile theme summary. P3 summarized the intertwined nature of the entire process of market strategy creation and the demographic focus factors,

There is no one, one marketing strategy for an organization . . . It's a strategy that you have to apply . . . so you have to identify first your audience, your personas, because you have to create personas for each of the geo-groups that you're targeting. So, you have to identify your audience you have to know who are you targeting? . . . And then start creating all your campaigns and then identify the correct channels. The correct tone of voice, the correct assets, and distribute the budget according to your . . . according to the percentages of the lead volume that you have from your original strategy.

The findings revealed that some for-profit education business marketing refer to demographic factors when creating marketing strategies to enroll online students from Brazil over cultural factors. To illustrate this point, Figure 3 displays the demographic

focus factors that both groups referenced via the interviews or the marketing material presented. The sizes of the subthemes displayed in the figure represent the significance of each subtheme relative to how often each was mentioned by the participants.

Affluence and professional experience were the two subthemes that each of the participants referenced. Neither G1 nor G2 expressed marketing strategies to target less affluent populations. The ability to pay for the program was the factor described by both groups as instrumental to new student enrollment. The participants identified working professionals as the group most likely able to pay for programs, linking professional experience to affluence. The level of prospective students' education tied into the professional experience demographic factor, as the participants described the significance that education had on professional experience. Pergelova and Angulo-Ruiz (2017) recognized that the selection of a higher education institution could impact future careers of students. This aligns with the value that the first three demographic focus factors exhibit in Figure 3. Education levels influence future professional experience and ultimately affluence. Thus, Pergelova and Angulo-Ruiz (2017) posited that not only collectivist cultures recognized the value of word-of-mouth advertising in high risk purchases such as higher education enrollment, but individualist ones do as well in the higher education market. G2 concurred with this observation relative to the immediate local market, but not for locations further away from their campus.

The demographic focus factors of students' age and location were relevant to the marketers in the creation of marketing strategy but to a lesser degree than the first three factors. The participants expressed that each of these demographic focus factors were

utilized in the creation of marketing strategy, but the first three factors were the most influential on decision making and enrollments of online Brazilian students. Per G2, the demographic focus factor of location aligned with Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimension of collectivism at the very local level more so than at distance. G1 did not make this analogy as all of its programs were only delivered online and none via a physical campus.
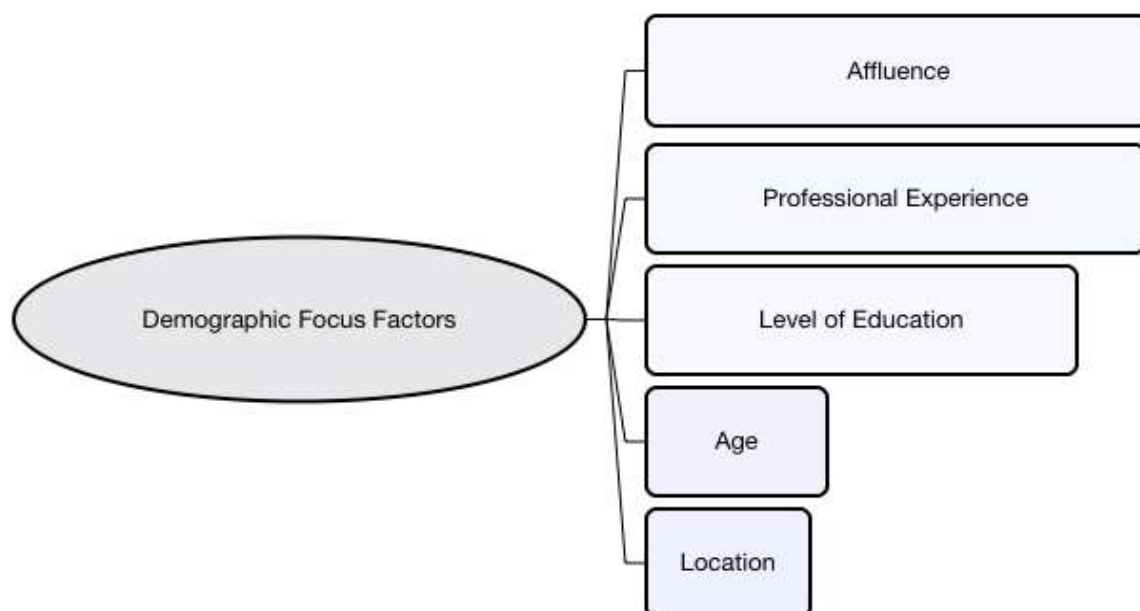
Figure 3. Mind map showing marketing leaders' most mentioned demographic factors.

During the interviews, the participants discussed which marketing channels were most effective to reach this demographic population. As a result, Theme 3, the selection of multimedia marketing channels arose. These ranged from social media to email campaigns.

Theme 3: Multimedia Marketing Channels

Marketing managers use social media as part of their marketing strategies to better reach their potential customer base in an interactive way, especially those who are tech savvy (Menon, 2018). When reviewing the interview and website data, the results

indicated that both participant groups had extensive social media presence as part of their

marketing strategies to enroll online Brazilian students. The types of social media

channels mentioned by participants during the interviews included Facebook, Instagram,

and WhatsApp, as well as some specialized websites dedicated to the subject matter

taught.

All the participants referred to at least one of these social network sites as part of

the interview process. P1 noted,

Internationally, there's less stigma around search display leads. It may be that the

user is not as marketing savvy as the U.S. user for some reason, or it might be that

that's just kind of some, you know, that's culturally that is more accepted in

Brazil or wherever you are.

P3 added, "So, it's thinking about kind of like the savviness of the consumer,

what's culturally, you know, what channels are people using in a cultural sense so like

WhatsApp is another one, right?" P2 echoed that thought,

So, I think the main thing to do is to really understand what are those things that

would make it relevant for that student, that potential student to join the

university? And from there . . . What is the best way to communicate? So maybe

that might involve not only the strategy that you can spend . . . to talk about, but

also what kind of channels are you going to be using? You know so is that a

society for example that listens to a lot of radio? Is that a society that uses social

media for pretty much everything they do? If so, which social media platform or

if radio, which radio station or is it, digital radio? Is it a regular radio? What are

the times?

Table 2 depicts the frequency of references to social media channels by the

business marketing leaders during the interviews. Facebook was mentioned during most

of the interviews and both G1 and G2 had extensive web presence on Facebook to appeal

to different level of education students and with a working professional focus. G1 had a

Facebook presence relative to different programs and stages of the enrollment cycle from

new students to alumni. Instagram and WhatsApp were equally mentioned by the

marketing leaders.

Table 2

Reference to Social Media Channels by Marketers

Participants	Facebook	Instagram	WhatsApp	Other
P1	X		X	
P2			X	
P3	X	X		X
P4	X	X	X	
P5	X	X		X

Facebook was referenced the most by four out of five of the business marketing

leaders. P4 expressed, "We try to be active on social media . . . such as Facebook and

Instagram because here in Brazil people tend to search ahead. So, they do search about

the school and if it's good or not?" P5 agreed while saying, "At this moment for Brazil

Facebook and Instagram would be the best." At G1, P3 described the use of Facebook,

"We drive traffic to the Web site so that the user would start learning about us and then

we retarget them once they . . . once they visit the website. We retarget them with

Facebook lead ads to targeting us." Markić et al. (2016) posited that Facebook was an

effective platform to gain feedback from consumers directly to better assess their needs

and wants.

To further penetrate the market, G1 had a sophisticated series of email messages

that were sent to prospective students at different stages of the enrollment cycle, called

nurturing emails. G3 described nurturing email campaigns stating,

> Depending on the geogroup, because we run different campaigns and different
>
> like . . . brand awareness campaigns for audiences that they haven't heard about
>
> our institution. We drive traffic to the website so that the user would start learning
>
> about us and then we retarget them once they . . . once they visit the website . . .
>
> And then for people that they know about our brand, we get them with lead
>
> generation ads, but once they become a lead, we target them with nurturing
>
> campaigns to go down to the funnel and start or complete their application and
>
> then potentially become a student. So, this strategy varies by comes to country.

These nurturing email campaigns were intended to encourage prospective

students to act and to take the next step in the enrollment process. G2 did not mention the

use of targeted email campaigns as part of their recruitment strategy. Instead, G2 relied

upon word-of-mouth advertising as their most effective marketing channel.

Pergelova and Angulo-Ruiz (2017) hypothesized that collectivist cultures were

influenced by word-of-mouth or relationship advertising while individualistic cultures

were more influenced by mass media. These hypotheses were in line with the behavior

patterns Hofstede (1980) described in his cultural dimensions theory. After conducting

their study, Pergelova and Angulo-Ruiz (2017) found that on high risk items such as the selection of a higher education institution that both collectivist and individualistic cultures relied upon word-of-mouth as a reliable source of information contrary to their initial hypothesis. The purpose of the social media and proprietary website presence coupled with the nurturing email campaigns was to encourage the prospective student to act, this is how the fourth theme developed.

Theme 4: Call-to-Action Marketing Messages

The purpose of the marketing channel selection was to find the most effective ways to convey the call-to-action messages that G1 and G2 attempted to disseminate. P1 recognized cultural differences are needed in crafting a marketing message and shared that,

> You need to understand like how to be culturally relevant to the students because what a U.S. student wants isn't necessarily what a Latin American student wants, and then their cultural ideals and values are also very different. So for example, in the U.S. education is very much centered on the self, so like, on how to better yourself you want that career, you want . . . it's all about you, whereas in Latin there's more of a societal focus so when you do things for your family you do things for your community's greater good.

P1 recognized the differences between the individualist society of the United States in contrast to the collectivist nature of Brazilian society and how these cultural differences should be taken into consideration when developing a marketing message and strategy (Hofstede, 1980; O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 2004; Pauwels et al., 2013). These were

two of Hofstede's (1980) terms used to describe U.S. versus Brazilian cultures in relation

to their cultural orientations (O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 2004; Pauwels et al., 2013). G2 used

memes and imagery calling to action based around subthemes such as humor, English

imagery, conversation, working professionals, youth, and diversity on Facebook and

Instagram.

These were simple images or words with a call-to-action message on where to

sign up for classes. Cultural dimensions did not serve a noticeable function in the creation

of marketing strategy for either group. Message boards on social media gave prospective

students the opportunity to discover via virtual word-of-mouth the experiences of former

students, which collectivist societies (Hofstede, 1980), such as Brazil, valued according

to P5. Pergelova and Angulo-Ruiz (2017) found that word-of-mouth advertising was

relevant to both collectivist and individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 1980) in the purchase

of high-risk items such as higher education programs. Table 3 illustrates the types and

locations of call-to-action campaigns conducted by G1 and G2.

Table 3

Call-to-Action Campaign Varieties

Group	Email	Own Website	Facebook	Instagram	Other
G1	X	X	X	X	X
G2		X	X	X	X

Both G1 and G2 focused on social media for their call-to-action campaigns where

G1 also had an extensive line of nurturing email campaigns as well for this purpose. G2

also conducted call-to-action campaigns on other websites related to their area of study.

Next, I review applications to the professional practice that can be gained from the knowledge of this research.

Applications to Professional Practice

The specific business problem is that some for-profit university business marketing leaders lack country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies to increase the enrollment of online Brazilian students. The aim of this study was to explore a Brazilian and an American higher education institutions' perspective on what country-specific and cultural-specific marketing strategies for-profit business marketing leaders use to increase the enrollment of online Brazilian students. In this case study, culture-specific marketing strategies were not created by G1 nor by G2 toward Brazil. Both G1 and G2 appeared to respond to the interview questions with an understanding of Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory without expressly referring to the defined terms. Nonetheless, neither chose to market on this cultural knowledge, but rather on consumer intelligence and demographic profiles.

Higher education business marketers at for-profit schools could develop a better understanding of the different factors that define of Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory, such as collectivism and individualism, or masculine and feminine, with respect to cultures. Higher education marketers can use this theory to create country-specific cultural profiles, and then this knowledge could be applied to the creation of future marketing strategies. For example, by crafting marketing messages specifically around a culture's known dimensions, marketers could potentially better reach their target market in a way that the target market would prefer the message relayed. A more

culturally sensitive marketing approach could lead to more customer by-in, brand loyalty, repeat sales, and enrollments by students with the educational background and budget to attend. After collecting market feedback via Facebook that culture was a factor to be considered when assessing a technological product's quality and consumer adaptation, Moro et al. (2018) posited that marketing messages should not be unvaried in nature to be effective in different cultures. Culture was a factor in ecommerce purchase decision making (Mohammed & Tejay, 2017). Both participant groups in the current study used social media extensively as part of their global marketing strategy. Marketers could act on these data to create more culturally effective marketing messages by incorporating more of a culturally sensitive messages into their marketing campaigns.

For-profit institutions could give additional tuition savings incentives to populations in different countries where word-of-mouth advertising is fundamental to a culture and in turn improve enrollment numbers. In word-of-mouth advertising remunerating both the deliverer and the recipient of the message with in-kind rewards was an effective way to increase the willingness of participants to spread the message (Haenlein & Libal, 2017). Marketers could compare their organization's use of the marketing channels mentioned during the interviews, such as Facebook and Instagram, to reconsider how they are marketing around culture and improve efforts aligned with Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory. Creating a different marketing campaign for a collectivist versus an individualistic culture would provide prospective students with marketing messages that better resonated with their country's cultural dimensions predisposition.

Knowing if a culture had a high level of uncertainty avoidance may encourage marketers to use different wording in marketing campaigns to reach prospective students (Leng & Botelho, 2010; O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 2004). By recognizing a culture's level of distance to power (Hofstede,1980) marketers could determine the tone that would best work with a culture and whether a more casual or formal tone to messaging would be more appropriate. The knowledge gained via this study on demographic profiles and consumer intelligence could also be beneficial to the professional practice as marketers evaluate every aspect of the consumer when creating marketing strategy (Cleveland et al., 2016).

P5 noted, "São Paulo, capital . . . I have many students from the capital they do online classes . . . And so, in their case, they just come [to be] online." P5 compared this São Paulo capital population that based decision-making on availability online to his local Rio Preto community that was more in need of word-of-mouth advertising to express value in a program. P5 recognized the microcultural difference of both groups. Other business marketers could take greater effort in looking for microcultures and market to their needs accordingly. Next, I address implications for positive social change.

Implications for Social Change

Better understanding of different nations' cultural dimensions could lead to better communication. As P1 expressed, "Like, you know, the basic thing of marketing is finding the right person, at the right place, at the right time, but it's also making sure that you're saying the right thing." Were marketing messages more culturally sensitive and customized to the appropriate audience, then potentially more prospective students would

want to enroll in online programs from for-profit institutions. This could lead to greater numbers of enrollments from less-represented countries. Many people are unable to participate in the current higher educational system in Brazil (Schwartzman, 2011). More students who presently do not have access to higher education options globally could be educated.

In the case of Brazil, during the 2016 school year 561,667 students graduated from fully online programs and by 2017 this number rose to 1,320,025 (Associação Brasileira de Educação a Distância, 2017). The number of online graduates more than doubled in a year as the Brazilian MEC continues to increase the number of recognized online programs. Possibly, the customization of marketing messages along cultural dimensions lines would make prospective students develop a sense of inclusion even in a distance education setting that is sometimes missing in the current situations, then the number of online graduates year over year could increase from these levels, as more students choose to study online. Next, I present recommendations for future action.

Recommendations for Action

In this study, for-profit institutions' business marketing leaders appeared to understand cultural differences and what the priorities of different cultures are, however, chose to ignore these differences when creating marketing messages or campaigns and chose to market around consumer intelligence and demographic profiles instead. A recommendation to future for-profit education marketing business leaders would be to choose to embrace cultural differences in creating marketing strategy and messages. As marketers become aware of the findings of this study, some marketing business leaders

could identify the cultural dimensions composition of a target culture and create a marketing message specific to that audience's needs. The closer the marketer can get to the consumer in tone, message, and channel the more successful the campaign may be.

I recommend that business marketing leaders at for-profit schools go beyond their current consumer intelligence and demographic profiles to add some aspects of Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory to their marketing strategy and use this as a tool to better communicate with their prospective student base in a manner that would best resonate with the base. Both G1 and G2 used similar call-to-action types of marketing campaigns. These efforts could have more of a cultural dimensions tone to better appeal to the target market. Engelen and Brettel (2011) found Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to be used most extensively in the creation of marketing strategies. For-profit business marketing leaders could join the others in bringing this theory to life via their marketing campaigns as well.

Recommendations for Further Research

I would recommend that researchers look at complex cultures, such as that of Brazil, to break down the culture into subcultures and market to that level. As Volkema (2012) noted, Brazil is made up of several subcultures. Focusing on marketing strategy designed to enroll Paulistas as potential students could be favorable to enrollment growth, as many Paulistas would fit the demographic *focus factor profile* described in Figure 3. Also, one of the participants reiterated this point when discussing the local Rio Preto culture versus that of the São Paulo capital culture and how the priorities of local versus distant students were different from one another. Researchers should analyze how

marketing messages need to be adjusted to better connect to the different subcultures in Brazil through modifying their marketing message tone and changing marketing channel selection to more effectively reach their target markets.

Scholars could conduct focus groups in Brazil both with different marketing teams as well as with prospective students to find out what is most relevant to them in their decision making process when choosing an online school and looks for clues that may give direction on how to incorporate this knowledge into culturally sensitive marketing campaigns. Marketers could conduct similar focus groups in other countries to obtain firsthand feedback from prospective students to reconfirm that Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions were applicable to each culture and subcultures. These data could also become a natural way to better communicate with prospective student populations.

Also, this study was conducted with two participant groups. Researchers could conduct this study on a much larger scale to gather rich data from many more schools to see if this type of marketing focus based around demographics and consumer intelligence was the norm over marketing on cultural dimensions of a nation? By growing the size of the number of participant groups potentially the validity and credibility of findings would increase, but not in all circumstances (Elo et al., 2014). Marketing scholars could conduct a quantitative study via Likert scale surveys of prospective students to explore the correlation between subcultures within a culture and specific cultural dimensions or by surveying different age groups or sexes in relation to cultural dimensions to determine the significance that these factors could have to the creation of marketing messages.

Reflections

Prior to this study I was unaware if culture served a function in cross-cultural marketing strategies that for-profit marketing leaders used to increase enrollments of online Brazilian students. Through my research, I found that culture can be understood but often ignored while creating marketing strategy. I did not explore if this lack of cultural orientation was due marketing budget or time constraints that existed which prevented teams from executing culture-specific strategies or just an effort to keep the message simple. These results could have been different, had culture served a greater function in the creation of global marketing strategy.

I learned that irrespective of country of origin of the marketer, both had similar notions on their target market based around demographic profiles. I learned the importance of being patient while organizing participant groups for data collection and developed the skills to analyze the data in a new environment. This process was new to me and I grew as a scholar for having experienced this journey. I had some notions of Brazilian culture from my own personal experiences interacting with Brazilians. This study gave me the opportunity to detach myself from my predispositions and to allowed me to examine marketing to a Brazilian culture objectively and report the findings as such. I found that as I expanded my knowledge of my chosen conceptual framework that the results, I derived were very much in line with the way this specific cultural was described by Hofstede and by others through the literature I reviewed.

Conclusions

The purpose of this doctoral study was to explore the country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies that business marketing leaders used to increase the enrollment of online Brazil students. I explored the marketers of two for-profit higher education institutions via interviews and reviewed their marketing messages online. Often culture did not appear to serve a primary function in the creation of marketing strategy. Marketing leaders appeared to be aware of these differences, however, they chose not to incorporate cultural dimensions into their marketing strategy. Demographics and consumer intelligence were two factors that were more prominent in the creation of marketing strategy. The data revealed that cultural dimensions could be useful to create culturally sensitive messages by for-profit marketing strategy leaders to enroll online Brazilian students. By embracing Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (1980) business marketing leaders could become more successful at truly reaching their target market in the most effective way possible.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

What country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies do you as a for-profit university business marketing leader use to increase online enrollment levels of Brazilian students?

How does your country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategy vary in characteristics from market to market?

When determining a country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategy do you focus on a specific demographic profile or cultural group within a country?

How do you define the target market?

What country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies do you use to determine the driving factors for potential students to enroll online?

How do you determine which marketing channels to choose to engage potential online Brazilian students?

What are the main sources of market feedback that you collect from potential students about the effectiveness of your country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies to enroll online Brazilian students?

How do you adjust your country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies based on market feedback from potential online Brazilian students?

Do you have any additional comments you would like to share regarding the specific country-specific and culture-specific marketing strategies that you use to recruit online Brazilian students?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

The interview coding protocol was as follows:

The researcher labeled the participant groups G1 and G2 and the individual

participants were labeled P1 through P5.

The interview process was as follows:

Introduction

- I welcomed the participant and asked if there were any questions in

   relation to the protocol breakdown that they had received in advance of the

   interview.

- I reminded them of the overarching research question: What country-

   specific and cultural-specific marketing strategies do some for-profit

   university business marketing leaders use to increase the enrollment of

   online Brazilian students?

Informed Consent

- I received their informed consent via Survey Monkey for the U.S.-based

   school and via email confirmations for the Brazilian school in advance of

   the interview session.

Interview Questions

- I reviewed the interview questions one by one.

- I recorded the responses via Business Skype.

Interview Wrap-up

- I asked if there were any follow-up comments beyond the interview questions posed.

- I reminded the participants that the interviews would remain confidential.

- I added that I would be following-up with a transcript and a second Skype call to review their responses to member check the data.

- I gave the participants the IRB contact details in the event that they wanted any clarification on the process from them directly.

- I thanked each participant for engaging in this interview process.