Chapter 5
Is there a European Shopping–Related Lifestyle?
Investigating the Interaction between National Culture and Shopping–Culture

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate possible differences and similarities across European countries in terms of shopping culture, and identify in which constructs or dimensions these differences occur. The results suggest that European countries do differ in terms of shopping-related lifestyles and that these differences are related to responsibility, quality, shopping enjoyment, shopping as a social activity, and online shopping, as well as overt and covert shopping behaviour. Therefore, it was concluded that there seem to be many shopping-related lifestyles in Europe, not a single unified one.

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many firms have come to see foreign markets as a way to expand their market share. As a consequence, consumers across the globe drink Coca-Cola, communicate with their loved ones on their iPhones and laugh at the same YouTubeclip. In the marketing literature, this expansion of markets has led to marketing scholars emphasizing the need to understand and compare consumers across nations and cultures (Nakata & Sivakumar, 1996). This change has stimulated scholarly debate on whether nations or cultures should be considered the unit of analysis (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2002; Douglas & Craig, 1997).

One can find arguments both for and against using national borders as units of analysis. Whether it is relevant to examine consumption culture in terms of national culture can be questioned for at least three reasons (e.g. Douglas & Craig, 1997; Meamber & Venkatesh, 2000; Steenkamp, 2001). Firstly, even though people living within certain national borders are often considered as belonging to a certain culture, this is far from true. For instance, cultures and nations in Europe have traditionally been largely heterogeneous and according to estimates 11.45 –14 per cent of Europeans— that is, more than one in every 10 Europeans belong to a traditional minority group (Pan & Pfeil, 2003). Moreover, both increased immigration across European national borders and immigration from non-European countries have further increased this heterogeneity (Refworld, 2011). Secondly, the increased trend of individualism in the Western world has encouraged consumers to separate and cultivate unique, individual characteristics rather than conforming to a national culture (Twenge, 2006; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). For instance, an ecological activist, a stay-at-home mother and a business manager are likely to be very different, although they can all be categorized as Germans. Thirdly, empirical evidence suggests that the culture of the market is a culture in itself and operates across country borders alongside national cultures (Venkatesh, 1995). For instance, Heyman & Ariely (2004) investigated what the authors call social and market norms,
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