

# Korean vs. American Corporate Websites: Interactivity, Comparative Appeals and Use of Technology

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## 〈요약〉

This study is a cross cultural examination of interactivity, comparative advertising, and technology use in Korean and U.S. corporate websites. Utilizing cultural analysis criteria of high vs. low context, power distance and individualism-collectivism, we compared interactivity in U.S. and Korean websites. Our findings indicate that U.S. corporate websites tend to emphasize customer-message and customer-advertiser interactivity, while Korean websites highlight customer-customer interactivity. Findings on comparative advertising strategy indicate that cultural bias represented in U.S. individualism and Korean collectivism leads U.S. web advertisers to utilize direct and indirect comparative advertising more frequently than their Korean counterparts. The results of our technology analysis unexpectedly show that there is no significant difference between the two countries.

Key Words : interactivity, comparative appeals, use of technology

## I. Introduction

The appearance of largely borderless economies has led a new realism for advertisers and marketers in all fields of marketing strategy. Globalization driven by competition among global companies across cultures requires the companies to employ the process of intercultural communication analysis, which involves the examination of similarities and

dissimilarities between consumers in two or more countries or societies. A large body of research exists exhibiting the tendency of advertising to reflect culture as communication content (Hong, Muderrisoglu and Zinkhan 1987; Riffle, Lacy and Fico 1998). Consumers live with traditional core culture and are encompassed by the values, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and behaviors based on that culture. (Hallowell 1972). The fact that advertising serves more as a mirror for culture tendencies and reflects culture, has added great momentum to research in cross-cultural values of advertising, demonstrating to what extent differences in cultural values affect advertising effectiveness (Poally and Gallagher 1990;

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Davis and Sensenbrenner 2000; Han, Bates and Smith 1992). Although the appropriate method to approach local markets has long been debated, many researchers argue the importance of adapting, customizing, or localizing marketing activities when cultures differ, and suggest utilizing varied advertising and marketing strategies which appeal to the uniqueness of individual countries (Dowling 1980; Madden, Caballero and Matsukubo 1986; Weinberger and Spotts 1989; Keown, Jacobs and Ghymn 1992; Muller 1987; Culter and Javalgi 1992 Zandpour; Chang and Catalano 1992).

The Internet is commonly represented as one of the most economic altering technological inventions since the Industrial Revolution (The Economist 1999). Economic globalization through the Internet, as one of the fastest-growing forms of media, changes the business paradigm of the global marketers (Papaws 1998). Therefore, use of the Internet by advertisers and marketers is growing exponentially. According to forecasts by Forester Research (2002), despite the recent downturn of online companies due to the economic slowdown, during fiscal year 2003 the business-to-business Internet market will increase to \$1.3 trillion. Likewise, business-to-consumer market growth is expected to increase to \$108 billion as the total number of Internet users was estimated at 513

million worldwide as of August 2001 (NUA Internet Surveys 2002a).

The Internet appears to be one of few media forms to cross cultural barriers. Although there are many intercultural studies on traditional media advertising, only a few studies examining the cultural influences on Web advertising have been conducted. In this vein, this study investigates the differences in cultural influences on Web advertising between Korea and the U.S., based on content analysis. According to Porter and Samovar's (1982) scale of social-cultural differences, Western and Asian cultures show maximum difference. Therefore, Web advertising in the U.S., representing Western culture, and Korea, representing Eastern culture, were examined to see the cultural differences more clearly. It is expected that the cultural differences existing between the two countries influence Web advertising practices. Specifically, this study will examine various communication factors in web based advertising such as interactivity, comparatives and technology.

## II . Literature Review

### Korea and the U.S.

The U.S. and Korea differ in their

cultural, social, economic and political situations, and in technological development. While the Internet was born as APRANET in the late 1960s in the U.S. and opened to the public in 1992, Internet use in Korea was introduced for government and academic use in 1982 and became a public medium in 1994. In both countries, the Internet is experiencing exponential growth in the number of networks, number of hosts, and volume of traffic (NUA Internet Surveys 2002a).

*Online Demographics.* Of the 513 million reported Internet users worldwide as of August 2001, 143 million were in the U.S. and 24 million in Korea, putting usage at 50.9 % of the 281 million total U.S. population and Marketer 2002).

According to a survey conducted by the KRNIC (Korean Internet Information Center) in January 2001, 55.6 percent of Internet users in Korea are male and 44.4 percent are female (KRNIC 2002). This is a significant shift since 1997 when 83.8 percent were male and 15.2 percent were female, although the Internet continues to be a more male-dominated medium in Korea than in the U.S. Regarding age distribution of Internet users, younger people dominate Internet usage in Korea (i.e., 93.3 percent of Korean users are between the ages of 7 and 19).

## Online Advertising

According to Robert Coen, McCann-Erickson, the U.S. advertising market spent a total of \$244 billion in 2001, an increase of 9.6 percent over the previous year (Adage 2002). According to an executive summary outlining U.S. web advertising revenues published by Jupiter Research Center in 2002, advertising investment in the online medium has fallen off despite increased Internet consumer usage because, combined with the recent economic slowdown, most advertisers fail to understand the true value of their spending. Consequently, in 2001, online advertising accounted for \$7.3 billion; in 2002, it will see only modest growth of 10.9 percent, amounting to \$8.1 billion (eMarketer 2001a). While advertising growth rates are projected to make only modest gains, the overall rate of Internet usage is, as previously stated, achieving exponential growth. This disparity can be explained by projected diversification of online advertising spending to such digital marketing initiatives as coupons, promotions, sweepstakes, and e-mail campaigns (Jupiter Research Center 2002). These digital marketing initiatives represent the terms of interactivity functions to be expounded upon later in this study.

JoongangIlbo (2002), one of the leading Korean daily newspapers, forecast Korea's advertising market is on track to reach

\$4.6 billion by 2002 and could grow by 5 to 13 percent over the 2001 growth figure. Despite a serious economic crisis in 1997 and depression of offline and dotcom companies in Korea, total Web advertising revenues are estimated to increase from \$80 million in 2001 to \$100 million in 2002 (JAD Plaza 2002). Although Korea, with Japan and China, has one of the fastest Internet growth rates in Asia, advertising and web advertising revenues are relatively small when compared with the U.S. The introduction of new marketing definition and advertising strategy such as joint- / package-marketing or cross media marketing in Korea is helping its economic recovery (Joongangilbo 2002). The Internet plays an important role as a very affordable medium in the Korean marketing environment because it is a viable option for many middle and small sized companies, which cannot afford expensive traditional media advertising.

### III. Conceptualization and Hypotheses Development

#### Interactivity

Among several distinguishing characteristics of the Internet such as interactivity, irrelevance of distance and time, low set-up costs, global coverage,

and ease of entry (Berthon, Pitt and Watson 1996), interactivity is considered the most salient characteristic of the Internet (Pavik 1996; Cho and Leckenby 1999; Yoon and Kim 2001).

Previous research utilized different conceptual definitions of interactivity. Interactivity in computer-mediated environments is defined as "the extent to which users can participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real time" (Steuer 1992). Robb, McCarthy, and Sheridan (1997) interpreted interactivity in marketing as "the combination of rich content, active intelligence, and collaborative communications to create a compelling consumer experience."

Steuer (1992) argued that interactivity is not a uni-dimensional, but multi-dimensional concept and explained the concept as having two dimensions of interaction (human-human interaction and human-message interaction). In the advertising context, Cho and Leckenby (1999) explained human-human interaction as interaction between consumers and advertisers (e.g., providing feedback or personal information, site registration, etc.), and human-message interaction as consumers' manipulation or control over messages (e.g., searching for information, clicking hyperlinks, etc.). However, the researchers of the current study believe that human-human interaction should include not only interaction between

consumers and advertisers (sending feedback to advertisers, registration, etc.), but also interaction among consumers (e.g., chatting, online message board, etc.). Therefore, in this study, we define interactivity having three dimensions, i.e., the degree to which a person actively engages in advertising processing by interacting with advertising messages, advertisers, and other consumers. For each dimension of interactivity, we will propose a hypothesis in regards to various cultural dimensions (high vs. low context, power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, etc.).

*Consumer-Message Interactivity.* Consumers interact with advertising messages on the Internet by editing, manipulating, and searching for information. Previous research studies have shown that Korean television and magazine advertising is less informative than similar U.S. advertising (Keown et al. 1992). Correspondingly, on the Internet, Oh, Cho and Leckenby (1999) show that Korean web advertising is less informative than U.S. web advertising. More information on the web implies more consumer-message interaction likelihood; i.e., a larger quantity of information on websites may enable more consumer-message interaction. This difference in the quantity of information and consumer-message interaction between American and Korean ads can be explained by Hall's (1976) cultural context theory. According to Hall's theory, the expression

of message, especially the informativeness of the message, varies in different cultures (Wells, Burnett, and Moriarty. 1995). In other words, consumers from low context cultures (i.e. the U.S.) may tend to draw substantially more information from the explicit content presented in communications by interacting with various messages (e.g., searching, editing and manipulating provided contents) than do those from high context cultures (i.e. Korea). Hence, it is expected that U.S. websites are more likely to utilize the informative nature of websites by implementing more consumer-message interaction Internet capabilities.

H1: U.S. advertisers utilize more consumer-message interaction content on the Internet than Korean advertisers.

*Consumer-Advertiser Interactivity.* One of the approaches most widely used to classify different cultures has been Hofstede's cultural dimension approach. Here, a culture is defined as "collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from those of another" (Hofstede 1984). He conceptualized cultural dimensions in terms of uncertainty avoidance, power distance, individualism-collectivism, and masculinity-femininity (Hofstede 1980).

According to Hofstede (1984), power

distance is defined as "the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations accept that power is distributed unequally". It influences how people with less and more power both deal with authority (Mooij 1998). In other words, individuals within high power distance cultures tend to accept wider status margins than low power distance cultures. Compared to Korean culture, U.S. culture values individualism and rejects hierarchic status, which makes power distance or authority recognition an uncomfortable proposition. Accordingly, U.S. web advertisers may tend to lessen the distance between consumer and advertiser in an attempt to maintain a good relationship through interaction.

H2: U.S. advertisers utilize more consumer-advertiser interaction on the Internet than Korean advertisers.

*Consumer-Consumer Interactivity.* People in individualistic cultures (the U.S.) are more likely to identify themselves as individual entities instead of group members and put more value on individual performance than group harmony when there is a conflict between the two (Hofstede 1980). Conversely, collectivist cultures (Korea) place pressure on individuals to accept collective or group-centered goals ahead of personal

goals, and condition people to gravitate to more comfortable situations of group behavior (Triandis 1990). Given this cultural difference, Koreans are more likely to engage in group activities and interactions than Americans. Consequently, Korean advertisers may be more likely to emphasize collectivistic activities among consumers, which foster a group environment and stimulate communication and interaction among consumers.

H3: Korean advertisers utilize more consumer-consumer interaction on the Internet than U.S. advertisers.

### Comparative Advertising

Comparative advertising, the format of comparison appealed at differentiation based on superiority, can be direct or indirect (Dröge 1989). In typical comparative advertising, the advertiser claims superiority over a leading competitor (identified or unidentified) based on how superior the advertised brand is in regard to an important attribute. The sponsored brand can be referred to as superior to the target brand with or without stating the name of the target brand; i.e., a direct or indirect comparison, respectively (Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991; Dröge 1989; Gorn and Weinberg 1984).

It is well established that cultural

norms and values form the basis of advertising strategy in any culture. Han and Shavitt (1994) found systematic differences in advertising appeals across cultures. In Korea, advertising appeals that emphasized group benefits were more persuasive, whereas in the U.S., appeals that emphasized individual benefits were more persuasive. Korean culture is characterized by an expression of self within the framework of the group in relating to others and emphasis is placed on connectedness and relationships. Koreans, as collectivists, do not appear to view themselves as better than others in their society and have less desire to stand out from the crowd (Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000). Therefore, comparative advertising that highlights superior points of difference from the target brand is less likely to appeal to collectivists, and thus is less likely to be utilized in Korean advertising strategy.

H4: Korean advertisers are less likely to utilize comparative advertising strategies on the Internet than U.S. advertisers.

H4.1: Korean advertisers are less likely to utilize direct comparative advertising strategies than U.S. advertisers.

H4.2: Korean advertisers are less likely to utilize indirect comparative advertising

strategies than U.S. advertisers.

## Use of Technology

In the development of corporate websites, technology tools such as Java, Flash and Streaming Video are considered tools that add vividness by enhancing the richness of the experience and interactivity. Because these technology tools are considered a contributor to interactivity (Steuer 1992), web advertisers make a concerted effort to increase the level of vividness on their corporate websites.

In terms of the years of use, the number of users, and online ad spending in the two countries, the Internet is a relatively newer and less developed medium in Korea than in the U.S. The overall technology level is expected to be more developed in the U.S. than in Korea. Since Java, Flash and Streaming Video are the most commonly used multimedia technologies on the Internet, they are presumed to be more ubiquitous on American websites. Therefore, it is expected that Korean websites have a lower technology level than U.S. websites.

H5: Korean advertisers are less likely to utilize advanced multimedia technologies such as Java, Flash and Streaming Video than U.S. advertisers.

## IV. Methodology

### Sample Materials and Coding

Recognizing the Internet as an example of interactive media, Internet advertising can be defined as paid or non paid forms of communications on the Internet in an attempt to sell products, services or ideas by identified sponsors, following the definition of interactive advertising by editors of JIAD (Journal of Interactive Advertising, at <http://www.jiad.org>). In the current study, advertiser-supported websites or corporate business websites were used as units of analysis among many different forms of Internet advertising (e.g., banner ads, buttons, paid links, interstitials, etc.), because the purpose of this study is to analyze various communication styles including interactivity in Internet websites.

A content analysis of Korean vs. U.S. corporate websites was conducted to examine interactivity, comparative advertising and use of technology. The sample included 100 corporate business websites; 50 leading U.S. national advertisers' websites and 50 leading Korean national advertisers' websites. The sample websites were analyzed from January 2002 to February 2002. Data identifying the top 50 national advertisers was attained from *Ad Age* (2002) for the

U.S. and JAd Plaza (2002) for Korea (see Table 1.1 and Table 1.2).

Each corporate web site was evaluated by two judges who were fluent in both English and Korean. The level of analysis for this study consisted of three parts: 1) the first level web pages (the landing, index, or home page of each website), 2) the second level web pages (all hyperlinked pages from the first level web page), and 3) all web pages found through search functions on each website. Specifically, each coder initially examined the first and second level web pages to find requisite content. If not found in the first two levels of web pages, then, various search functions on each website were used to locate missing content. To authenticate intercoder reliability, two coders independently analyzed 10 Korean and 10 U.S. websites. Agreement between the two coder's ratings of the websites was calculated to check whether it fell within the acceptance range of reliability ( $r > .80$ ).

### Measurement

To operationalize three dimensions of interactivity (consumer-message, consumer-advertiser, and consumer-consumer interactivity), our study utilizes "forms of interactive function" which classified interactivity into 23 functions (Ghose and



(Table 1.1) 50 Leading U.S. National Advertisers Ranked by Total U.S. Ad Spending in 2000

Rank	Advertiser	URL
1	General Motors Corp.	<a href="http://www.gm.com/">http://www.gm.com/</a>
2	Philip Morris Cos.	<a href="http://www.philipmorris.com/home.asp">http://www.philipmorris.com/home.asp</a>
3	Procter & Gamble Co.	<a href="http://www.pg.com/">http://www.pg.com/</a>
4	Ford Motor Co.	<a href="http://www.ford.com/en/default.htm">http://www.ford.com/en/default.htm</a>
5	Pfizer	<a href="http://www.pfizer.com/main.html">http://www.pfizer.com/main.html</a>
6	PepsiCo	<a href="http://www.pepsico.com/">http://www.pepsico.com/</a>
7	DaimlerChrysler	<a href="http://www.daimlerchrysler.com/">http://www.daimlerchrysler.com/</a>
8	AOL Time Warner	<a href="http://www.aoltime Warner.com/index_flash.adp">http://www.aoltime Warner.com/index_flash.adp</a>
9	Walt Disney Co.	<a href="http://disney.go.com/">http://disney.go.com/</a>
10	Verizon Communications	<a href="http://www22.verizon.com/">http://www22.verizon.com/</a>
11	Johnson & Johnson	<a href="http://www.jnj.com/">http://www.jnj.com/</a>
12	Sears, Roebuck & Co.	<a href="http://www.sears.com/sr/homepages/sears_homepage.jsp">http://www.sears.com/sr/homepages/sears_homepage.jsp</a>
13	Unilever	<a href="http://www.unilever.com/">http://www.unilever.com/</a>
14	AT&T Corp.	<a href="http://www.att.com/">http://www.att.com/</a>
15	General Electric Co.	<a href="http://www.ge.com/">http://www.ge.com/</a>
16	Toyota Motor Corp.	<a href="http://www.toyota.com/index2.html">http://www.toyota.com/index2.html</a>
17	McDonald's Corp.	<a href="http://www.mcdonalds.com/corporate/">http://www.mcdonalds.com/corporate/</a>
18	U.S. Government	<a href="http://www.firstgov.gov/">http://www.firstgov.gov/</a>
19	Sprint Corp.	<a href="http://www.sprint.com/">http://www.sprint.com/</a>
20	Viacom	<a href="http://www.viacom.com/">http://www.viacom.com/</a>
21	Bristol-Myers Squibb Co.	<a href="http://www.bms.com/landing/data/">http://www.bms.com/landing/data/</a>
22	IBM Corp.	<a href="http://www.ibm.com/">http://www.ibm.com/</a>
23	Federated Department Stores	<a href="http://www.federated-fds.com/home.asp">http://www.federated-fds.com/home.asp</a>
24	GlaxoSmithKline	<a href="http://www.gsk.com/">http://www.gsk.com/</a>
25	Diageo	<a href="http://www.diageo.co.uk/">http://www.diageo.co.uk/</a>
26	Honda Motor Co.	<a href="http://www.honda.com/">http://www.honda.com/</a>
27	Sony Corp.	<a href="http://www.sony.com/">http://www.sony.com/</a>
28	J.C. Penney Co.	<a href="http://www0.jcpenney.com/jcp/default.asp">http://www0.jcpenney.com/jcp/default.asp</a>
29	L'Oreal	<a href="http://www.loreal.com/fr/index.asp">http://www.loreal.com/fr/index.asp</a>
30	Merck & Co.	<a href="http://www.merck.com/">http://www.merck.com/</a>
31	News Corp.	<a href="http://www.newscorp.com/index2.html">http://www.newscorp.com/index2.html</a>
32	Coca-Cola Co.	<a href="http://www.coca-cola.com/">http://www.coca-cola.com/</a>
33	Tricon Global Restaurants	<a href="http://www.triconglobal.com/">http://www.triconglobal.com/</a>
34	Microsoft Corp.	<a href="http://www.microsoft.com/ms.htm">http://www.microsoft.com/ms.htm</a>
35	Target Corp.	<a href="http://www.target.com/">http://www.target.com/</a>
36	Nissan Motor Co.	<a href="http://www.nissan-global.com/EN/HOME/">http://www.nissan-global.com/EN/HOME/</a>
37	WorldCom	<a href="http://www.worldcom.com/main.phtml">http://www.worldcom.com/main.phtml</a>
38	Hewlett-Packard Co.	<a href="http://www.hp.com/">http://www.hp.com/</a>
39	SBC Communications	<a href="http://www.sbc.com/">http://www.sbc.com/</a>
40	Intel Corp.	<a href="http://www.intel.com/">http://www.intel.com/</a>
41	Pharmacia Corp.	<a href="http://www.pharmacia.com/">http://www.pharmacia.com/</a>
42	Estee Lauder Cos.	<a href="http://www.esteelauder.com/">http://www.esteelauder.com/</a>
43	Anheuser-Busch Cos.	<a href="http://www.anheuser-busch.com/">http://www.anheuser-busch.com/</a>
44	Vivendi Universal	<a href="http://www.vivendiuniversal.com/vu2/en/home/home.cfm">http://www.vivendiuniversal.com/vu2/en/home/home.cfm</a>
45	American Home Products Corp.	<a href="http://www.ahp.com/home.asp?flash=y">http://www.ahp.com/home.asp?flash=y</a>
46	Mars Inc.	<a href="http://www.mars.com/">http://www.mars.com/</a>
47	Home Depot	<a href="http://www.homedepot.com/">http://www.homedepot.com/</a>
48	Bayer	<a href="http://www.bayer.com/en/index_en.html">http://www.bayer.com/en/index_en.html</a>
49	General Mills	<a href="http://www.generalmills.com/corporate/">http://www.generalmills.com/corporate/</a>
50	Nestle	<a href="http://www.nestle.com/">http://www.nestle.com/</a>

〈Table 1.2〉 50 Leading Korean National Advertisers Ranked by Total Korean Ad Spending in 2000

Rank	Advertiser	URL
1	SK Corp.	<a href="http://www.sk.co.kr/">http://www.sk.co.kr/</a>
2	Hyundai Corporate	<a href="http://www.hyundai.co.kr/">http://www.hyundai.co.kr/</a>
3	Samsung Digital	<a href="http://www.samsung.co.kr/">http://www.samsung.co.kr/</a>
4	KT Telecom.	<a href="http://www.kt.co.kr/">http://www.kt.co.kr/</a>
5	LG	<a href="http://www.lg.co.kr/">http://www.lg.co.kr/</a>
6	LOTTE.com Inc	<a href="http://www.lotte.com/">http://www.lotte.com/</a>
7	KIA Motors	<a href="http://www.kia.co.kr/">http://www.kia.co.kr/</a>
8	Pharm.Co.	<a href="http://www.pacificpharm.co.kr/">http://www.pacificpharm.co.kr/</a>
9	Mamyang Milk	<a href="http://www.namyangi.com/">http://www.namyangi.com/</a>
10	Maeil Dairy Industry	<a href="http://www2.maeil.com/">http://www2.maeil.com/</a>
11	Korea Yakult Co.	<a href="http://www.yakult.co.kr/">http://www.yakult.co.kr/</a>
12	Haitai Confectionery Co..	<a href="http://www.ht.co.kr/">http://www.ht.co.kr/</a>
13	Hankook Chinaware	<a href="http://www.hankook.com/index.html">http://www.hankook.com/index.html</a>
14	Donga Pharmaceutical Co.	<a href="http://www.donga.co.kr/">http://www.donga.co.kr/</a>
15	Korea Nestle	<a href="http://www.nestle.co.kr/">http://www.nestle.co.kr/</a>
16	Migliorevalley	<a href="http://www.migliorevalley.com/">http://www.migliorevalley.com/</a>
17	The HITE Co.	<a href="http://www.hite.co.kr/">http://www.hite.co.kr/</a>
18	Nongshim Food Co.	<a href="http://www.nongshim.co.kr/">http://www.nongshim.co.kr/</a>
19	E-Himart	<a href="http://www.e-himart.co.kr/">http://www.e-himart.co.kr/</a>
20	POSCO	<a href="http://www.posco.co.kr/">http://www.posco.co.kr/</a>
21	Chunho Food	<a href="http://www.chunho.net/">http://www.chunho.net/</a>
22	JooyonTech Computer	<a href="http://www.jooyon.co.kr/">http://www.jooyon.co.kr/</a>
23	Ildong Pharmaceutical Co	<a href="http://www.ildong.com/">http://www.ildong.com/</a>
24	Kimberly-Clark Corporation	<a href="http://www.yuhan-kimberly.co.kr/">http://www.yuhan-kimberly.co.kr/</a>
25	YUHAN CO.	<a href="http://www.yuhan.co.kr/">http://www.yuhan.co.kr/</a>
26	Woongjin Co.	<a href="http://www.woongjin.com/">http://www.woongjin.com/</a>
27	Onstel Co.	<a href="http://www.onsetel.co.kr/">http://www.onsetel.co.kr/</a>
28	Aekyung Co.	<a href="http://www.aekyung.co.kr/">http://www.aekyung.co.kr/</a>
29	Asiana Airline	<a href="http://www.asiana.co.kr/">http://www.asiana.co.kr/</a>
30	SSANGYONG Motors	<a href="http://www.smotor.com/">http://www.smotor.com/</a>
31	Shinhan Bank	<a href="http://www.shinhan.com/">http://www.shinhan.com/</a>
32	SK Telecom	<a href="http://www.shinsegi.com/">http://www.shinsegi.com/</a>
33	Seoul Bank	<a href="http://www.seoulbank.co.kr/">http://www.seoulbank.co.kr/</a>
34	Seoul Milk	<a href="http://www.seoulmilk.co.kr/">http://www.seoulmilk.co.kr/</a>
35	TriGem Computer.Inc	<a href="http://www.trigem.co.kr/">http://www.trigem.co.kr/</a>
36	Biggreae Co.	<a href="http://www.bing.co.kr/">http://www.bing.co.kr/</a>
37	BCCard	<a href="http://www.bccard.co.kr/">http://www.bccard.co.kr/</a>
38	Boryung Pharm.	<a href="http://www.boryung.co.kr/">http://www.boryung.co.kr/</a>
39	Myungin Pharmacy	<a href="http://www.myunginph.co.kr/">http://www.myunginph.co.kr/</a>
40	Loreal Korea	<a href="http://www.loreal.co.kr/">http://www.loreal.co.kr/</a>
41	Dong Suh Food Co.	<a href="http://www.dongsuh.co.kr/">http://www.dongsuh.co.kr/</a>
42	Korean Air	<a href="http://www.koreanair.co.kr/">http://www.koreanair.co.kr/</a>
43	Daewoong Co.	<a href="http://www.daewoong.co.kr/">http://www.daewoong.co.kr/</a>
44	Daekyo Co.	<a href="http://www.daekyo.co.kr/">http://www.daekyo.co.kr/</a>
45	Kumkang Shoe Co.	<a href="http://www.kumkang.com/">http://www.kumkang.com/</a>
46	Kumgang Korea Chemical Co.	<a href="http://www.kccworld.co.kr/">http://www.kccworld.co.kr/</a>
47	Kwang Dong Pharm Co.	<a href="http://www.kwang-dong.co.kr/">http://www.kwang-dong.co.kr/</a>
48	Hyunju Computer	<a href="http://www.hyunju.com/">http://www.hyunju.com/</a>
49	P&G Korea	<a href="http://www.pg.co.kr/">http://www.pg.co.kr/</a>
50	Kookmin Bank	<a href="http://www.hncbworld.com/index.jsp">http://www.hncbworld.com/index.jsp</a>

〈Table 2〉 Operationalization of Three Interactivity Dimensions

Dimensions	Function	Measurement
Consumer-Message Interaction	Key words search	A function that allows a visitor to pinpoint the particular information he or she is interested in.
	Personal choice helper	A function that can make relatively sophisticated recommendations on consumers' choices based on their input of preferences and decision criteria.
	Virtual reality display	A function that permits consumers to virtually "feel or experience" the product.
	Dealer locator	A function that allows users to pinpoint a dealer closest to his or her residence.
	Multimedia shows	QuickTime movie, streamline video, and other forms of multimedia presentation.
	Software downloading	Surfers download software from a site, usually for free.
	Games	Online games.
Consumer-Advertiser Interaction	Site survey	E-form survey for visitors that solicits their comments on the content and design of the site.
	Online order	An option to order products online.
	Order status tracking	Customers can track the status or whereabouts of their orders online in real time.
	Electric coupon	Distributed online and can be used in retail stores.
	Push media	Similar to TV channels. Users select to participate and receive information directly to their screens on a regular basis.
	Online problem diagnostics	Customers report their problem spots and this function helps them to locate the problem exactly. Whenever possible, "trouble shooting" suggestions are given.
	Electric-form inquiries Comment Feedback	E-forms on which customers can type in online inquiries regarding the products or the firm.
		Customers can fill out e-forms to express their opinions about the company, products and the site.
		Customers can type in their feedback in e-forms with regard to specific questions raised by the site.
	Product survey	E-form survey designed for measuring customer satisfaction about firm's offerings and service.
New-products proposal	E-forms for customers to write about their expectations of new products and their suggestions for new products.	
Sweepstakes/Prize	Events held to attract surfers and to encourage surfer participation by special incentives.	
Interactive job placement	Online job resume building, personal career goal check, etc.	
Consumer-Consumer Interaction	Surfer positions	A section for surfers to write their stories, opinions, or others
	User groups	Cyber group for product users.
	Community	Cyber community for people who share common interests.
	Electric post cards	Written by senders online and to be retrieved by recipients.

Dou 1998). The researchers of the current study had to adjust and manipulate these 23 interactive functions because some functions overlapped (e.g., comment, feedback and electric-form inquiry) while others had to be separated (e.g., user groups and community). As a result, 22 functions were used in the final coding scheme. These 22 functions were categorized into three interactivity dimensions. Table 2 summarizes each interactive function and shows to which interactivity dimension each function corresponds. Each website was coded for each interactive function (used or not used), and the appearance of individual interactive functions in each website was measured and summated/combined for corresponding interactivity dimensions in order to achieve the total interactivity dimension score.

With regard to comparative advertising, the appearance of direct and indirect comparative advertising content was measured for each website. The overall level of comparative strategy was tested by the combined frequencies of direct and indirect comparisons. Finally, the technology level was measured by tracking the appearance of three technology criteria--Java, Flash, and Steaming Video. The overall technology level was tested by the combined frequencies of the three criteria. Statistical procedures used to test all hypotheses were Chi-Square tests for a  $2 \times 2$

contingency table controlling each variable. We used the SAS (1988) program PROC FREQ to analyze the data.

## V. Results

### Intercoder Reliability

For intercoder reliability, a commonly used measure of reliability—the proportion of coding agreements to the total number of coding decisions—was employed in this study. The coder reliability of each coding category was overall satisfactory, ranging from .86 to .98 (i.e., .86 for interactivity, .90 for comparative advertising strategies, .98 for use of technology).

### Hypothesis Testing

*Consumer-Message Interactivity.* Since the U.S. belongs to low context culture and Korea to high context culture, we hypothesized that the U.S. advertiser websites would contain more consumer-message interactivity functions (H1). Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of seven consumer-message interactivity functions. The results show that U.S. websites are more likely to utilize consumer-message interactivity functions than Korean websites. That is, regarding

key word search function, 47 out of 50 U.S. websites use the function while only 27 out of 50 Korean websites employ it. A similar pattern was found for six other consumer-message interactivity functions (20 vs. 10 for personal choice helper; 36 vs. 27 for virtual reality display; 47 vs. 36 for dealer locator; 26 vs. 19 for multimedia shows; 36 vs. 19 for software downloading; and 14 vs. 7 for games). The consumer-message interaction index score for each country was calculated by combining frequencies of seven consumer-message interactivity functions, and the resultant index score was 226 vs. 145 out of 350 maximum possible scores for U.S. and Korean websites, respectively. The result was statistically significant (Chi-Square value = 37.63\*\*, d.f. = 1, p <.01). Therefore, H1 is supported.

<Table 3> Consumer-Message Interactivity in U.S. and Korean Websites

Consumer-Message Interactivity Functions	U.S. (N=50)	Korea (N=50)
Key Words Search	47	27
Personal Choice Helper	20	10
Virtual Reality Display	36	27
Dealer Locator	47	36
Multimedia Shows	26	19
Software Downloading	36	19
Games	14	7
Consumer-Message Interactivity Index Score	226	145

Chi-Square = 37.63\*\*, d.f. = 1, p < .01

*Consumer-Advertiser Interactivity.*  
Based on the proposition that U.S. culture

has a lower power distance predisposition than Korea, we hypothesized that U.S. advertisers would utilize more consumer-advertiser interactivity functions (H2). Table 4 shows the frequency distribution of eleven consumer-advertiser interactivity functions. The results show that U.S. websites are more likely to utilize consumer-advertiser interactivity functions than Korean websites. With regard to site survey, 16 out of 50 U.S. websites use the function, while only 8 out of 50 Korean websites employ it. A similar pattern was found for online order (38 vs. 32), order status tracking (40 vs. 23), electric coupon (23 vs. 19), and push media (35 vs. 1). However, the remaining six consumer-advertiser functions showed either similar or higher frequencies on Korean websites (28 U.S. websites vs. 27 Korean websites for online problem diagnostics, 47 vs. 49 for e-form/comment/feedback, 29 vs. 36 for product survey, 14 vs. 16 for new-product proposal, 14 vs. 27 for sweepstakes/prize, and 42 vs. 43 for interactive job placement). The consumer-advertiser interaction index score for each country was calculated by combining frequencies of eleven consumer-advertiser interactivity functions, and the resultant index score was 326 vs. 281 out of 550 maximum possible scores for U.S. and Korean websites, respectively. The result was statistically significant (Chi-Square value

= 7.44\*\*, d.f. = 1, p <.01). Therefore, with regard to consumer-advertiser interactivity as a whole, H2 is supported.

<Table 4> Consumer-Advertiser Interactivity in U.S. and Korean Websites

Consumer-Advertiser Interactivity Functions	U.S. (N=50)	Korea (N=50)
Site Survey	16	8
Online Order	38	32
Order Status Tracking	40	23
Electronic Coupon	23	19
Push Media	35	1
Online Problem Diagnostics	28	27
E-form/Comment/Feedback	47	49
Product Survey	29	36
New Product Proposal	14	16
Sweepstakes/Prize	14	27
Interactive Job Placement	42	43
Consumer-Advertiser Interactivity Index Score	326	281

Chi-Square = 7.44\*\*, d.f. = 1, p < .01

<Table 5> Consumer-Consumer Interactivity in U.S. and Korean Websites

Consumer-Consumer Interactivity Functions	U.S. (N=50)	Korea (N=50)
Surfer Positions	2	40
User Group	26	37
Community	17	31
Electronic Postcards	13	7
Consumer-Consumer Interactivity Index Score	58	115

Chi-Square = 33.09\*\*, d.f. = 1, p < .01

*Consumer-Consumer Interactivity.* Because Korea emphasizes more collectivistic cultural values than the U.S., we hypothesized that Korean advertisers would utilize more consumer-consumer interactivity functions than U.S. advertisers (H3). Table 5 shows the

frequency distribution of four consumer-consumer interactivity functions. The results show that U.S. websites are more likely to utilize consumer-consumer interactivity functions than Korean websites. With regard to surfer positions, 40 out of 50 Korean websites use the function while only 2 out of 50 U.S. websites employ it. A similar pattern was found for user groups (37 Korean websites vs. 26 U.S. websites), community (31 Korean websites vs. 17 U.S. websites). However, with regard to electric post cards, more U.S. websites (13) used this function than Korean websites (7). The consumer-consumer interaction index score for each country was calculated by combining frequencies of four consumer-consumer interactivity functions, and the resultant index score was 115 vs. 58 out of 200 maximum possible scores for Korean and U.S. websites, respectively. The result was statistically significant (Chi-Square value = 33.09\*\*, d.f. = 1, p <.01). Therefore, with regard to consumer-consumer interactivity as a whole, H3 is also supported.

*Comparative Advertising.* We hypothesized that since Korea puts less emphasis on individualistic cultural values than Korea, Korean advertisers would utilize less comparative advertising strategies than U.S. advertisers (H4). As shown in Table

6, U.S. websites are more likely to utilize both direct and indirect comparisons; i.e., 15 vs. 1 for direct comparisons (Chi-Square value = 14.58\*\*, d.f. = 1, p <.01) and 28 vs. 3 for indirect comparisons (Chi-Square value = 29.22\*\*, d.f. = 1, p <.01). Therefore, both H4.1 and H4.2 are supported. The combined frequency of direct and indirect comparisons also shows a significant difference between U.S. (43) and Korean (4) websites (Chi-Square value = 42.30\*\*, d.f. = 1, p <.01).

<Table 6> Comparative Strategy in U.S. and Korean Websites

Comparative Strategy	U.S. (N=50)	Korea (N=50)	Chi-Square (d.f.=1)
Direct Comparison	15	1	14.58**
Indirect Comparison	28	3	29.22**
Comparative Index Score	43	4	42.30**

p < .01\*\*

<Table 7> Use of Technology in U.S. and Korean Websites

Multimedia Technology	U.S. (N=50)	Korea (N=50)	Chi-Square (d.f.=1)
Java	46	44	0.44
Flash	32	41	4.11**
Streaming Video	22	28	1.44
Technology Index Score	100	113	2.74

p < .01\*\*

*Use of Technology.* We hypothesized that U.S. advertisers would utilize a higher level of multimedia technologies than Korean advertisers (H5). However, the two countries are unexpectedly very

similar with regard to use of Java (44 vs. 46) and Streaming Video (28 vs. 22) for Korean and U.S. websites, respectively (see Table 7). Moreover, regarding use of Flash, more Korean websites (41) used Flash technology than did U.S. websites (32) (Chi-Square value = 4.11\*, d.f. = 1, p <.05). For overall technology level combining three technologies, the results indicate no significant difference between the two countries (113 and 100 for Korean and U.S. websites, respectively) (Chi-Square value = 2.74, d.f. = 1, p > .05).

## VI. Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine cultural differences in interactivity, comparative appeals and technology level employed in corporate websites between Korea and the U.S. Several cultural dimensions were used to explain differences in web communication styles between two countries; i.e., high vs. low cultural context for consumer-message interactivity; power distance for consumer-advertiser interactivity; collectivism-individualism for consumer-consumer interactivity and comparative advertising. The current study is a first attempt to compare level of interactivity employed in websites in different cultures. In addition, this study suggests a new dimension of

interactivity, consumer-consumer interactivity, as an addition to consumer-message and consumer-advertiser interactivity. Our findings concluded that Korean websites employed less consumer-message interactivity, consumer-advertiser interactivity and comparative advertising strategy, but more consumer-consumer interactivity than U.S. websites.

The first finding of less consumer-message interactivity in Korean websites is consistent with that of previous related studies; i.e., less informativeness of Korean advertising than U.S. advertising both in traditional media (Keown et al. 1992) and the Internet (Oh, Cho, and Leckenby 1999). This consistency provides external validity support for the current study. In other words, Korean websites deliver less information and utilize less consumer-message interactivity functions on the Internet. Regarding human-human interactivity (consumer-advertiser and consumer-consumer interaction), the findings are quite interesting. As expected, Korean websites utilize more consumer-consumer interactivity but less consumer-advertiser interactivity than U.S. websites. In other words, Korean websites are less likely to provide various channels of communication and interaction with marketers (consumer-advertiser interactivity), but more likely to encourage interaction among consumers. Again, this can be well explained by two distinct cultural

characteristics of Korean society, i.e., higher power distance (i.e., a larger gap between marketers and consumers) and more collectivistic cultural values (i.e., more group activities among consumers).

The reason for less consumer-message and consumer-advertiser interactivity in Korean websites can be explained by the reality that Korean advertisers do not seriously consider the Internet a business marketing tool, but only a PR tool or showcase. Since the Internet was introduced to Korea later than to the U.S., and the concept of online marketing has not been fully established in marketers' minds when compared with the U.S., Korean advertisers use their websites to push the cutting-edge image of their technologically updated companies. The result of technology level found in this study explains this, i.e., Korean websites utilize advanced multimedia technology equally with U.S. websites. In other words, just presenting the company's site as a technological showcase has been the main concern to Korean advertisers; i.e., "we also have our own website." It has not been necessary for them to give consumers specific information about their products or various channels of communication and interaction with marketers so they simply take advantage of the Internet's capabilities for group discussion and activity among consumers.

Regarding comparative advertising



strategies on the Internet, the finding is consistent with that of previous studies on comparative advertising appeals in traditional media; i.e., Korean advertisers utilize less comparative appeals than do U.S. advertisers. This is quite understandable, not only because Korea is collectivistic culture, but because of advertising regulations in Korea. Specially, by law, Korea prohibits the use of direct comparison advertising in traditional media. Even though it is legal to use indirect comparison unless a specific target brand name is mentioned, Korean consumers tend to think it unethical to argue superiority by comparison with competitors' brands. Although recognized that direct comparison is illegal in Korea, we determined it would be valuable to analyze comparative appeals on the Internet because regulation on Internet advertising has not been fully established in either Korea or the U.S.

The findings of technological similarity between the two countries can be explained by the realization that technological factors can be easily adapted and rapidly changing. Korea, despite a relatively short Internet history compared with the U.S., has already equipped 50 percent of households with broad band systems such as leased line, cable modem, xDSL( Mult-Digital Subscriber Line), and ISDN( Integrated Service Digital Network) in place of less capable telephone modem

systems (eMarketer 2001b). According to eMarketer (2001b), Korea has the highest broadband penetration rate in the world (50%), followed by Hong Kong and Canada (40%), the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden (10%), and the U.S. (5%). Korea's ability to provide upgraded Internet systems like broadband in such a timely and pervasive manner is probably due to a relatively small geographic environment which makes it easier to build broadband infrastructure. Currently in Korea, most new metropolitan high-rise apartments are equipped with broadband infrastructure, which may explain why there is no significant difference in overall technology level between Korea and the U.S. and why Korea is even further along in the use of Flash technology (multimedia animation applications).

There exist several limitations of the current study. Firstly, as raised by one of the reviewers, the relationship between consumers and marketers may not be considered as an example of hierarchical power relationship, which may reduce theoretical legitimacy of the second hypothesis (i.e., U.S. web advertisers may tend to lessen the distance between consumers and advertisers in an attempt to maintain a good relationship through consumer-advertiser interaction). However, the researchers of the current study believe that the power gap between consumers and marketers tend to be high

in S. Korea compared to the U.S. and that the result of the current study partly supports the rationale. Secondly, the validity of interactive index scores for three interactivity dimensions was not empirically tested in this study, therefore, it would be valuable to conduct various validity tests (e.g., face validity and content validity) to make sure that each interactive function measures what it is supposed to measure just on the face of it and each function represents the corresponding interactivity dimension successfully. Thirdly, in the current study, the content analysis of the websites was conducted in three phases: first level links, second level links and keyword searches, which may not cover all the interactive functions within each website. In addition, the findings of the current study may be biased in some extent because more U.S. websites had search functions than Korean websites and consequently the U.S. websites might have been found to utilize more interactive functions. Therefore, as future research, even though it may be more demanding in time and labor, it would be worthwhile to content-analyze all hyperlinks and webpages in order to locate all interactive functions available within each website.

The overall results of the current study demonstrate significant differences in the communication styles of Internet websites between Korea and the U.S., excluding

technology usage. This implies that even the Internet, which has been believed to be a less culture bound and more global medium, reflects cultural values. Therefore, this study supports the existence of cultural differences and localization in advertising and marketing practices in different cultures as it relates to online advertising. However, the various content factors on websites are advertiser-controlled, and do not necessarily correspond to actual consumer responses to websites. That is, it is not necessarily true that more consumer-message interactivity on U.S. websites will generate better advertising responses among U.S. consumers. Similarly, we are not certain that Korean consumers will respond more positively to advertisers websites when they encounter more consumer-consumer interaction. Furthermore, we cannot make the absolute assertion that Korean consumers will be less likely to interact with advertisers simply because Korean websites deliver fewer applications for these types of interactions. In short, this study was a content-analysis of interactivity in websites, which is not necessarily equivalent to the actual response of consumers to advertising messages. In this vein, it would be useful to study consumers responses to different levels of interactivity and advertising appeals on the Internet across cultures. For example,

does more consumer-message interactivity yield better advertising responses among U.S. consumers, Korean consumers, or both? The answer to this question requires an experimental study measuring the effectiveness of Internet advertising by the employment of various advertising appeals such as interactivity and comparative messages across different cultures. Since Internet advertising can target people throughout the world using global access, this kind of cross-cultural study of advertising effectiveness would be extremely valuable.

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〈Abstract〉

## Korean vs. American Corporate Websites: Interactivity, Comparative Appeals and Use of Technology

Chang-Hoan Cho\* · Hongsik John Cheon\*\*

본 연구는 한국회사와 미국회사의 웹사이트의 상호작용, 비교광고 및 기술사용에 대한 비교문화적분석을 시도하는 것이다. 고관여와 저관여, 권력간격 그리고 개인주의-집단주의를 문화분석기준을 이용하여 분석함으로써 한국과 미국의 웹사이트의 상호작용을 비교 평가하였다.

본연구의 결과에 의하면 미국의 웹사이트들은 고객-메세지와 고객-광고주의 상호작용을 강조한 반면에 한국의 웹사이트는 고객-고객의 상호작용을 강조하고있는 것으로 발견되었다. 비교광고에 대한 연구결과에 의하면 미국의 개인주의와 한국의 집단주의에 대한 편향성 때문에 미국 웹사이트은 한국 웹사이트들과 비교하여 직, 간접적인 비교광고를 더욱 많이 사용하는 것을 발견하였다. 기술분석의 결과에 의하면 두 나라의 웹사이트들은 이 분야에 있어서 차이가 없는 것으로 나타났다.

주제어 : interactivity, comparative appeals, use of technology

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