

# Cultural differences transcend demographics

Appealing to the emotions is a highly effective marketing approach, but brands must understand which emotions to target in which places at which times. Research into the complex emotions surrounding beauty, in the UK and Indonesia, has revealed that cultural differences and usage occasions transcend demographic targeting and, when properly understood, allow brands to engage consumers in ways that are relevant and meaningful

By Neil Gains, *TapstryWorks*

Many brands are placing increasing importance on the role of emotions to engage with consumers, and no category is more competitive or more laden with emotion than female beauty. Much of our work focuses on finding the most effective emotions for brands to leverage in their category (sometimes negative as well as positive ones), and across many projects we have seen that the emotions around beauty are more complex than almost any other category.

How can brands and marketers break down this complexity to understand which emotions to target in which places at which times? In two recent studies, we explored the role of cultural differences and usage occasions in shaping the most relevant emotions and motivations for female beauty in the UK and Indonesia. In our experience, cultural differences and usage occasions transcend demographic targeting and allow brands to engage consumers in ways that are relevant and meaningful to them.

In the first study, we compared the beauty needs of women from the UK and Indonesia, across a spectrum of ages (18–44 years), social classes and geographies (urban, suburban and rural) within each country. We conducted an online survey of women's buying behaviours and, more importantly, the motivations and needs that drive those behaviours.

We measured these using different approaches to understand emotional and functional needs. As well as using a vocabulary of words and phrases, translated carefully across languages, we also used visual stimuli to capture beauty goals. Our visual stimuli covered both a UK-centric visualisation of beauty goals and stimuli specifically developed for Indonesia, representing local cultural context, dress and sensibilities.

The current language of most market research is verbal rather than visual, and if there is one single word or phrase that is most commonly associated with beauty, it is 'confidence'. But are there other aspects of beauty that are relevant? We asked our respondents to choose three words or phrases from a list of 36 words and phrases covering 12 motivational segments (a similar approach was used with visual stimuli).

The word 'confidence' or '*percaya diri*' in Bahasa Indonesia (literally 'believing in yourself') was chosen by 63% of women in Indonesia and 55% of those in the UK, and the emotional segment relating to confidence, charisma and mastery accounted for up to one-third of all needs, making it by far the largest motivational segment (Figure 1).

Does that mean that all brands need to do is to express confidence to attract the attention of women? Are love, creativity, naturalness and strength much less important? And, more fundamentally, does the concept of confidence actually mean the

same thing in the two countries?

Using visual images to represent the same 12 motivational segments and 36 words, there is a more nuanced response to the question 'What is the beauty that you desire for yourself?', and one that goes beyond the need for confidence. Also, we found that the meaning of confidence depends on local cultural context.

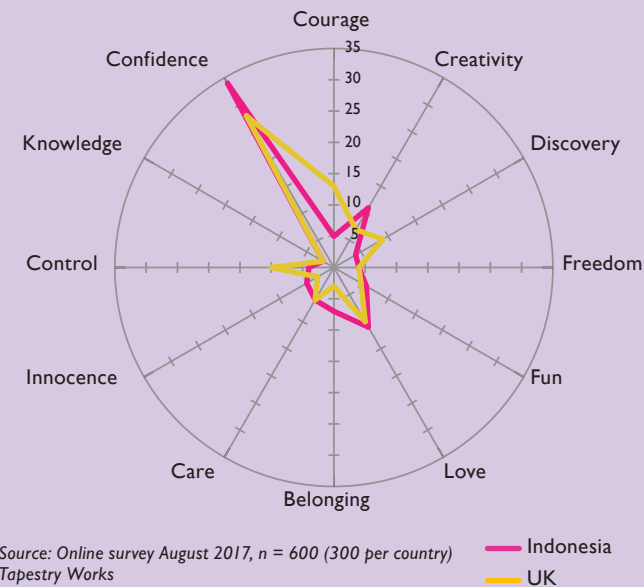
Based on these visual concepts, we saw that confidence was still important to women from both countries, but was now first among equals, with courage (physical and mental strength) also very important for British women along with exploration, fun and innocence. For Indonesian women, innocence was a very close second to confidence, followed by the need for fun and play. Asking the same question with images reflecting Indonesian cultural context also brought out the need for creativity.

These three motivations were also rated as important when we asked women to create an emotional profile of their ideal skin care and make-up brands. The two countries show some differences – in terms of the relative importance of courage and creativity in particular, there is a high degree of consistency, especially in the importance of confidence and innocence. More strikingly, skin care and make-up profiles are quite similar to each other, consistent with other recent work we have undertaken, which suggests that these categories are quite blurred in the consumer's mind.

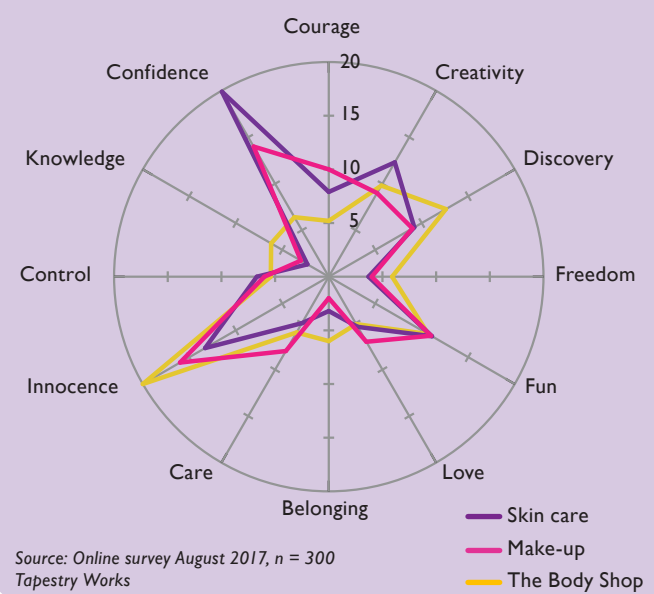
What does this mean for brands? Innocence reflects a need for idealism, optimism and tradition. In our survey, we also measured the profile of three brands, and innocence has the strongest association for The Body Shop brand (Figure 2), making the brand ideally targeted at this consumer need in the UK (in Indonesia, the brand is less differentiated, as other brands are also aligned with this need). By contrast, L'Oréal is stronger in the area of confidence, both in the UK and Indonesia.

Although confidence is an important goal of beauty in Indonesia, consistent with the UK, other work we conducted suggests that

**FIGURE 1: WHAT VERBAL CONCEPTS DESCRIBE IDEAL BEAUTY?**



**FIGURE 2: THE BODY SHOP BRAND PROFILE VS. NEEDS FROM SKIN CARE AND MAKE-UP (UK)**



confidence is only important in very specific contexts. In some recent qualitative research, conducted through an online community, we discovered that beauty routines at different times of the day have different emotional triggers and goals and play a specific role in women's emotional lives.

In the morning, Indonesian women's beauty routines are focused on getting back to a sense of themselves and reaffirming their unique identity and personal beauty. During the daytime, especially at work, beauty routines are short and simple and as well as helping them to 'touch up' their looks also give a much-needed break and space in the day from the routine of work (either in the office or at home) with the goal of bringing back the smile to their face. At night-time, women have very different needs, to cleanse their body and soul from the grime of the day and setting them up for a good night's sleep and, most importantly, the need to reconnect with their family and especially their husband. The ultimate goal of night-time beauty routines for them is love and intimacy.

Confidence rarely appears in the daily beauty needs and rituals of Indonesian women, so why do they choose this as an important motivation? Although confidence is not something that is key for women every day, it is critical on those special occasions when they are 'on show' and when they most want to be noticed by others and make their husbands proud of them.

Such special occasions – like weddings, parties and other social events – require special preparations and a more prestigious and colourful appearance, including the clothes they wear (such as the traditional kebaya) and the make-up they wear. On such occasions, they always want to use more premium brands which can give them the confidence (or belief in themselves) that they need.

Brands that market to the need for confidence are therefore only marketing to this important, but less frequent, need. By contrast, local brands such as Wardāh market to the more everyday needs of idealism, creativity and fun, which motivate women every day, whether in the morning, afternoon or evening. This may explain why a local brand such as Wardāh has managed to achieve a huge share of the local beauty market, while many international brands continue to have a relatively niche positioning. Special occasions are very important in women's lives but are defined by different needs to the ones they have on a day-to-day basis.

A communication strategy built on the right motivational landscape allows efficient communications across large sections of a target audience. Our work in beauty and other categories shows that such needs are very consistent across age and social class (although they change a little as people move through different life stages). The needs that drive categories are most strongly influenced by cultural values and the specific

requirements of key usage occasions.

This means that targeting approaches based on motivational segmentation can cut across country barriers too, as long as they are married to a solid understanding of local cultural contexts and how messaging should be adapted to reflect these differences.

Needs-based targeting is not new to marketing, but perhaps requires revisiting in the modern world. Motivational segmentation approaches help capture human universal truths, adapted to local market realities and category context. Contextual marketing is an important focus of technological trends in marketing. However, that doesn't necessarily mean that brands need to understand the micro-level details of every moment in their customers' lives.

Rather, I believe that contextual marketing is most efficient and effective when it looks at the macro-level details of consumer needs and the key motivations and emotions that are associated with key occasions and cultural values. These associations are linked to the triggers of behaviour, the feelings associated with product use and the end goals and benefits of using brands. Marketing to emotions, culture and context is the most effective way to engage with customers, whatever their demographic profile.