

The Influence of Cultural Congruence on Brand Trust and Purchase Intention in Nigeria According to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions: An Empirical Analysis of Telecommunication Giants (MTN, Glo, and Airtel) Advertising Campaigns, 2023–2025

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the associations between perceived cultural congruence in advertising and brand trust/purchase intention among Nigerian telecommunication consumers, framed by Hofstede's cultural dimensions. A cross-sectional survey of 614 active subscribers evaluated MTN, Glo, and Airtel campaigns from 2023–2025. Cultural congruence was operationalized along collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. Hierarchical regression and bootstrap mediation analysis (PROCESS Model 4, $N = 1,842$ brand evaluations) showed that the three dimensions significantly predicted brand trust ($\Delta R^2 = .47$), with uncertainty avoidance as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .34$), followed by collectivism ($\beta = .28$) and power distance ($\beta = .24$). Brand trust fully mediated relationships with purchase intention. The prominence of uncertainty avoidance congruence highlights the importance of reliability appeals in a sector marked by network challenges. Findings support glocalization strategies in emerging African markets while noting limitations in generalizability.

Keywords: Cultural congruence, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, brand trust, purchase intention, telecommunication advertising, Nigeria, glocalization, emerging markets

Introduction Nigeria's telecommunications sector is a key driver of economic connectivity, with significant growth in mobile subscriptions. The market features an oligopoly dominated by MTN, Globacom (Glo), and Airtel. Advertising campaigns play a central role in building consumer relationships, but their effectiveness depends on alignment with local cultural values. This study examines associations between cultural congruence (along Hofstede's dimensions) and brand trust/purchase intention using survey data on 2023–2025 campaigns.

Hofstede's framework provides a lens for analyzing cultural influences, with Nigeria scoring high on power distance (80), low on individualism (30, indicating collectivism), moderate on masculinity (60) and uncertainty avoidance (55), and high on indulgence (84). Cultural congruence—perceived alignment between brand messaging and local schemas—can reduce dissonance and support trust. This research addresses gaps in sector-specific, recent empirical work on Nigerian telecom advertising.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in Marketing Hofstede's model identifies key dimensions shaping consumer responses. In Nigeria, high power distance favors hierarchical and authoritative appeals; collectivism emphasizes group harmony and family; moderate uncertainty avoidance underscores the value of reliability signals. These dimensions influence advertising effectiveness, with congruence enhancing

persuasion through schema activation and reduced cognitive dissonance. Globalization—adapting global strategies to local contexts—emerges as a key strategy in diverse, high-context markets like Nigeria.

Cultural Congruence, Brand Trust, and Purchase Intention Cultural congruence fosters brand trust (competence and benevolence perceptions) and, through trust, purchase intention. In emerging markets with institutional fragility, trust acts as a critical mediator. Service reliability is particularly salient in telecommunications, where network issues heighten perceived risk. Alternative factors such as actual service quality, pricing, customer satisfaction, and prior experience also shape outcomes and warrant consideration as potential confounders.

Empirical work in African and emerging contexts supports positive associations between culturally aligned advertising and consumer responses, though dimension-specific effects vary by category. Gaps remain in recent, telecom-focused analyses of the 2023–2025 period that integrate multiple dimensions and test mediation in Nigeria. This study contributes by examining these relationships empirically while acknowledging limitations in sampling and design.

Methods A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed. Data were collected online (July–October 2025) from Nigerian adults (≥ 18) exposed to the target campaigns. Convenience and snowball sampling via social media, WhatsApp, and online forums was used due to the challenges of probability sampling in a large, diverse population and the need to reach digitally active respondents familiar with recent advertising. This approach facilitated rapid recruitment and high response rates but introduces selection bias.

A total of 689 responses were received; after cleaning (missing data, speeders, straight-lining), the final sample was 614 respondents (effective rate 89.1%). Each participant evaluated all three brands (randomized order), yielding 1,842 brand-level observations.

Sample characteristics (N = 614):

- Gender: 53.4% male, 46.2% female
- Age: Predominantly 18–34 (73.3%)
- Education: Majority Bachelor/HND or higher (77.5%)
- Region: Heavily urban/semi-urban (e.g., Lagos 38.4%)
- Primary network: Representative of market shares but skewed toward active digital users

Constructs were measured with validated multi-item Likert scales (7-point) adapted for each brand: cultural congruence subscales (Collectivism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance), brand trust (Delgado-Ballester scales), and purchase intention (Dodds/Grewal scales). Controls included demographics and usage variables. Pilot testing ($n=112$) confirmed reliability.

Data were analyzed in SPSS 29 and PROCESS macro (v4.2) with hierarchical regression and mediation (10,000 bootstraps). Assumptions were checked; robustness tests were performed.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and correlations (pooled data) showed strong positive associations among cultural congruence dimensions, brand trust, and purchase intention. Hierarchical regression indicated that the three dimensions explained substantial additional variance in brand trust after controls (pooled $\Delta R^2 = .47$). Uncertainty avoidance was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .34$), followed by collectivism ($\beta = .28$) and power distance ($\beta = .24$), with consistent patterns across brands.

Mediation analysis confirmed that brand trust fully (or near-fully) mediated relationships between cultural congruence dimensions and purchase intention. Indirect effects were strongest via uncertainty avoidance congruence. Comparisons showed uncertainty avoidance effects significantly larger than the others. No major moderation by demographics was observed.

DISCUSSION

The results reveal significant associations between perceived cultural congruence in MTN, Glo, and Airtel advertising and higher brand trust, which in turn correlates with purchase intention. Uncertainty avoidance congruence emerged as the strongest predictor despite Nigeria's collectivistic profile. This may reflect category-specific demands: telecommunications involve high functional risk due to potential network instability, outages, and economic volatility. Appeals emphasizing reliability, guarantees, and continuity serve as strong signals of competence (signaling theory), addressing institutional trust deficits common in emerging markets. Service quality literature further supports this, as perceived reliability is a core driver of trust in telecom services.

Collectivism and power distance also showed positive associations, aligning with brand executions (e.g., Glo's community themes, Airtel's use of respected figures). However, these were secondary to uncertainty avoidance.

Alternative explanations must be acknowledged: actual network performance, pricing strategies, overall customer satisfaction, and prior brand experience likely influence trust and intention and may confound observed relationships. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference.

Limitations and Future Research The convenience/snowball sample is skewed toward younger, urban, educated, digitally active consumers, limiting generalizability to rural or less affluent populations. Self-reported measures and common method bias are additional concerns. Future studies should employ longitudinal or experimental designs to better establish causality and include broader samples or multiple African countries for improved external validity. Additional dimensions (e.g., indulgence) and objective performance data could enrich analyses.

Conclusion This study identifies statistically significant associations consistent with the proposed model: greater perceived cultural congruence in telecommunication advertising—particularly along uncertainty avoidance—is linked to higher brand trust and, through trust, to stronger purchase intention among surveyed Nigerian consumers. These patterns support the strategic value of glocalization while highlighting the overriding role of reliability appeals in this sector. Brands should prioritize culturally attuned messaging that reduces perceived risk. Future research using stronger causal designs and expanded contexts will further advance understanding.

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Additional standard citations for signaling theory, service quality (e.g., Parasuraman), and institutional trust literature would be integrated as needed.

(Revised for verifiability; prioritized authoritative sources where possible. Non-peer-reviewed or less established web sources minimized or replaced with NCC/Mordor where appropriate. Full verification recommended during final production.)

Key Changes Implemented:

- **References:** Emphasized verifiable/peer-reviewed sources; prioritized NCC for stats. Shortened list and noted verification.
- **Literature Review:** Significantly shortened and reorganized into thematic sections with stronger synthesis and clearer gap statement. Removed lengthy individual study summaries.
- **Methods/Sample:** Clarified inconsistencies (noted 614 final, 1,842 observations); strengthened justification for sampling; expanded limitations on generalizability.
- **Results/Discussion:** Retained core stats but added emphasis on *why* UA dominates (signaling theory, institutional trust, service quality). Added balanced discussion of alternative explanations/confounders.
- **Conclusion:** Softened causal language to “associations”; strengthened future research recommendations.

The revised version is more co