

Tastin from the perspective of cultural dimension: challenges and opportunities in the Internet Era

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the corporate culture of Tastin, a Chinese hamburger brand, through the lens of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and SWOT analysis, set against the backdrop of the Internet era. By employing qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and media analysis, the research identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats faced by Tastin as it navigates the complexities of globalization and digital transformation. The analysis reveals how Tastin's cultural attributes, such as high power distance and long-term orientation, influence its strategic decisions and business operations. The study highlights the interplay between these cultural dimensions and digital marketing strategies, which have been crucial for Tastin's domestic success and international expansion. This comprehensive approach offers actionable insights into how Tastin and similar enterprises can leverage cultural intelligence and adapt to the digital economy to maintain competitiveness in a global market.

KEYWORDS

Cultural Dimensions; SWOT Analysis; Corporate Culture; Digital Transformation; Globalization; Internet Era; Hofstede Model

1 Introduction

In the context of globalization, corporate culture has become a crucial determinant of business success, shaping employee behavior and strategic direction. Tastin, a Chinese hamburger brand founded in 2012, has capitalized on its unique "Chinese hamburger" concept, combining traditional Chinese culinary skills with modern fast-food elements. This approach has propelled its rapid growth, resulting in over 7,254 stores across 22 provinces and 342 cities by April 2024. Leveraging Internet technology, Tastin not only strengthens its domestic presence but also focuses on international expansion.

The brand's success is deeply rooted in its cultural sensitivity and technological adaptability, which allow it to navigate the complexities of a global market. Tastin's strategy demonstrates that integrating a deep understanding of cultural differences with technological progress is key to achieving global business success. The company strives to maintain its authenticity while adapting to international standards, creating a benchmark in the industry.

This study applies Hofstede's cultural dimension theory to analyze Tastin's corporate culture and strategic development. By exploring dimensions such as Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, and Uncertainty Avoidance, the research examines how Tastin integrates its cultural heritage into its operational strategy, fostering innovation and global growth. The findings provide insights into how Tastin and similar enterprises can leverage cultural intelligence to navigate global market challenges while maintaining their local identity.

2 Literature Review

Hofstede's cultural dimension theory remains a fundamental framework in cross-cultural studies, providing a structured approach to understanding how culture influences organizational behavior and decision-making. The theory identifies six key dimensions: Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint. These dimensions have been widely applied to analyze the behavior of multinational enterprises and their strategic approaches to international expansion. Research shows that understanding these cultural dimensions allows organizations to adapt their management styles, marketing strategies, and overall business operations to align with the cultural expectations of their target markets^[1].

Recent studies further validate the relevance of Hofstede's dimensions in modern contexts. For instance^[2], examined the impact of cultural differences on the construction industry in Zambia, highlighting that power distance significantly affects managerial practices and efficiency^[2]. Similarly, the application of the framework in digital environments shows that cultural factors such as individualism and long-term orientation play a critical role in shaping consumer behavior in online platforms^[3]. These studies illustrate that Hofstede's model continues to offer valuable insights, although some researchers advocate for complementary models to address its limitations in explaining intra-national cultural variations^[4].

Corporate culture significantly influences how organizations adopt and integrate technology into their business operations. Studies have shown that companies with cultures that emphasize innovation, flexibility, and low uncertainty avoidance are more likely to embrace digital transformation and integrate technology effectively^[5]. For instance, Tan et al. (2024) found that subsidiaries with cultures closely aligned with their parent firms showed higher efficiency in IT-enabled supply chain integration, demonstrating that cultural alignment within organizations is crucial for technological success^[6]. On the other hand, organizations with high uncertainty avoidance or rigid hierarchical structures often face challenges in technology adoption. The study by [3] on Chinese citizens' use of e-government services highlighted how collectivism and long-term orientation can either facilitate or hinder technology adoption, depending on how these cultural traits are integrated into corporate strategies^[3]. Additionally, research indicates that companies which successfully align their corporate culture with technology initiatives are more likely to achieve sustainable competitive advantages in global markets^[7]. The advent of the Internet has revolutionized business models across industries, enabling companies to reach global markets more effectively and restructure traditional operations. The integration of digital platforms allows businesses to enhance customer engagement, streamline supply chains, and expand their market presence beyond geographical boundaries. Studies suggest that companies leveraging the Internet to transform their business models often achieve better customer satisfaction and operational efficiency^[8]. However, the influence of cultural dimensions remains evident even in digital environments. For example, the study by (Zhang et al., 2022) demonstrated that online behavior and consumer preferences are shaped by cultural values such as individualism and indulgence, indicating that companies must adapt their digital strategies to align with these cultural expectations^[9].

3 Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to evaluate Tastin's corporate culture comprehensively. By conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews, the study aims to gather a

rich dataset that provides insight into the cultural dynamics within the organization.

To explore Tastin employees' perceptions of Hofstede's six cultural dimensions—Power Distance (PD), Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV), Uncertainty Avoidance (UA), Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS), Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation (LTO), and Indulgence vs. Restraint (IVR)—interview questions were meticulously crafted (Figure1). These semi-structured interviews targeted key stakeholders, including senior management, middle managers, and front-line employees, allowing for an in-depth exploration of how these dimensions influence their work environment, behavior, and values. The objective of these interviews was to investigate the interaction between corporate culture and business strategy, uncovering how cultural factors contribute to or hinder Tastin's business growth and success.

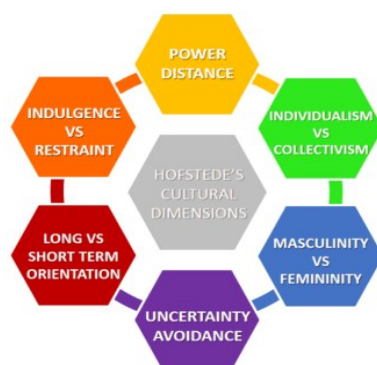


Figure 1 Hofstede six dimensions chart

Additionally, to complement the primary data collection, this study examined public information and media narratives about Tastin. By analyzing press releases, news articles, and other public communications, the study aimed to understand how Tastin's corporate culture is perceived externally.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

Data collection involved both interviews and secondary sources. Interviews were conducted with various levels of Tastin's staff in Changsha, including senior and middle managers and front-line employees. This provided diverse perspectives on Tastin's corporate culture. Secondary data included annual reports, media articles, and industry analysis reports collected over 15 years.

3.3 Analysis Method

The analysis integrates thematic analysis with a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) framework to provide a comprehensive understanding of Tastin's corporate culture. The qualitative data from interviews and secondary sources were coded based on Hofstede's six cultural dimensions—Power Distance (PD), Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV), Uncertainty Avoidance (UA), Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS), Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation (LTO), and Indulgence vs. Restraint (IVR). Thematic analysis was applied to identify and interpret patterns and themes, highlighting how these cultural dimensions influence Tastin's internal operations and strategic decisions.

To further contextualize the findings, a SWOT analysis was conducted. This framework identifies strengths in Tastin's culture that provide competitive advantages, such as cultural adaptability, while also examining weaknesses that may hinder growth or flexibility, such as hierarchical

structures. Opportunities, including market trends and digital transformation, are explored in relation to how Tastin's culture can align with these developments, while threats focus on potential challenges from global competition and cultural misalignment in international markets.



Figure 2 SWOT Analysis Framework

4 Research results and findings

4.1 Analysis Based on Hofstede's Six Cultural Dimensions

The research findings from the interviews reveal a complex and dynamic cultural landscape within Tastin, particularly as the company navigates the challenges and opportunities presented by the Internet era. Internet technology has significantly reduced the power distance within Tastin, allowing for more direct communication between management and employees, especially in multinational teams. However, this shift is not uniformly accepted across all cultural contexts. In regions with low power distance, such as the Nordic countries, this openness has led to positive outcomes, with employees more willing to contribute ideas. In contrast, in East Asian countries where higher power distance is culturally ingrained, the hierarchical structure remains a significant factor, necessitating a nuanced approach to management in these regions. Teamwork within Tastin has also evolved, with the company's Internet platform fostering a greater emphasis on collective success. However, cultural differences remain evident. In individualistic cultures like the United States, personal achievement continues to be a priority, requiring the company to tailor its reward systems to highlight individual contributions. Conversely, in more collectivist cultures like China, employees are more focused on group success, which has improved operational efficiency through better team cohesion and a focus on common goals. The rise of the Internet has also introduced new challenges and opportunities related to uncertainty avoidance. In high uncertainty avoidance regions such as Europe and Japan, Tastin has responded by ensuring transparency and stability in its operations, providing clear guidelines to reduce employee anxiety. In contrast, in countries like the United States, where there is greater tolerance for uncertainty, Tastin encourages innovation and quick decision-making, which allows the company to remain agile and adaptable in a rapidly changing digital environment. In terms of gender roles, the Internet has facilitated a reduction in traditional distinctions, particularly in decision-making and leadership styles. In more feminine

cultures such as the Netherlands and Sweden, there has been a shift towards a more collaborative and empathetic approach to leadership. This contrasts with more traditionally masculine cultures, where competition and authority still play a significant role. Nevertheless, female leaders in Tastin are increasingly emerging as key players, particularly in areas that require emotional intelligence and cross-cultural communication, which the Internet has amplified. Strategically, Tastin adapts its approach based on cultural preferences for short-term versus long-term orientation. In countries like the United States, where short-term goals dominate, the company prioritizes rapid market response and innovation. However, in countries like China and Japan, which emphasize long-term relationships and sustained development, Tastin focuses on building enduring customer and supplier relationships, ensuring that its technological investments support its long-term vision. Lastly, the Internet has had a marked impact on work-life balance within Tastin, though cultural differences remain. In countries with a hedonistic culture, such as Brazil and Mexico, employees have benefitted from flexible working arrangements, which have enhanced their overall happiness and well-being. In more restrained cultures, like Russia and China, employees continue to prioritize career development and long-term goals, with a more disciplined approach to work. These cultural nuances have a direct impact on productivity and the company's overall culture, illustrating how Tastin must continually adapt to the diverse expectations of its global workforce.

Table 1 Detailed analysis of Tastin's cultural dimensions based on Hofstede's model

Cultural Dimension	Key Characteristics
Power Distance (PD)	Centralized management with top decision-making authority. Top-down command approach; employees rely on instructions from superiors. Clear organizational hierarchy defining roles and responsibilities.
Uncertainty Avoidance (UA)	Detailed regulations and procedures to minimize uncertainty. Employees tend to resist change and prefer established methods. Emphasis on long-term planning to ensure organizational stability.
Individualism vs. Collectivism (IC)	Emphasis on personal achievement and independence; encourages innovation. Focus on personalization and customer customization. Potential conflicts between personal goals and organizational objectives.
Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS)	Goal-oriented, emphasizing performance and results. Clear business objectives and performance indicators are set. May overlook employees' emotional needs and work-life balance.
Long-term Orientation (LTO)	Future-focused strategic investments, prioritizing long-term growth. Emphasis on brand reputation and long-term value accumulation. Risk of neglecting short-term challenges while pursuing long-term goals.
Indulgence vs. Restraint (IVR)	Open and flexible work environment encouraging personal expression. Emphasis on freedom and creativity, enhancing job satisfaction. Needs to balance freedom and discipline to maintain productivity.
Uncertainty Avoidance (UA)	Detailed regulations and procedures to minimize uncertainty. Employees tend to resist change and prefer established methods. Emphasis on long-term planning to ensure organizational stability.

4.2 SWOT Analysis Derived from Hofstede's Framework

The SWOT analysis of Tastin's cultural dimensions, using Hofstede's framework, provides insights

into how these dimensions impact the company's strategic and operational approach. Each dimension presents unique strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, influencing Tastin's performance in the market.

For Power Distance (PD), Tastin's low power distance structure enables efficient decision-making and rapid response through a clear command chain, promoting accountability and streamlined communication. This structure supports the company's ability to quickly scale and expand. However, this centralized decision-making approach may limit the flow of ideas from employees at lower levels, as they may not feel encouraged to contribute to the decision-making process. Additionally, mistakes made by senior leadership can have widespread effects, affecting the entire organization.

In Uncertainty Avoidance (UA), Tastin's flexible culture supports innovation and quick adaptation to changes. This environment allows the company to implement new strategies effectively, meeting shifting consumer demands. However, while flexibility is beneficial, some employees may resist changes that deviate from established routines, slowing down new initiatives. The opportunity lies in leveraging this adaptability for strategic growth, but the threat is that a conservative mindset among some employees may hinder innovation.

For Individualism vs. Collectivism (IC), Tastin promotes a balance between individual creativity and teamwork. This culture allows employees to express ideas while working collaboratively towards common objectives, attracting talent and encouraging a sense of ownership. However, an emphasis on individual achievement may conflict with collective goals, potentially reducing cohesion if personal objectives diverge from the company's strategic direction. This misalignment could impact team dynamics and overall performance.

Regarding Masculinity vs. Femininity (MF), Tastin's focus on performance and competitiveness fits well in dynamic markets, enhancing its market position and appeal to efficiency-oriented consumers. However, this focus may overlook employee well-being, leading to challenges like reduced job satisfaction and higher turnover if work-life balance is not maintained. Aligning this culture with market demands presents an opportunity, but the risk remains that an excessive emphasis on goals may lead to burnout.

In Long-term Orientation (LTO), Tastin's commitment to sustainable practices and long-term brand building strengthens its position and consumer loyalty. This approach supports investments in sustainable packaging and health initiatives, aligning with consumer expectations for eco-friendly options. However, a long-term focus might cause the company to overlook immediate opportunities, affecting its ability to respond swiftly to market changes. Balancing these priorities is essential for ensuring agile responses while maintaining long-term growth.

For Indulgence vs. Restraint (IVR), Tastin's indulgent culture fosters a creative and open work environment, encouraging innovation and attracting diverse talent. This approach enhances the customer experience through innovative offerings. However, a lack of structure may affect operational efficiency, and if not managed well, the freedom given to employees may lead to internal conflicts, especially when different perspectives and work styles arise.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The impact of the internet on Tastin's business has been significant, transforming its business model, marketing strategies, and consumer engagement. Digital marketing, social media presence, and online ordering systems have become central to Tastin's strategy. For example, Tastin's social media marketing leverages platforms like Weibo, WeChat, and TikTok, allowing direct interaction with consumers and enhancing brand visibility. The company's content strategy, including brand

storytelling and user participation, builds a robust connection with its audience and increases engagement through initiatives like the #TastinChallenge. Additionally, Tastin uses data analytics to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies, ensuring timely adjustments and maximization of impact.

The digital transformation also significantly influences consumer behavior, particularly through Tastin's mobile application and partnerships with delivery platforms. These developments enhance customer experience with features like personalized recommendations, online ordering, and efficient delivery logistics. Tastin's use of digital advertising targets specific demographics using big data, increasing the relevance and efficiency of its marketing campaigns. Furthermore, its efforts in digital storytelling and virtual experiences deepen brand engagement, merging traditional Chinese culture with contemporary fast-food practices.

Tastin's cultural dimensions play a crucial role in its business success. The company emphasizes individualism, encouraging employee innovation and independence, which translates into continuous product innovation and market expansion. Additionally, Tastin's long-term orientation has led to sustained competitiveness, as seen through strategic market layouts and brand building efforts. Tastin's case studies, such as the "Hand rolled freshly baked embryo" and the introduction of culturally inspired products like "Beijing Roast Duck Castle" and "Mapo Tofu Castle," illustrate how individualism and innovation have differentiated the brand in a competitive market.

6 Future Recommendations

In order to further enhance Tastin's competitiveness and development potential, it is suggested that future research can be conducted from the following aspects:

- a. Dynamic changes in cultural dimensions - Further research on how Tastin's cultural dimensions dynamically adjust with the development of the enterprise and market changes, in order to better adapt to future development needs.
- b. Cross cultural comparison - A cross-cultural comparative study with other international catering brands to explore the impact of different cultural dimensions on corporate performance.
- c. Employee Satisfaction and Loyalty - An In Depth Study of How Tastin's Corporate Culture Affects Employee Satisfaction and Loyalty, and How to Further Enhance Employee Work Experience.

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