

Impact of Culture on Marketing Strategies

Miss Jaspreet kaur¹ & Miss Roopkamal Chawla²

^{1&2}Assistant professor in commerce, Dev Samaj college for women, Ferozpur, India.

Abstract : *Due to the era of globalisation where the economies are expanding and integrating with the other economies and are exposed to universal marketing mix, there is a need to understand the fact that promotion of a product is highly affected by the cultural patterns of different countries. The article attempts to identify and analyse the impact of culture on marketing strategies of different products. The choice of people and demand trends of different products depend upon customs, traditions and cultural values of specific region. The contribution of this article is attained by providing emphasis on how cultural diversification affects the marketing strategies and also discuss the role of country culture in determination of marketing programs for product promotion.*

1. Introduction

Culture totally depicts the way of life style and attributes of specific group of people. It also includes the way we speak, dressing style, attitude, learning, believes, values and norms. There are many factors which affects the marketing strategies for a product promotion like target market, budget, economy and competition but culture also has a great impact on consumer preferences which was not considered as an important factor few years ago. Marketing strategies are related with product promotion, planning to cope with competition, quality maintains and cost control. Culture has a great effect on marketing strategies. Vendor cannot ignore to analyse the importance of local culture before advertising or selling the product in the market. Marketing plans are totally based on product promotion; marketer's main purpose is to aware customers regarding product features and influences them to purchase the products.

Consumers can be attracted only when product will fit better according to their customs, traditions, norms and cultural requirements. Whenever marketers do not convey their thinking to people, they fail to attain attention of local people and have to suffer huge losses. Even choice of local people is important for local trader but for an international marketer it is must to have deep study cultural effects on product promotion.

Due to globalisation of business environment, companies have to face increasing haste, occurrence and magnitude of competitors. It is not easy for any corporation to start and expand their business for a long duration without implementing marketing strategies. International market has also resulted to change in consumers taste and preferences. For example, customers do not wait for a single product because there are many alternatives available in the market and they can easily shift to another product without compromising with their taste. This is the main reason that today's business environment is consumer oriented. Marketers always consider it that how they can satisfy consumers. The most important factors that a marketer keeps in mind are to offer best quality, less prices and easily excess to consumers but all these concepts are considered by almost all the marketing managers. Only those companies stay for a long duration which implements new strategies and they do not ignore the importance of culture in product promotion. Companies are facing many problems regarding marketing and culture, the most important challenge is culture. To achieve continuous growth and competitive success, it is necessary for companies to understand the diversity and complexity of marketing activities.

Consumers have different choices in different countries. These differences are result of diversified culture, attitude, values and norms. Culture has a deep influence on product choice, motivation and life style of customers. Cultural influence is shown by how many customers prefer to purchase same product. Due to the increase in international trade there is a need to redesign the marketing strategies of a product. The increase in cross-border trading has led to the emergence of international marketing. The companies which are moving towards the concept of international marketing face the problems of difference between the countries and one of the major problems they face is designing the marketing strategies according to the cultural diversification. Only those companies are more successful now a day's which are exporting their products to cope with the specific demands of a particular culture.

2. Review of Literature

Hofsede (1980), studied many factors of culture and that culture is a complex but it is not chaotic. He did different studies to analyse the elements of culture and its impact on other areas. He defined the five areas of national culture, power distance, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance and long term orientation. He stated in his statement that Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the member of one human group from another. Hollensen (2001) defines various concepts of culture as language, manners and customs, technology and material cultures attitudes and values, social organisations, aesthetics and religion.

Indre Pikturiene, (2005); had concluded that global marketing has affected the cultures of the nations and is playing an important role in the emergence of the global culture. There have been a lot of discussions and oppositions that marketing strategies do not act as a barrier in the growth of national culture as people act as a great filter.

Marieke de Mooij global, (2005); analysed the various components of culture that influence the marketing programs. There has always been a debate over the problems being faced by the managers to make an appropriate strategy for marketing. There is always influence of culture on the marketing mix due to the change in the needs of consumers because of cultural diversification

Huib Wursten and Tom Fadrhonc,(2012), indicated that the marketers who were expanding their boundaries and are trading with other countries face a real problem of a perfect marketing mix for their products. It becomes very difficult for the management to follow an approach which is according to the differences in cultures of the countries. They explained the theory of cultural dimensions. The various researches have come to the conclusion that there are five areas which describe the cultural diversification for strategies of marketing.

Gabriela Capatina (2014), analysed that framing marketing programs at international market are one of the complex decisions that the management has to make. He considered many factors like Investment decisions, Human resource decision and marketing mix decisions in cultural context. The paper represented that success of new product launch depends upon marketing program in cultural framework. He also describes future directions that management should consider cultural differences between various groups while deciding marketing programs.

Johan D. Rockefeller, attempted to study the role of ethics in marketing. He considered that it is not an easy task for marketer to decide the difference between ethical and non-ethical issues. He researched over many companies and concluded that ethical codes help in strengthen the management relation with customers which results in profit maximisation.

The marketing approach of globalized companies has had to learn how to come to terms with the realities of cultural and other differences in the markets around the world. However, companies have also faced blunders, which occur due to cultural differences when they operate abroad. Verhage (2010, p. 721) illustrates some examples of cultural disregard in international business that resulted in negative consequences:

- An after shave commercial presented a romantic scene between a man and a woman that also showed the man's dog. It failed in Middle Eastern countries where dogs are considered unclean.
- A United States Telephone Company attempted to promote its products and services in Saudi Arabia. Its commercial portrayed an executive talking on the phone with his feet propped up on the desk, showing the soles of his shoes – a serious insult in that country.
- Procter and Gamble used a television commercial in Japan that had been popular in Europe. The advertisement showed a woman bathing, her husband entering the bathroom and touching her. The Japanese considered this advertisement an invasion of privacy, inappropriate behaviour, and in very poor taste.

3. Objectives

The objective of this article is to identify the elements of culture and study the influence of cultural factors on marketing strategies for product promotion. These cultural factors can be used in positive way if all marketing strategies are planned according to it.

4. Culture And Marketing Strategies

Culture:

Culture is defined from the way of speaking, dressing styles, believes, norms, values and

thinking level of a particular group of people. Examining culture of a particular country means analysis of a country's lifestyle, living standard, way in which they do each and every activity from morning to evening. Even in a particular country because of geographical and religion differences, culture of various groups of people are different from another. Beliefs, values, judgement and norms are also included in identifying the terms of culture.

According to some specialists culture can be defined as follows:

- Culture is a continuously changing totality of learned and shared meanings, rituals, norms, and traditions among the members of an organization or society.
- Set of commonly held values, a way of life of a group of people includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and habits.
- Everything that people have, think and do as members of their society.
- An integrated system of learned behavior patterns those are characteristic of the members of any given society.

Svend Hollensen (2011) has explained in a delightful manner that culture usually includes every religion, caste, education group. Along with this it is also affected by different forces mainly like political technological legal and economic staff. Therefore vitality of culture of intense necessity for the multinational shareholders while managing the customers who communicate in numerous languages or believe in different religions the investors can plan about how to go with their plan on the points where the consumers are differentiated. But the problem which investors need to identify is the attitude and values of consumers in various countries across the globe. Huntington (1996) distinguishes the cultures as western (the United States), Western Europe and Australia), Orthodox (the Soviet republics, Central Europe), Confucian (China and Southeast Asia) Islamic (the Southeast Asia), Buddhist (Thailand) Hindu (India), Latin American, African and Japanese. Huntington has stated that after the cold-war a conflict will take place between the different cultures instead of the countries. On the other side Fukuyama (1996) contradicts Huntington by saying that culture will not be the reason of fight? He expects a conglomerate talks in between the cultures and hopes for the advancements in the cultures.

Hollensen (2011) remarks that there are three characteristics that are usually concurred amid authors;

- Sophistication is learned, not inherent.
- It is interrelated.
- It is shared by a cluster of people.

Selfridge and Sokolik (1975) debate that sophistication exists of visible- and invisible parts. They delineate that the palpable portions of a sophistication (things that can be perceived, sniffed, heard, tasted or touched) are artifacts or indicators of underlying benefits and assumptions that a cluster of persons share. They illuminate this as an iceberg that is tear in three levels, whereas daily deeds (i.e. Body speech, clothing, lifestyle, and drinking and eating habits) are visible whereas the invisible deeds continue of benefits and morals (i.e. relations benefits, sex acts, friendship patterns) and frank traditional assumptions (i.e. nationwide individuality, cultural sophistication, religion.) (Selfridge & Sokolik, 1975). The ones underneath the external are the ones that cannot be perceived and therefore make it harder for global marketers to assume.

Marketing strategies:

Marketing strategies are defined as combination of all goals into one comprehensive plan. An efficient marketing strategy should be focused on the right product mix in order to achieve maximum profits. Marketing strategies includes all long and short-term actions taken by marketers to launch a new product, its promotion and growth for a long time period. The process of framing strategies starts with analysis of internal and external environment of business. It becomes compulsory to grasp all factors of external environment, such as economy, technology, culture, legal and political. Culture is one of the most important factors which were ignored in earlier years but now it is must for every marketer to study culture of a specific group to whom he is offering his product.

5. Elements of culture and its impact on marketing strategies

There are many studies that illustrate how culture affects human behavior. Gillespie et al. (2004) explains that elements of culture consist of religion, language, history, and education. They further state that "these aspects of the society send direct and indirect messages to consumers regarding the selection of goods and services." (Gillespie et al., 2004, p. 49) Svend Hollensen (2011) has listed 8 of these elements that are commonly included in the perception of culture. The impact of these elements on international marketing is:

- **Language:** A country's key to its culture is the language and it is proved as a can be described as an indication of the culture. Hence, if a company is dealing with other cultures for a long time, it is beneficial for the growth of the organisation to

learn language. To influence customers this is must to communicate with them and to learn language is the first thing required for interaction. Language can then divided into two major elements:

a) Verbal language: This form of language has several roles in global marketing; it is important in information-gathering and evaluation efforts, it provides access to local societies, it is becoming ever more important in company communications and lastly it provides more than the ability to communicate.

b) Non-verbal language:

This, differing from country to country, can also be an important and powerful mean of communication.

Manners and customs: This agent ought to be prudently monitored as in what precisely is disparate amid the cultures. An example of this agent is whereas in so-called right-hand sophistications (Middle East, amongst others) the left hand is the 'toilet hand' and employing it to eat, for example, is believed impolite.

• Technology and material culture

This agent aftermath from knowledge and is undeviating related in what method an area constructions its commercial activity. Technical progression moves in the direction of traditional convergence. Hence, an example is how black-and-white televisions in the US had a far higher marketplace allocate contrasted alongside Europe and Japan that seized them nearly a decade to grasp the same level of marketplace share. This though had modified across the colour television, whereas the 'lag' was decreased to five years.

• Communal institutions

Business, governmental, relations or class connected impact the deeds of customers and the methods in that they associate to every single other. Exceptionally in Latin and in the Middle East, a manager who gives distinct treatment to a comparative is believed to be fulfilling an obligation.

• Education

This agent includes the procedure of transferring skills, thoughts and attitudes, as well as training in particular disciplines. One intention of education is the transmission of the continuing sophistication and traditions to the new generation.

• Values and attitudes

These agents aid ascertain what people contemplate is right or suitable, what is vital and what is desirable. Associating it to global marketing, the extra imbedded the benefits and attitudes are in central beliefs (i.e. religion), the extra understanding the globe marketing manager has to be.

• Aesthetics

This agent mentions towards beauty and good taste in the fine art, music, folklore and drama of a culture. This agent of a particular sophistication can be vital in the clarification of symbolic meanings of assorted artistic expressions. Hence, what is and what is not satisfactory could vary melodramatically even in or else exceedingly comparable marketplaces (i.e. sex in advertising).

• Religion

The main faiths that are public by a number of nationwide states are; Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism. The faith that is rehearsed most in the Middle East is Islam. Faith can furnish the basis for transcultural similarities below public beliefs. In assorted states faith is of paramount importance. Faith can additionally impact the globe marketing strategy undeviating in countless methods such as; Spiritual celebrations vary considerably amid the states (i.e. Christians wear white dress on the marriage and wear black on creation, whereas Hindu and Sikhs wear red and bright colours on the occasion of any function and mostly they wear white on cremation), consumption outlines could be affected by spiritual necessities or prohibitions (i.e. pork check occurs in Israel as well as in Islamic states in the Middle East), Islamic worshippers hope confronting the divine metropolis of Mecca five periods every single date (i.e. in a little states in the Middle East it is not infrequent for managers and operatives to hope countless periods across the day), and in the end the act of women in publicizing and gender acts varies from sophistication to sophistication, and spiritual beliefs are a main cause. Though, from time to time the impact of faith on the marketing nature is flouted. Marketers must have to analyse faith and believes of people because customers are more attracted when any product is promoted by linking it with faiths and believes of people.

• Cultural Norms

Norms are derived from values and defined as an accepted standard of doing things that most of the people agree with these can be defined as specific rules that a group of people use for deciding what is appropriate and not appropriate.

(A) Imperative: What an outsider must or must not do

(B) Exclusive: What locals may do but an outsider cannot

(C) Adiaphorous: What an outsider may or may not do

• Cultural Variability

□ **Power Distance** – Power distance means the distance between two people during mutual interaction. We the Muslims and Indian sub continental people used to be closer during interaction. On the other hand the western

Christians used to hold a gape between two interactive people. Muslim thinks that westerns are not friendly and they think Muslims are pushy. But it is because of their culture power distance is barring here.

□ **Uncertainty Avoidance** – we are always try to avoid uncertainty and happy with that what can be found certainly. But on the other hand westerns are risk lover. They used to take challenges during any action.

□ **Masculinity versus Femininity** – Culture define the priority of decisions in the family, society and in the country. In some tribal community live in the northern region of India they are mother lead society, wealth owner and earning member is mother in the family. As a result women decide what ought to be, what have to do. On the other hand in male dominant society father is the owners of wealth and earning member of the family. As a result her father's decision is the final one. This masculinity and femininity has a great impact in case of product selection / brand choice and final purchasing decision. As a marketer he must have to know what types of society he is offering product. Who has to be highlighted in their promotional campaign and advertisements?

□ **Individualism versus Collectivism** – Maximum western country is suffering from their individualistic mentality. I have this, I have done it, I want it, etc. but in our sub continental culture we think collectively. We have this, we have done it and we need it. This individualistic and collective thinking has a great effect on their product choice as well as purchase of product.

6. Why Is the Cultural Understanding Important For Marketing Strategies

An evaluation of a country's culture for marketing's purpose involves studying the people's attitudes, motivations, perceptions, and learning processes:

a) Verify related motivations in the culture: to analyse that what kind of needs of a family members are satisfied by a product offered by the company. How these needs are currently satisfied by consumers? Whether all persons of a specific culture have accepted these needs?

b) Evaluate behavioural patterns: What are the characteristic of purchasing behaviour? What forms of division of labour exist within the family structure? How frequently are products of this type purchased? Does any of these characteristics conflict with the outcome expected for this product? How strongly ingrained are the behaviour patterns that conflict with those needed for distribution of this product?

c) Determine the cultural values which are relevant for a product: Are there strong values about ethics in work place, morality, religion, family relations that relate to this product? Weather the product connotes attributes that are in hindrance with these cultural values? Can these hindrances with values be avoided by changing the product? Are there positive values in culture with which the product might be identified?

d) Identify the forms of decision-making: Do the members of the culture have a positive approach to decisions concerning innovations or a negative approach? What is the type of the decision making procedure? What sources of data do the members of the culture rely upon? Are the people of these cultures rigid or flexible to the new innovations and new ideas? What basis do they use in evaluating alternatives?

e) Evaluate the promotional strategies: What role does advertising occupy in the culture? What themes, words, or illustrations are taboos? What language problems exist in present markets that cannot be translated into this culture? What types of salespeople do members of the culture accept? Are such salespeople available?

f) Determine appropriate institutions for this product in the minds of consumers: What types of retailers and intermediary institutions are available? What services do these institutions offer that are expected by the consumer? What alternatives are available for obtaining services needed for the product but not offered by existing institutions? How do consumers regard various types of retailers? Will challenges in the distribution structure be readily accepted? The information contained in this exhibit attempts to relate cultural traits to marketing decisions. For example, simply

Knowing about the religion or morality of a culture is not enough. What must be analyzed is whether or not the product was slated to be introduced into the country has any direct or indirect connotations that conflict with the cultural patterns of the society. Similarly, an examination of advertising, themes, phrases, words, or expressions should confirm viability of promotional decisions.

7. Conclusion

Marketing strategies for product promotion is one of the most important decisions that marketers of a company face. Cultural diversity intensifies the degree of uncertainty and difficulty in taking decisions for marketing programs. All marketing strategies are framed after studying the culture of a specific group because each group have different needs according to their income, customs and traditions. There are various elements of culture

which have direct and indirect influence on marketing. A good marketer who wants to exist his product for a long period cannot ignore to study the changing cultural demands. So an international marketer must have to analyse that he is offering his product to whom and what are their cultural backgrounds. Due to diversification in different parts of world possess different cultural behaviour, customs, tastes and norms. Marketers must have to promote their product after studying all these factors. In the terms of conclusions, marketing strategies on international market is considered to be predictor of products growth in future, and at the same time, a valuable approach to the allocation of marketing attempt.

8. Recommendations

After analysing all factors and its impact on culture, it is clear that managerial teams must consider the cultural differences between various groups of people while deciding strategies for product promotion. In future research the impact of socio-economic variables on cultural dimensions should be considered. The problem faced by researcher is data availability. Because of culture diversification it is not easy for researcher to study all cultures and for marketers to analyse that what kind of product is preferred by one group. Even people living in the same society have their different religion, customs and traditions so a marketer cannot judge that customers of one geographical area have same choices. The previous circumstances of cultural magnitude can also be integrated in future research, especially in order to reveal the superiority of socio-economic factors on cultural dimensions for a long time period. This approach could also be employed to analyse the impact of various marketing variables and hoe they interrelate with other cultural and socio-economical factors. It is also important for marketers and researchers to assess that which activities are most successful over a long time.

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