A Review of Cross-Cultural Variations in Consumer Behaviour and Marketing Strategy

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Abstract
People's habits, their aspirations in life, the roles they fill, how they relate to other people, their perception of things, the products they feel they need and the nature of their consumption patterns reflect, more or less, the influence of culture. This paper, therefore, examines the literature on the nature of nature of culture and cross-cultural variations in consumer behaviour. In this paper, we analyze the marketing implications of cultural differences and similarities that exist between the people of two or more nations. The review mainly examines some theories of culture, variations in cultural values, cultural variations in nonverbal communications and, finally, marketing implications of cross-cultural variations that exist between people of different nations.

Key words: Cross-Cultural variations; Consumer behaviour; Marketing strategy

INTRODUCTION

Marketing across cultural boundaries is a difficult and challenging task. Cultures may differ in demographics, languages nonverbal communications and values. In the business world today, almost all multinational companies are aggressively marketing their goods and services beyond the borders of their homelands. In fact, as Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) observe, the issue is generally not whether to market a brand in other countries but rather how to do it. Because of this emphasis on operating as a multinational company, many companies endeavour to incorporate in their marketing practices a mix of standardized and local components so as to gain the benefits of each strategy. Several companies are fashioning strategies to take advantage of existing and emerging economic opportunities in other societies. Companies are marketing their goods and services worldwide for various reasons. Among others, several companies have realized that overseas markets represent the single most important opportunity for their potential growth when their home markets mature. This realization is driving them to broaden their scope of interests and search for consumers spread across the world.

1. THE LITERATURE

1.1 The Concept of Culture

In view of the broad and pervasive nature of culture, it is not easy to define its boundaries. Some of the common definitions in the literature are referred to in this paper. McCarthy and Perreault (1993) state culture as "the whole set of beliefs, attitudes and ways of doing things of a reasonably homogenous set of people." Hawkins *et al*. (2007) define culture as "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society. However, because the objective is to understand the influence of culture on consumer behavior, we adopt the definition of culture submitted by Schifman and Kanuk (2007) as the sum total of learned beliefs, values and customs that serve to direct the consumer behavior of members of a particular society.

From the foregoing definitions, several aspects of culture require elaboration. First, culture is *comprehensive*. It includes almost everything that influences an

individual's thought processes, actions and behaviour. Second, culture, as a complex whole, is a system of interdependent components. It is composed of common habits and patterns of living of a group of people in their daily activities; their values, customs, norms and even of common interests such as entertainment. Third, beliefs are important parts of culture. Every culture thrives on values that they accept as true and real. Fourth, other issues such as morals and customs are very relevant. It is important to note that what some countries view as moral may in fact be highly immoral in others. Fifth, culture is *learned* (acquired); it is transmitted from generation to generation. Unlike innate biological characteristics, culture is learned and as such does not include inherent responses and predispositions. When discussing the acquisition of culture, anthropologists often distinguish between the learning of one's own, or native, culture and the learning of some *new* (other) culture. The learning of one's own culture is known as *enculturation.* The learning of a new or foreign culture is known as *acculturation.* Finally, culture is a framework of action and understanding that enables people to behave in a manner that is acceptable to other members of the group. The frameworks vary between cultures but they always incorporate things such as language, norms, values, symbols and rituals.

Culture is manifested within *boundaries* of acceptable behaviour. It supplies boundaries within which people think and act. Culture operates primarily by setting rather loose boundaries for individual behaviour and by influencing the functioning of institutions such as the family. These boundaries as set by culture on behaviour are called *norms*. Hawkins *et al.* (2007) define norms as rules that specify or prohibit certain behaviours in specific situations. Norms are derived from *cultural values*, or widely held beliefs that affirm what is desirable. Violations to cultural norms may lead to *penalties* or *sanctions*, ranging from mild social disapproval to banishment from the group of simply being laughed at by others. For example, in Ghana, using the left hand in action while talking to elders is considered a sign of disrespect, while this means nothing in the Western world. Conformity, however, is expected without reward. Thus, as Figure 1 indicates, cultural values give rise to norms (rules that govern behaviour of members) and associated sanctions, which in turn influence consumption patterns.

Values and norms represent the beliefs of various groups within a society. According to Blackwell *et al.* (2006), *macroculture* refers to values and symbols that apply to an entire or to most of its citizens. *Microculture* refers to values and symbols of a restrictive group or segment of consumers, defined according to variables such as age, religion, ethnicity, or social class. Microcultures are often called subcultures.
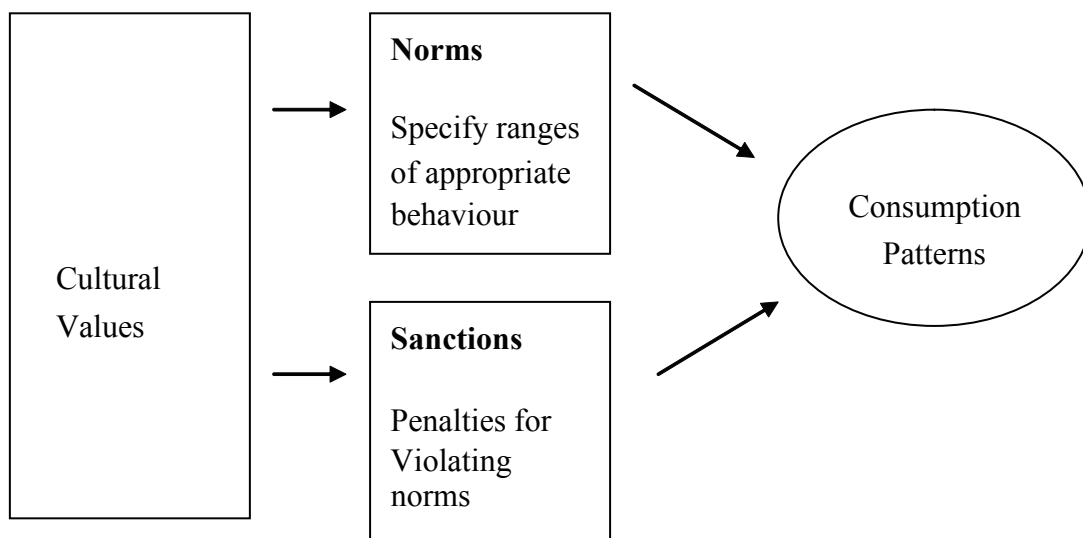
Figure 1
Values, Norms, Sanctions and Consumption Patterns
Source: Adapted from Hawkins, D. I, Mothersbaugh, D. L & Best, R. J. Consumer Behaviour:Building Marketing Strategy, (1989) 10th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, p. 43.

Cultures are not *static*. They typically evolve and change slowly over time. As Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) surmise, to fulfill its need-gratifying role, culture continually must evolve if it is to function in the best interests of a society. Major changes can occur in a culture during relatively short time periods due to rapid technological advances, exposure to other culture or dramatic events such as war. For this reason, the marketer must carefully monitor the socio-cultural environment in order to market an existing product more effectively or to develop promising new product. As Hawkins *et al.* (2007) suggest, marketers must understand both existing cultural

values and the emerging cultural values of the societies they serve. A failure to understand cultural differences can produce negative consequences. A cultural system consists of three functional areas, as summarized by Lutz (1985):

(1) *Ecology:* the way in which a system is adapted to its habitat. This area is shaped by the technology used to obtain and distribute resources (e.g., industrialized societies versus Third World countries). The Japanese, for example, greatly value products that are designed for efficient use of space because of the cramped conditions in that island nation (Lazer *et al.*, 1985).

(2) *Social structure:* the way in which orderly social life is maintained. This includes the domestic and political groups that are dominant within the culture (e.g., the nuclear family versus the extended family, representative government versus dictatorship).

(3) *Ideology:* the mental characteristic of a people and the way in which they relate to their environment and social groups. This revolves around the notion that members of a society possess a common *worldview*. They share certain ideas about principles of order and fairness. They also share an ethos, or a set of moral and aesthetic principles.

When cultural changes occur, trends develop and provide marketing opportunities to those who spot the changes before their competitors do. As culture evolves, marketers may associate product or brand benefits with new values, or they may have to change the product if that value is no longer gratifying in society.

As Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) emphasize, the changing nature of culture means that marketers have to consistently reconsider *why* consumers are now doing what they do, *who* the purchasers and the users of their products are (males only, females only, or both), *when* they do their shopping, *how* and *where* they can be reached by the media, and *what* product and service needs are emerging. Marketers who monitor cultural changes also often find new opportunities to increase corporate profitability.

1.2 Variations in Cultural Values

Marketing across cultural boundaries is a difficult and challenging task. Cultures may differ in demographics, languages, nonverbal communications and values. Although every culture is different, as Solomon (2002) identifies, four dimensions appear to account for much of this variability (Hofstede, 1980; Milner *et al.*, 2002):

(1) *Power distance:* the way in which interpersonal relationships form when differences in power are perceived. Some cultures emphasize strict, vertical relationships (e.g., Ghana), whereas others, as the United States, stress a greater degree of equality and informality.

(2) *Uncertainty avoidance:* the degree to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations and have beliefs and institutions that help that help them to avoid this uncertainty (e.g., organized religion).

(3) *Masculinity/femininity:* the degree to which sex roles are clearly delineated (see Session 2). Traditional societies are more likely to possess very explicit rules about the acceptable behaviours of men and women, such as who is responsible for certain tasks within the family unit.

(4) *Individualism/collectivism:* the extent to which the welfare of the individual versus that of the group is valued. Cultures differ in their emphasis on individualism versus collectivism. In *collectivist cultures,* people subordinate their personal goals to those of a stable in-group. In contrast, consumers in *individualist cultures* attach more importance to individual goals, and people are more likely to change membership when the demands of the group (e.g., workplace, church, etc.) become too costly. Whereas a collectivist society will stress values such as self-discipline and accepting one's position in life, people in individualist cultures emphasize personal enjoyment, excitement, equality and freedom. As the literature indicates (e.g., Goleman, 1990; Triandis, 1989; Triandis *et al.,* 1988), some strongly individualistic cultures include the United States of America, Australia, Great Britain, Canada and the Netherlands. Venezuela, Pakistan, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Greece and Portugal are some examples of strongly collectivist cultures.

Cultural values are widely held beliefs that affirm what is desirable. These values affect behavior through norms, which specify an acceptable range of responses to specific situations. As Hawkins *et al.* (2007) submit, a useful approach to understanding cultural variations in behavior is to understand the values embraced by different cultures.

There are numerous values that vary across cultures and affect consumption. Hawkins *et al.* (2007) present a classification scheme consisting of three broad forms of cultural values: (1) *other-oriented,* (2) *environment-oriented* and (3) *self-oriented.* The cultural values that have the most impact on consumer behavior can be classified in one of these three general categories.

Other-Oriented Values. As Hawkins *et al.* (2007) observe, other-oriented values reflect a society's view of the relationships between individuals and groups within that society. These relationships have a major influence on marketing practice. For example, if the society values collective activity, consumers will look towards others for guidance in purchase decisions and will not respond favourably to promotional appeals to "be an individual."

Environment-Oriented Values. These prescribe a society's relationship to its economic and technical as well as its physical environment. As Hawkins *et al.* observe, you would develop a very different marketing programme for a society that stressed a problem-solving, risk-taking, performance-oriented approach to its environment than you would for a fatalistic, security- and status-oriented society.

Self-Oriented Values. As the authors suggest, self-oriented values reflect the objectives and approaches

to life that the individual members of society find desirable. Again, these values have strong implications for marketing management. For instance, the acceptance and use of credit is very much determined by a society's position on the value of postponed versus immediate gratification.

1.3 Cultural Variations in Nonverbal Communications

As Hawkins *et al.* (2007) observe, differences in verbal communication systems (languages) are immediately obvious to anyone entering a foreign culture. A Ghanaian travelling in Britain or America will be able to communicate, but differences in pronunciation, timing, and meaning will still occur.

Attempts to translate marketing communications from one language to another can result in ineffective communications, as Ford Motor Company is painfully aware. For example, Fiera (a low-cost truck designed for developing countries) faced sales problems since *fiera* means "terrible, cruel, or ugly" in Spanish (Ricks, 1983).

As Hawkins *et al.* emphasize, the problems of literal translations and slang expressions are compounded by symbolic meanings associated with words, the absence of some words from various languages, and the difficulty of pronouncing certain words (Zhang & Schmitt, 2001).

Nonverbal communication systems are the arbitrary meanings a culture assigns actions, events, and things other than words. The following discussion examines seven major variables all of which influence nonverbal communications: time, space, symbols, relationships, agreements, things and etiquette.

Time. According to Spears *et al.* (2001), the meaning of time varies between cultures in two ways: time perspective and meanings in the use of time. Time perspective is the culture's overall orientation towards time. People of most developed countries tend to view time as inescapable, linear and fixed min nature (Hawkins *et al.*, 2007). It is a road reaching into the future with distinct, separate sections (hours, days, weeks and so on). Time is considered almost as a physical object: we can schedule it, waste it, lose it and so forth. Believing that a person does one thing at a time, we have a strong orientation towards the present and the short term future. This is referred to as a *monochromic time perspective*. Most people of the Asian and Latin American descent tend to view time as being less discrete and less subject to scheduling. They view simultaneous involvement in many activities as natural. People and relationships take priority over schedules, and activities occur in their own pace rather than according to a predetermined timetable. Such cultures have an orientation towards the present and the future. This is known as a *polychromic time perspective* (Hawkins *et al.*, 2007).

How would marketing activities vary between monochromic and polychromic cultures? Personal selling and negotiation styles and strategies should differ, as would advertising themes. Contests and sales with deadlines would generally be more effective in monochromic than in polychromic cultures. As Hawkins *et al.* observe, convenience foods frequently fail when positioned in terms of timesaving and convenience in polychromic cultures where *saving time* is not part of the cultural thought processes (Hawkins *et al.,* 2007). Interestingly, even within a culture, time perspectives ac vary by age and by situation. For example, according to de Mooij (2007), in Japan, work is approached in terms of monochromic time whereas leisure is approached, as their culture might suggest, in terms of polychromic time.

Meanings in the use of time. Specific uses of time have varying meanings in different cultures. In much of the world, the time required for a decision is proportional to the importance of the decision. As Hawkins *et al.* observe, Americans, by being well prepared with ready answers, may adversely downplay the importance of the business being discussed. Likewise, both Japanese and Middle-Eastern executives are put off by Americans' insistence on coming to the point directly and quickly in business transactions. Promptness is considered very important in American and Japan. According to de Mooij, "time is money and a symbol of status ad responsibility. To be kept waiting is offensive in monochromic cultures; it is perceived as a message. It is not in polychromic culture" (de Mooij, 2007). As can be seen, understanding such differences prior to doing business in a given country is very important.

Space. In view of Chapman and Jamal (2007), the use people make of space and the meanings they assign to their use of space constitute another form of nonverbal communication. In Ghana, like in America, office space in organizations generally is allocated according to rank or prestige than need. The chief executive will often have the largest office, followed by deputy chief executive and so on. *Personal space* is a second major use of space. This is the nearest that others can move to a person in various situations without one feeling uncomfortable. As the literature suggests, in America, normal business conversations occur at distances of 3 to 5 feet and highly personal business from 18 inches to 3 feet. In part of northern Europe, the distances are slightly longer; in most Latin America, they are substantially shorter (Hawkins *et al.*, 2007).

In the context of business, for instance, an American businessperson in Latin America would tend to back away from a Latin American counterpart in order to maintain his/her preferred personal distance. In turn, the host will tend to advance towards the American in order to maintain his/her personal space. Furthermore, each assigns a meaning to the other's actions according to what the action means in his/her culture. Thus, the North American would consider the Latin American to be pushy and aggressive. In turn, the Latin American would consider

the North American to be cold, aloof and snobbish.

Symbols. Basically, a symbol is anything that stands for something else. Any word is a symbol. To communicate effectively with their audience, marketers would need to use appropriate symbols to convey desired product images or characteristics. These symbols can be verbal or nonverbal. Verbal symbols may include a television announcement or an advertisement in a magazine. Nonverbal communication includes the use of such symbols as figures, colours, shapes and even textures to lend additional meaning to print or broadcast advertisements, to trademarks and to packaging or product designs (Schifman & Kanuk, 2007).

As Schifman and Kanuk surmise, a symbol may have several, even contradictory, meanings, so the advertiser would need to ascertain exactly what the symbol is communicating to its intended audience. For example, the marketer who uses a trademark depicting an old craftsman to symbolize careful workmanship may instead be communicating an image of outmoded methods and lack of style. The marketer who uses slang in an advertisement to attract an audience of teenagers would need to do so with great care. Slang that is misused or outdated will symbolically date the marketer's firm or product (Schifman & Kanuk, 2007). In fact, as the authors emphasize, all the elements of the marketing mix (the product, its price, promotion and the stores at which it is available) are symbols that communicate ranges of its quality to potential customers. Failure to recognize the meaning assigned to a symbol can cause serious problems.

Relationships. The rights and obligations imposed by relationships and friendships are another nonverbal cultural variable. According to Hawkins *et al.* (2007), Americans, more so than most other cultures, form relationships and make friends quickly and easily and drop them easily also. Largely, this may be because America has always had a great deal of both social and geographic mobility. In their view, people who move every few years must be able to form friendships in a short time period and depart from them with a minimum of pain. In many other parts of the world, relationships and friendships are formed slowly and carefully because they imply deep and lasting obligations. As the literature indicates (e.g., Herbig & Kramer, 1992; Fan & Zigang, 2004), friendships and business are deeply intertwined in most of the world. This is exemplified by the following quote:

To most Asians and Latin Americans, good personal relationships and feelings are all that really matter in a long-term agreement. After all, the written word is less important than personal ties. Once personal trust has been established, co-operation increases. The social contacts developed between the parties are often far more significant than the technical specifications and the price. In many countries the heart of the matter, the major point of the negotiations, is getting to know the people involved. Americans negotiate a contract; the Japanese negotiate a relationship. In many cultures, the written word is used simply to satisfy legalities. In their eyes, emotion and

personal relations are more important than cold facts (Herbig & Kramer, 1992).

Agreements. Mostly, people in the developed world rely on an extensive and, generally, highly efficient legal system for ensuring that business obligations are honourned and for resolving disagreements. Many other cultures, like Ghanaians, have not developed such a system and rely instead on relationships, friendship and kinship, local moral principles, or informed customs to guide business conduct. For example, as Fan and Zigang (2004) point out, the Chinese "tend to pay more attention to relationships than contracts." In the words of Brewer (1997):

Relationships are everything in China, more so than in the United States, which is more focused on business. The Chinese want to know and understand you before they buy from you.

As McDonald *et al.* (2000) and Abdul-Muhmin (2001) point out, in many Latin American, Asian and Middle East countries, unlike Americans, virtually all prices of products, including industrial products, are negotiated prior to the sale. As Hawkins *et al.* (2007) emphasize, if a product such as a taxi ride is consumed without first establishing the price, the customer must pay what the seller demands. Likewise, assuming that a price list exists or has real meaning for industrial products can lead to incorrect conclusions concerning the actual price.

Things. As Hawkins *et al.* (2007) observe, the cultural meaning of things leads to purchase patterns that one would not otherwise predict. Miller (2007) noted that a strong demand for expensive, status brands whose absolute cost was not too high among those Russians beginning to gain economically under capitalism. He concluded:

They may stick to their locally produced toothpaste, but they want the Levi's, the Mont Blanc pens, the Moet Chandon champagne to establish their self-esteem and their class position (Miller, 2007)

According to Parks (1998), the differing meanings that cultures attach to things, including products, makes gift-giving a particularly difficult task. For example, as Joy (2001) points out, giving a Chinese business customer or distributor a nice desk clock (a common gift in many countries, including Ghana) would be inappropriate. This is because, in China, the word for clock is similar to the word for funeral, making clocks inappropriate gifts. In China, the situation where the receipt of a *requires* a gift in return depends on the closeness of the relationship between the two parties – the closer the relationship, the less a return gift is required (Joy, 2001; Wang *et al.*, 2001).

Etiquette. This represents generally accepted ways of behaving in social situations. Behaviours considered rude or offensive in one culture may be quite acceptable in another. The common and acceptable Western European

habit of crossing one's legs while sitting, such that the sole of a shoe shows, is extremely insulting in many Eastern and African cultures (Hawkins *et al.*, 2007). In these cultures, the sole of the foot or shoe should never be exposed to view. As Voss *et al.* (2004) observe, while most Americans are not hesitant to voice their dissatisfaction with a service encounter, many Asians are. This also appears to be true of the British who have traditionally been characterized by their reserved nature. Such factors can lead American managers to misjudge customer response to their services abroad (Voss *et al.*, 2004; Hui & Au, 2001).

Normal voice tone, pitch and speed of speech differ among cultures and languages, as does the use of gestures. Westerners often mistake the seemingly loud, volatile speech of some Asian cultures as signifying anger or emotional distress when it is normal speech for the occasion. The importance of proper, culture-specific etiquette is obvious. Although people recognize that etiquette varies from culture to culture, there is still a strong emotional feeling that "our way is natural and right" (Hawkins *et al.*, 2007).

2. CROSS-CULTURAL MARKETING STRATEGY

An important issue facing marketers is the extent to which one or more global consumer cultures segments are emerging. As Keillor *et al.* (2002) indicate, evidence suggests that there is indeed movement in this direction. Such a culture will have a shared set of consumption-related symbols with common meaning and desirability among members. One such proposed global culture is that portion of local cultures that view themselves as cosmopolitan, knowledgeable and modern. Such individuals share many values and consumption-related behaviours with similar individuals across a range of national cultures (Hawkins *et al.*, 2007).

Such cultures are being created by the globalization of mass media, work, education and travel. Some product categories and brands have become symbolically related to this culture. This does not imply that these brands use the same advertising globally but rather that the underlying theme and symbolism may be the same.

There is ongoing controversy over the extent to which cross-cultural marketing strategies, particularly advertising, should be standardized (Sirisagul, 2000; Neff, 2000; de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002). Standardized strategies can result in significant cost savings. This should be an important consideration in the marker's advertising strategy.

Generally, most companies will blend standardization and customization. A recent surge in people's pride in their local cultures means that at least some customization is necessary (Hawkins *et al.*, 2007).

A critical factor is achieving the right balance and determining where standardization is possible and where customization is critical.

2.1 Considerations in Approaching a Foreign Market

There are seven key considerations for each geographic market that a firm is contemplating. An analysis of these seven variables would provide the background necessary for deciding whether or not to enter the market and to what extent, if any, an individualized marketing strategy is required (Hawkins *et al.,* 2007).

Is the geographic area homogeneous or heterogeneous with respect culture? Marketing efforts, in general, are geared towards defined geographic areas, most importantly political and economic entities. This approach is often supported legal requirements and existing distribution channels. Nevertheless, it is also encouraged by the implicit belief that geographic or political boundaries coincide with cultural boundaries. From the forgoing, country boundaries represent general boundaries; but it is very important also to consider the existing differences within a given country. For example, Rubel's (1996) and Barros' (2004) research recommends that marketing strategies in Latin America must take into consideration not only cross-country but also within country boundaries differences. Accordingly, marketing campaigns need to be designed for cultural and demographic groups, not just countries.

What needs can this product or a version of it fill in this culture? Majority of companies analyze a new market with an existing product or product technology in mind. The issue that needs to be addressed is what needs their existing or modified product can satisfy in the given culture. For example, bicycles and motor serve basically recreational needs in developed countries, but they provide primary transportation in many other countries, particularly developing ones.

ABX Company successfully positioned Juvita as a substitute for apple juice at breakfast in Ghana. Nevertheless, in evaluating the market for La Cote d'I voire, it realized that the Ivorians drink little apple juice and almost none at breakfast. Consequently, a completely different positioning strategy was employed; Juvita was promoted as a new type of refreshing drink for any time of the day.

Can enough of the people needing the product afford the product? A firm needs to undertake an initial demographic analysis to find out the number of individuals or households that might need the product who can actually have the money to buy it. Example, while China has over 1.3 billion consumers, the effective market for most Western goods is estimated to be less than 20 percent of this total (Madden & Neff, 2004). Furthermore, the possibilities of establishing credit, obtaining a government subsidy, or making a less expensive version

of the product should be considered. As Andruss (2001) reports, this latter approach is being employed by P&G in China, where a tiered pricing system was created to help reach consumers with relatively low incomes.

What values or patterns are relevant to the purchase and use of this product? The second section of this paper centred on values and their role in consumer behavior. The system may be examined for influences on purchasing the product, owning the product, using the product and disposing the product. Much of the marketing strategy will be based on this analysis.

What are the distribution, political and legal structures for the product? It is obvious that a country's legal structure can have an influence on each element of a company's marketing mix. For example, a company may have to make changes for its advertisement in a given country because of legal restrictions in the country. It is reported of China to have recently banned sex appeals, and advertisements for so-called 'offensive' products such as feminine-hygiene products and hemorrhoid ointments have been banned during the three daily meals times (when families will be watching with children) (Chen & Chang, 2004). And Brazil has put laws in place that limit the amount of alcohol advertising (Fowler, 2004). Such legal restrictions limit the ability of firms to employ standardized approaches to their marketing efforts.

Also, regulations influence distribution channels. For example, as Madden reports (1998), China placed a ban on direct sales to consumers; this has major repercussions for direct marketers in this country.

In what ways can we communicate about the product? As Hawkins *et al*. (2007) suggest, this question demands an investigation into (1) available media and who attends to each type, (2) the needs the product fill, (3) values associated with the product and its use and (4) the verbal and nonverbal communications systems in the culture(s). All elements of an organization's promotional mix, which includes packaging, non-functional product design features, personal selling techniques and advertising, should be based on these factors. For example, ABX Technologies makes use of bright colours for the refrigerators it markets in some Asian countries. The company does so because a lot of consumers in these countries keep their refrigerators in their living rooms and want them to serve as attractive pieces of furniture, not just as appliances.

What are the ethical implications of marketing this product in this country? All marketing programmes need to be analyzed on ethical as well as financial dimensions (Hawkins *et al.*, 2007). International marketing activities bring up many ethical problems. The ethical dimension is particularly important and complex in marketing to Third World and developing countries. For example, a firm seeking to introduce a product in an international market will need to undertake an ethical analysis on various factors of concern in the country. Such ethical analysis will help forestall conflicts with local governments or economic interests.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have learned that culture is the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society. Some of the identified characteristics of culture are that it is comprehensive, acquired and static. Also, culture is manifested within boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Culture operates primarily by setting rather loose boundaries for individual behaviour and by influencing the functioning of institutions such as the family. To fulfill its need-gratifying role, culture continually must evolve if it is to function in the best interests of a society. When cultural changes occur, trends develop and provide marketing opportunities to those who spot the changes before their competitors do. There are numerous values that vary across cultures and affect consumption. Cultural values are classified into three categories: other, environment and self. Differences in verbal communication systems are immediately obvious across cultures and need to be considered by marketers who want to do business in these cultures. However, more difficult to recognize are nonverbal communications systems. The main examples of nonverbal communication variables that influence marketers are time, space, symbols, relationships, agreements, things and etiquette. Seven major questions that relevant for developing a cross-cultural marketing strategy are: (1) Is the geographic area homogeneous or heterogeneous with respect culture? (2) What needs can this product or a version of it fill in this culture? (3) Can enough of the people needing the product afford the product? (4) What values or patterns are relevant to the purchase and use of this product? (5) What are the distribution, political and legal structures for the product? (6) In what ways can we communicate about the product? (7) What are the ethical implications of marketing this product in this country?

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