

# Cross Cultural Marketing – Need, Strategy and Challenges

Dr. Mona Sharma

Assistant Professor – Commerce Department, DAV College, Sec. 10, Chandigarh

## 1. Introduction:

Cross-cultural marketing is international marketing on a personal level. It means considering cultural differences when planning marketing campaigns and media; realizing the need for a balance between localization and globalization; and most importantly, implementing strategies that respect differences while seeking to unify brand messages.

Marketers will want to know how to translate an understanding of cultural differences into effective cross-cultural marketing strategies – turning them into a direct plan of action. How will the deliverables differ from country to country? How must a web site's design differ? How does the "digital divide" affect a marketing roll-out plan from country to country?

## 2. Why Cross-Cultural Marketing?

Globalization is an inevitable process in the 21st Century, and so is the cross – culturalization. The world is becoming more and more homogeneous, and distinctions between national markets are not only fading but for some products its disappearing. This means that marketing is now becoming a world common discipline. However, on the other hand, the differences among nations, regions, language, regulatory environment, past heritage, ethnic groups, etc in terms of cultural factors still exist in the market place and having obvious impact on the marketing practices of the business organizations. From a marketing point of view it is very important for marketers to realize that the markets in the 21st century are cross-cultural markets and to be aware of and sensitive to the cultural differences is a major premise for the success in the 21st Century marketplace.

## 3. Strategic issues for Cross-Cultural Marketing:

Cross-cultural marketing can be seen as the strategic process of marketing among consumers whose culture differs from that of the marketer's own culture at least in one of the fundamental cultural aspects, such as language, religion, social norms and values, education, and the living style.

From the anthropological perspective all market behaviours are culture-bound. Therefore, in order to match the marketing mix with consumer preferences, purchasing behavior, and product-use patterns in a potential market, marketers must have a thorough understanding of the cultural environment of that market.

The following aspects should be vital to be considered by a business:

- cultural impacts on marketing (international versus domestic)
- cross-cultural dimensions of marketing research
- cross-cultural aspects of marketing mix (products, price, promotion, and distribution)
- cross-cultural marketing education and professional training
- cross-cultural practice in electronic marketing

## 4. Examples for Strategy in Cross-cultural Marketing

### Pizza Hut and Domino's in India

1992: *Paneer on a pizza!*

1997: *Paneer on a pizza?*

2002: *Paneer on a pizza.*

Same statement, same concept but the noticeable thing is the change in the attitude. It started from "absolute disbelief" to "why not" to "calm acceptance". It shows how foreign based multinational companies have changed their product according to the taste of the indigenous of a country.

In this case one element of the marketing mix, product has been changed to cope up with the existing culturally bound taste of Indians. Pizza Hut and Domino's now serve Tandoori, Paneer and Chettinad toppings which are absolutely new menu for these MNCs but culturally accepted traditional foodstuffs for Indians.

### Maggi in India

Noodles were alright for dinner once in a while and it is accepted in other countries as well but it was unsuccessful in India. Since Indians consider idly, dosa, chappathi, etc as their dinner menu. Then Maggi wanted another marketing strategy to sell its product and it marketed Maggi as a snack not as a dinner and succeeded in the market. This also reveals how culturally bounded practices impact the marketing strategies. They also went along with curry flavour, tomato flavour, etc in India.

### Swarovski in India

Swarovski is a Czech Republic based crystal venture incorporated in 1895. Swarovski India (Pvt) Ltd faced a difficulty in marketing crystals in India primarily. In the European and Western countries crystal is considered as a valuable gift item and initially they marketed their crystal as in the same manner in India but they struggled to capture the market due to the existing cultural aspects. Indians had a sentiment about gold and silver as ideal gifts for a bride or a

bridegroom and they are culturally taught that gold and silver are the ideal gift for every occasion.

Swarovski there after realized the need for Indianization and came up with an alternative product. They introduced crystal studded sarees firstly and now they are offering a collection of sarees, blouses, odhnis, and salwar kameezesstudded with crystals.

### MTV and V Channel in India

Youth of India expects music which is some what related to their culture and prefer the styles like bhangra which is a traditional Indian music style. Realizing these desires, western channels like MTV and V channel has included Indian pop, a kind of fusion music of India into their charts.

### 5. Advertisement in Cross-Cultural Marketing:

Cross-Cultural Marketers considers advertisements as it foremost part, which directly appeal the target market. Promotions in the sense it mainly includes advertisements and the cultural issues relating to those advertisements should be precisely dealt in order to capture the market through a healthy relationship with the target market.

People tend to live within their cultural boundaries; i.e., people have their own cultural values and norms, which influence the way they think, feel and act. People in a particular ethnic group tend to share the language, customs, values, and social views, and these influence people's cognitive (beliefs and motives), affective (emotion and attitude) and behavioral (purchase and consumption) processes. Based on this notion of "advertising as a mirror," cultural values and standards are implanted in ads in such a way that consumers can "see themselves" and identify with the characters in the ads and feel affinity with the brands.

For this purpose most of the MNCs utilize the technique called "Advertising Localization". It is not a mere change of designation stemming from computer science vocabulary but a radical change of perspective concerning the real nature and modes of linguistic and cultural transfer from one language into another.

Coca cola uses different celebrities in each region of India to communicate more effectively with the target market by considering their cultural variabilities. They use Aamir Khan in North India, Vijay in Tamil Nadu, Jyothika in Andhra Pradesh and Aishwarya Rai in rest of India endorsing the same Coca-Cola. This shows the perspective of marketers that the people will feel more comfortable when they see a person from their own cultural background in advertisements and feel positive toward their products. In Sri Lankan context Santhosh and Bathiya endorse Coke and the concept of the advertisement is carefully designed to reflect the local culture in each frame.

### 6. Challenges in Cross-Cultural Marketing:

Since culture is a wide spread phenomenon which cannot be separately identified from the group of people who share a

set of accepted behaviors, customs, and values, it is obvious that the impact of such shared culture would result in all sorts of decision makings of the human beings. Such impacts can be mainly seen in the following perspectives.

- In the General Point of View: For example; language, body language, punctuation, negotiation styles, gestures, etc. can be given.
- In the Human Relationship Point of View: For example; employee relationship, customer relationship, supplier relationship, stakeholder relationship, etc. can be pointed out.
- In the Marketing Point of View: The impact that culture would have on the 4Ps of Marketing.

### 7. Aspects to Consider When Starting a New Business:

Even though cross cultural clashes create barriers they also provide challenges for the international businesses where those challenges encourage the business to develop further. All it is required to have a comprehensive knowledge about the impacts of the culture on the international business and prepared with all sorts of precautionary actions to be successive. The followings can be provided as recommendations to be successful in the global business;

- Doing a thorough market research
- Doing internal research to identify the cultural impacts among the employees
- Adaptation to the differences
- Developing commonly accepted standards which to be followed by all the stakeholders of the business
- Customization to a greater extent

### 8. Conclusion:

When an organization does not fully understand another culture, bloopers will inevitably occur. For example:

- The Swedish furniture giant IKEA unfortunately created the name 'FARTFULL' for one of its new desks that was to be sold in English-speaking countries. Enough said.
- In other products, companies may include the word 'mist' in the name of the good. Several examples are a liqueur named 'Irish Mist,' a curling iron called a 'Mist Stick,' and the British Rolls Royce named the 'Silver Mist.' That is fine when only selling within English-speaking countries, but when these companies expanded into Germany, organizations found themselves in a cross-cultural marketing fiasco. 'Mist' translates into 'manure' in German.
- 'Traficante' is the name for an Italian mineral water. When the company expanded into Spain, they realized the importance of cross-cultural marketing. In Spanish, the word translates as 'drug dealer.'

It is imperative that businesses understand different cultures and norms to utilize cross-cultural marketing successfully.

As our world becomes more and more globalised, the call for businesses to explore opportunities internationally is vastly increasing. The importance for today's business personnel to understand the impact of cross cultural differences on business, trade, and internal company organisation will

without a doubt determine the overall success of a campaign – but most, do not, resulting in misunderstandings and blunders (similar to those covered above). The majority of companies making their move around the globe are not fully aware of the impact that their products and services are having in these areas, and more importantly are uneducated on how they will be perceived by the locals.

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