

Original Article

# Cross-cultural Marketing challenges in Global Environment

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**Abstract** - The emergence of global markets due to globalization has led many companies to operate in more than one country. This reach beyond geographical boundaries by the companies gave birth to multicultural organizations—where employees from more than one country are working together for the accomplishment of organizational objectives. It may be true that the companies are finding these expansions attractive and lucrative, but operating and managing a global level business is tougher than managing a local company.

Global business is affected by a number of factors like differences in social, cultural, economic, legal and political environments. The global business is also prone to a number of risks like political risk, currency risk, cross-cultural risks etc. Human resources are required to perform at all operational levels across all business units, be it domestic or global.

The aim of this paper is to examine cross-cultural marketing challenges in respect of organizations engaged in global level marketing operations. It is observed in the paper that thorough knowledge of foreign culture, respect towards foreign culture, and proper orientation of management towards cultural differences enable the organization to overcome the challenges of cross-cultural marketing.

**Keywords** - Culture, Cross-culture, Global Organization, Marketing, Globalization.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural Marketing is known as “Ethnic Marketing” or “Multi-cultural Marketing”, defined 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.

Cross-cultural marketing demands marketers to be aware of various dimensions of culture and sensitive to the cultural differences; respect the right to culture by the consumers in global market places, and marketers need to understand that the global

Consumers deserve their cultural rights. If the marketers want to be the winners in the cross-cultural markets, they must design the marketing mix that meets the cultural expectations of consumers. It involves recognizing that people all over the world have different needs, given their cultural backdrop.

Multicultural marketing acknowledges differences in perception, motives and beliefs among consumers with different cultural backgrounds utilizes cultural norms of several cultures to maximize exposure of the businesses product or services by demonstrating interest and appreciation of different cultures (De-Mooij, 2015). For a multicultural marketing strategy to succeed, cultural differences must be identified, understood, and respected. Businesses done at a global level must communicate on different "wavelengths" and adapt to different markets around the world (Wilkinson & Cheng, 1999).

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the last two decades, cross-cultural challenges in international business management have become prominent as the companies have started expanding across territorial boundaries. Even leading management schools in India have started incorporating cross-cultural challenges as part of the curriculum of international business management.

Many companies are now operating in more than one country due to the globalization of markets. This crossing of geographical boundaries by the companies gives the birth of multicultural organizations where employees from more than one country are working together. It may be true that companies are finding these expansions attractive and lucrative but operating and managing a global business is normally a lot tougher than managing a local company.

The main reason for the expansion of companies is to create global competitiveness by reducing production costs and exploiting market opportunities offered by trade liberalization and economic integration. The globalization of the economic environment has made it increasingly important for today's marketing managers to



understand how to do business in different cultural contexts and challenges. Effective distribution of products in cross-cultural markets has become a critical factor for sustaining success in global level business.

### III. OBJECTIVES

The aim of this paper is to examine the importance of cross-cultural dimensions of global marketing and the challenges due to cultural differences and the practices in cross-cultural markets by global business organizations.

The specific objectives are:

1. To study the importance of cross-cultural market dimensions for global level business organizations;
2. To identify the cross-cultural differences and their impact on global marketing programs;
3. To examine the challenges of cross-cultural markets being faced by the global level organizations; and
4. To suggest suitable measures to manage cross-cultural differences and address obstacles in the design of global marketing programs.

### IV. PERSPECTIVE ON CULTURE

*Encyclopedia Britannica online* expressed that culture is an "integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behaviour that is both a result of an integral to the human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations."

*Schein* (1985) opined that the culture is a set of basic assumptions- shared solutions to universal problems of external adaption (how to survive) and internal integration (how to stay together) - which have evolved over time and are handed down from one generation to the next.

*Kutscher and Schmid* (2004) expressed that culture is the set of basic assumptions, attitudes and convictions of a social unit that manifest themselves in a multitude of behaviour and artefacts and which developed over time as a response to the varied demands placed on this social unit."

Thus, culture is something that is shared by all or almost all members of some social group. It is something that older members of the group try to pass on to the younger members. It is something that shapes behaviour or structures one's perceptions of the world.

### V. ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

Culture includes every part of life. The scope of the term "culture" to the anthropologist is illustrated by the elements included within the meaning of the term<sup>1</sup>:

1. Material Culture:
  - a) Technology
  - b) Economics
2. Social Institutions
  - a) Family
  - b) Education
  - c) Political Structures
  - d) The media
3. Humans and the universe
  - a) Belief systems
4. Aesthetics
  - a) Graphic and plastic arts
  - b) Folklore
  - c) Music, drama and dance
5. Language

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1. Philip R. Cateora & J.L.Graham, International Marketing, TMGH, Ed.11, p.99

### VII. CROSS-CULTURAL MARKETING: AN UNDERSTANDING

According to Harris and Moran (1987), culture gives people a sense of who they are, of belonging, of how they should behave, and of what they should be doing. It provides a learned, shared, and interrelated set of symbols, codes, and values that direct and justify human behaviour. In marketing and consumer behaviour research, the use of the culture concept has been minimal; it has been common for marketers and consumers to ignore the depth of the concept and its implications for the analysis of human behaviour (Douglas & Craig, 1995; Griffith & Ryans, 1995). Cross-cultural marketing considers cultural differences as a basis for striking a balance between localization and globalization in planning marketing campaigns and media, and most importantly, implementing strategies that respect differences while seeking to unify brand messages.

### VIII. CROSS-CULTURAL MARKETING AND ITS ROLE

The late 1990s have been proved to be the beginning of the most exciting and opportunistic years in the history of marketing. Mass marketing is out, and customized marketing has become more important in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is clear that marketers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will need to face challenges more than ever before in terms of electronic marketing, global marketing, and cross-cultural marketing. At the same time, these three formats of marketing provide more opportunities for marketers in practice. As companies become global marketers and seek to standardize various parts of the marketing mix across several countries, multicultural studies become more important. Multicultural Marketing or Cross-cultural Marketing

(or Ethnic Marketing) applies unique marketing techniques to access the ethnic market.

"Ethnic Market" refers to cultures other than the majority culture in a company's home area and is significantly more paramount in some countries than in others. Multicultural marketing strategies involve recognizing a culture's traditions, beliefs, values, norms, language, and religion and applying those aspects to market to that culture's need. Multicultural research involves dealing with countries that have different languages, economies, social structures, behaviour, and attitude patterns.

Cross-culture can refer to a company's initiatives to increase understanding of different groups develop effective communication or marketing efforts to reach out to customers and clients outside its traditional market. Methods of cross-culture are intended to strengthen the interaction of people from different backgrounds in the business world and is a vital issue in international business. The understanding of cultural roundedness of business (i.e., the willingness of culture to relinquish its traditional methods and adopt new ones) is not only imperative for international marketing effectiveness but also for marketing to ethnic populations domestically. The changed world makes marketing a cross-cultural process that requires marketers must be well informed about cultural differences nationally, locally, and ethnically to be the winner in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century markets. Global markets will continue to grow in importance as global marketers continue their quest to identify and serve global segments. Marketing is at the threshold of a new and exciting era of e-business, e-commerce and e-marketing; through these tools, the marketers can address the needs of the individual customer.

## IX. CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Since culture is a widespread phenomenon that cannot be separately identified from the group of people who share a set of accepted behaviours, 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.

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

## X. CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

One of the main tasks of management is solving problems that appear at encountering individual companies and national cultures. Managers of international companies often face challenges of cultural differences. There are three sources of cultural differences.

**1. Corporate Company Culture:** The corporate company culture elements are such as the history of the company, company's experience, leadership and dominant coalition, ownership, stage of development and business diversity.

**2. Professional Industry Culture:** The professional industry culture comprises two elements; functional orientation and industry norms. Functional orientation includes marketing, finance, engineering, research and development functions. Industry norms include technology, change, key success factors, and types of customers.

**3. National Ethnic Culture:** National ethnic culture includes elements such as country history, education, social organization, religion and philosophy.

**Some cross-cultural differences examples:**

**Crossing Borders: Example-1 – Time: A many-cultured thing:**

Time is cultural, subjective, and variable. One of the most serious causes of frustration and friction in cross-cultural business dealings occurs when counterparts are out of sync with each other. Differences often appear with respect to the pace of time, its perceived nature and its function. Insights into a culture's view of time may be found in its sayings and proverbs<sup>2</sup>.

For example:

- a) Ethiopia: "If you wait long enough, even an egg will walk."
- b) France: "Before time, it is not yet the time; after the time, it's too late."
- c) Nigeria: "The clock did not invent man."
- d) Spain: "Those who rush arrive first at the grave."
- e) United States: "Time is Money"

The precision of clocks also tells a lot about a culture. In a study on how cultures keep time, the researcher found that clocks are slow or fast by an average of just 19 seconds in Switzerland. When a man in Brazil was queried about the time, however, he was more than three hours off when he said it was "exactly 2:14." When a postal employee in the central office in Jakarta was asked the time, he responded that he didn't know the time but to go outside and ask a street vendor.

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2. Philip R. Cateora & J.L.Graham, International Marketing, TMGH, Ed.11, p.139

**Example-2 – It's not the Gift that Counts, but how you present it:**

Giving a gift in another country requires careful attention if it is to be done properly. A few examples are listed below related to carefulness while giving any gift to other country people<sup>3</sup>:

**Arab World:** Do not give a gift when you first meet someone. It may be interpreted as a bribe.

**China:** Never make an issue of a gift presentation – publicly or privately. Gifts should be presented privately, with the exception of collective ceremonial gifts at banquets or after speeches.

**Europe:** a) Avoid red roses and white flowers, even numbers, and the number 13.

b) Do not wrap flowers on the paper.

**Japan:** a) Do not open a gift in front of a Japanese counterpart unless asked, and do not expect the Japanese to open your gift.

b) Avoid ribbons and bows as part of the gift wrappings. Bows are considered unattractive by many people, and ribbon colours can have different meanings.

c) Do not offer a gift depicting a fox which is the symbol of fertility, or a badger, which is the symbol of cunning.

**Latin America:** a) Gifts should be given during social encounters, not in the course of business.

b) Avoid the colours black and purple; both are associated with the Catholic Lenten season.

## XI. DIMENSIONS OF CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The major cultural differences could be categorized into two major dimensions. One was given by Geert Hofstede (1992)<sup>4</sup> and the other by Fons Trompenaars (1993)<sup>4</sup>. Both approaches propose a set of cultural dimensions along which dominant value systems can be ordered. These value systems affect human thinking, feeling, acting, and the behaviour of organizations and institutions in predictable ways.

The two sets of dimensions reflect basic problems that any society has to cope with but for which solutions differ. They are similar in some respects and different in others. The dimensions can be grouped into several categories.

**i) Relations between people:** Two main cultural differences have been identified. Geert Hofstede distinguishes between individualism and collectivism. Fons Trompenaars breaks down this distinction into two dimensions: universalism versus particularism and individualism versus communitarians.

**ii) Motivational Orientation:** Societies choose ways to cope with the inherent uncertainty of living. In this category, Hofstede identifies three dimensions: masculinity versus femininity, amount of uncertainty avoidance, and power distance.

**iii) Attitudes towards Time:** Hofstede distinguishes between a long-term versus short-term orientation. Trompenaars identifies two dimensions: sequential versus synchronic and inner versus outer time. The cultural differences could be in any of the above-mentioned dimensions. Hofstede identified four key dimensions which impact natural, cultural differences.

These are:

**i. Individualism/collectivism:** This dimension reflects the extent to which individuals' value self-determination, as opposed to their behaviour being determined by the collective will of a group or organization.

3. Philip R. Cateora & J.L.Graham, International Marketing, TMGH, Ed.11, p.107

4. Essays, UK. (November 2018). Geert Hofstede vs Fons Trompenaars. Retrieved from <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/management/geert-hofstede-vs-fons-trompenaars.php?vref=1>

**ii. Power-distance:** At the core of this dimension lies the question of involvement in decision making. In low power-distance cultures, employees seek involvement and have a desire for a participative management style. At the other end of this scale, employees tend to work and behave in a particular way because they accept that they will be directed to do so by the hierarchy or the organization.

**iii. Uncertainty Avoidance:** This dimension is concerned with employees' tolerance of ambiguity or uncertainty in their working environment. In cultures that have high uncertainty avoidance, employees will look for clearly defined, formal rules and conventions governing their behaviour.

**iv. Masculinity/femininity:** This is possibly the most difficult dimension to use in an organisational context. In practice, the difficulty is more to do with terminology and linguistics. In Hofstede's work, the dimension is related to values. In highly "masculine cultures", dominant values relate to assertiveness and material acquisition. In highly "feminine cultures", values focus on the relationship among people, concern for others and quality of life.

## XII. CHALLENGES IN CROSS-CULTURAL MARKETING

Globalization is an inevitable process to many countries in the world all over in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and

so is the cross-naturalisation of the global markets. On the one hand, the world is becoming more homogeneous, and distinctions between national markets are not only fading but, for some products, will disappear altogether. This means that marketing is now a world-encompassing discipline. However, on the other hand, the differences among nations, regions, and ethnic groups in terms of cultural factors are far from distinguishing but become more obvious. The last summit of francophone nations in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century called for a “cultural exception” in GATT/WTO rules governing trade of goods. The claims will not only affect public policy in these nations but international trade rules. It might initiate worldwide cultural protectionism for transnational marketing when business organizations approach global markets for their strategic competitive advantages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

From a marketing point of view, it is very important for marketers to realize that as the world becomes globalized, the cultural imperative is upon us; markets in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are worldwide, yet differences in cross-cultural markets limit the opportunities. As a consequence, global companies are required to be aware of the cultural differences and become sensitive to the cultural dimensions of the global markets; otherwise, success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century marketplace is a highly challenging task.

Clearly, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century made markets “borderless” where national boundaries are no longer the only relevant criteria in marketing, economic planning, and business decisions. However, understanding the cultural borders is especially important for products and industries that are “culture-bound”. National culture is one critical factor that affects economic development, demographic behaviour, and general business policies around the world. In this regard, the following aspects are considered vital by a global business:

- a) cultural impacts on marketing (international versus domestic)
- b) cross-cultural dimensions of marketing research
- c) cross-cultural aspects of marketing-mix (products, price, promotion, and distribution)
- d) cross-cultural marketing education and professional training
- e) cross-cultural practice in electronic 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 behaviour, and product-use patterns in a potential market, marketers must have a thorough understanding of the cultural environment of that market.

### XIII. CROSS-CULTURAL MARKETING: REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES

To what extent the culture of a particular marketplace has influenced the marketing practices of the business corporate can be understood by analyzing each element of the 4-Ps Marketing mix.

#### (1) *Product Adaptation:*

Cross-cultural product advertising presents a single product or brand to people in different cultures at once. To be most effective in advertising to different cultures, it can be necessary to tweak ads or create separate messages for each targeted culture or sub-culture.

##### a) *Pizza Hut and Domino’s in India*

**1992:** *Paneer on a pizza!*

**1997:** *Paneer on a pizza?*

**2002:** *Paneer on a pizza.*

The 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, the product, has been changed to cope with the existing culturally bound taste of Indians. Pizza Hut and Domino’s now serve Tandoori, Paneer and Chettinad toppings, which are the absolutely new menu for these MNCs but culturally accepted traditional foodstuffs for Indians.

##### b) *Nestlé’s Maggi Noodles 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 marketing strategies. They also went along with curry flavour, tomato flavour, etc., in India.

##### c) *MTV and V Channel in India*

The youth of India expects music that is somewhat related to their culture and prefers 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.

**(2) Price Adaptation:**

Pricing a product based on strict market conditions might not be enough to see sales soar. Businesses looking to maximize their overseas sales have to consider cultural preferences, traditions and biases if they want to make waves in global commerce.

**a) KFC and McDonalds in Sri Lanka**

MNCs like KFC and McDonalds are giving their primary concern to the price they charge from Sri Lankans since people in Sri Lanka are more conscious about the prices of the product than the quality. Even the displays they use to show their products specifically display the price of each product. This proves that these MNCs are amending their marketing strategies regarding price to suit Sri Lankan markets and consumer psychology.

**b) Procter and Gamble (P&G)**

P&G encountered strict price controls in Venezuela in the late 1980s. Despite increases in the cost of raw materials, P&G was granted only about 50 per cent of the price increases it requested; even then, months passed before permission was accorded to raise prices. As a result, by 1988, detergent prices in Venezuela were less than what they were in the US Markets.

**c) Sony**

Sony developed the portable compact disc player; the cost per unit at initial sales volumes was estimated to exceed the US \$600. Since this was a “no-go” price in the US and other target markets, Akio Morita instructed management to price the unit in the US \$300 range to achieve penetration. Because Sony was a global marketer, the sales volume is expected to achieve in these markets, leading to the economics of scale and lowering the manufacturing costs.

**(3) Place Adaptation:**

Place involves decisions concerning distribution channels to be used, the location of outlets, methods of transportation and inventory levels to

be held. The product should be available in the right quantity, at the right time and place.

**a) Dilmah Distribution in the Global Market:**

Dilmah uses several methods of distribution in several countries. It operates in 93 global markets, and it has its own distribution model through its regional channels in certain countries, whereas in other several countries, it uses a native prominent goods distributor for their tea. In countries like Australia, the USA, and European countries, it uses its own distribution channels where the customers believe in the manufacturer own brand and distribution. In certain countries like Jordan, UAE, etc., it uses a native goods distributor to distribute their tea since the channels of distribution are in the control of King’s families, and the customers buy products that come from their own country distributors.

**b) Dell:** Dell’s rise to the number three position in the world computer industry is based on its innovative channel strategy: Direct Marketing and Build to Order (BTO). Dell customers love Dell’s low prices and the ability to order the exact computer configuration they want. They do not miss the trip to the local computer store. The Dell strategy was developed in the US and is now being successfully extended to world markets, including China.

**c) IKEA:** IKEA, the world’s largest furniture retailer, relies primarily on its company-owned retail stores, but it also has a catalogue that supports retail stores and the expanding online store as well as direct mail-order selling. IKEA annually prints 38 editions of its catalogue in 17 languages to facilitate consumers reading manuals in their local languages.

**(4) Promotion Adaptation:**

Promotions, in a sense, mainly includes advertisements, and the cultural issues relating to those advertisements should be precisely dealt with in order to capture the market through a healthy relationship with the target market. 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.

a) **Coke Advertisements in India**

Coca-cola uses different celebrities in each region of India to communicate more effectively with the target market by considering their cultural variability's. They use Aamir Khan in North India, Vijay in Tamil Nadu, Jyothika in Andhra Pradesh and Aishwarya Rai in the rest of India, endorsing the same Coca-Cola. This shows the perspective of marketers that people will feel more comfortable when they see a person from their own cultural background in advertisements and feel positive toward their products. In the 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.

b) **Toyota Advertisements**

Toyota used a pregnant, naked woman in their advertisements, and this was accepted by some countries, whereas some countries protested against it on obscenity and distastefulness of the advertisement.

As a result, Toyota later withdrew the advertisement and introduced acceptable themes in their advertisements. This shows how the cultural beliefs of people have an influence on the marketing communication practices of business organizations in global marketing programs.

c) **McDonald**

McDonald's included a Japanese culture-specific approach in its global marketing program that invites consumers to associate the restaurant with family members interacting in various situations. Starting in 1996, McDonald's campaign in Japan depicted various aspects of fatherhood. One spot showed a father and son bicycling home with burgers and fries; another showed a father driving a vanful of boisterous kids to McDonald's for milkshakes. The ads come at a time when many Japanese "salarymen" are reassessing the balance between work and family life.

The campaign illustrates the use of localized global advertising; Japanese actors are used in the spots, and local musicians composed music reminiscent of Japanese prime time TV shows.

**XIV. CROSS-CULTURAL MARKETING BLUNDERS**

Marketers create more brand blunders than one would think, and these blunders can cause brands a lot of harm. Some of them, if they are lucky, escape with just a touch of public ridicule and shaming. Oftentimes, the advertising, marketing, and PR agencies come out unscathed, but the brand can sometimes take years to recover.

Attempts to create globally consumed brands, or regionally consumed brands throughout Asia-Pacific, have proved to be challenging. Changing a product to cater to the local needs or tastes may destroy the quality image that made the brand desirable when it was first created. Language and translation for persons and companies doing business across national boundaries are very important.

In England, many of the terms are different from what is used in the United States. For Example,

<b>British Version</b>	<b>American Version</b>
Chemist	Pharmacist
Lorry	Truck
Nappies	Diapers
Loo	Bathroom
Biscuits	Cookies
Crisps	Potato chips
Shandy	Beer with lemonade

Sometimes translation errors result in bloopers that are harmless but funny. Consider this assortment of hotel signs from around the world translated into English: Paris: "Please leave your values at the front desk", Japan: "You are invited to take advantage of the chambermaid", Zurich: "Because of the impropriety of entertaining guests of the opposite sex in the bedroom, it is suggested that the lobby be used for this purpose." Finally, in Romania: "The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time, we regret that you will be unbearable."

**Some more examples of the marketing blunders are as follows:**

- i. Gerber, a Nestle owned purveyor of baby foods, first started selling their baby food in Africa; they used the same packaging as in the USA – with the cute baby on the label. Later they found out that in Africa, companies routinely put pictures on the label of what is inside the package since most people cannot read.
- ii. When Coca-Cola entered the China market, they named their product something that, when pronounced, sounded like "Coca-Cola". The only problem was that the characters used meant "Bite the Wax Tadpole". When they

- learned of their blunder, they later changed to a set of characters that meant “Happiness in the Mouth”. [Coca-Cola claims this famous blunder was made not by the company itself but by retailers in China. -Ed.]
- iii. Colgate introduced a toothpaste in France called “Cue”, the name of a notorious porno magazine.
  - iv. The hair products company, Clairol, introduced the “Mist Stick” – a curling iron – into Germany, only to find out that “mist” is slang for manure. Not many people had used the manure stick.
  - v. Even companies as big and as smart as Procter and Gamble (P & G) can make brand blunders when cultural differences are not researched beforehand. P&G used a television commercial in Japan that was popular in Europe. The ad showed a woman bathing, her husband entering the bathroom and touching her. The Japanese considered this ad an invasion of privacy, inappropriate behaviour, and in very poor taste.
  - vi. Mercedes-Benz entered the Chinese market under the brand name ‘Bensi’, which Means “Rush to Die”.
  - vii. Nike had to recall thousands of products when a decoration intended to resemble the Arabic word of “Allah”.
  - viii. Parker Pen, when expanding into Mexico, mistranslated “It won’t leak in your pocket and embarrass you” into “It won’t leak in your pocket and make you pregnant”.
  - ix. Pepsi’s slogan “Pepsi Brings You Back to the Life” was debuted in China as “Pepsi Brings You Back from the Grave”.

## **XV. MEASURES TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES IN CROSS-CULTURAL MARKETING**

As the managers and the employees in a multinational organization gradually understand the dimensions and differences, it is the duty of both managers and the employees to adopt the strategies to keep the diversity at bay. Following are the strategies that help us to overcome the obstacles of cross-cultural differences in marketing.

**1. Good knowledge of foreign culture:** The first strategy is acknowledging and admitting the existence of differences between cultures. This mainly includes differences in perceptions, interpretations and evaluations of social situations and people who create them and act within them. These differences then have to be named, described, explained and understood. Recognition of the culture of a partner is considered to

be the first condition of mutual understanding and good cooperation. This step is definitely neither common nor easy.

**2. Respect for a foreign culture:** Respect for a foreign culture means, most of all accepting their differences without any judgment. It is not possible to claim that a certain culture is more perfect, "better" than another culture. Cultures are different, and for their members, they represent optimum to manage life situations in conditions they have been living in for a long time.

**3. Helpful steps in the relationship to a foreign culture:** The next strategy of the recommended process should be the effort to find a common solution, mutual understanding and simplification of the complicated and demanding process of behaving in different cultural conditions. These helpful steps in no case mean that the participating partners should give up their cultural background, but it suggests that they should use their knowledge of their own culture to gain knowledge about the partner's culture, which can be quite easy after all. Very often, it is enough to sacrifice something that is not too important for us, but it means a lot for another culture. The main condition is a very good knowledge of partners and their cultural environment.

**4. Ignore the cultural differences:** In this strategy, a stage comes where the managers ignore the differences. It later becomes irrelevant as the managers and employees would have a good understanding of each others' cultures and practices as earlier they would learn to respect the cultures. The employees and managers feel in this type of strategy that "our way is the only way", as it is also practised in parochial types of organizations. The ignorance of diversity precludes effective management of cultural differences and also precludes the possibility of minimizing negative impacts and increasing positive impacts of diversity.

**5. Minimize differences:** In this strategy, the managers recognize cultural differences but only as a source of problems. This strategy is mostly adopted by ethnocentric organizations. In such organizations, managers try to reduce the problems of differences by reducing cultural diversity. They do not think about the advantages of diversity. They try to either select a culturally homogenous workforce or attempt to socialize all employees into behaviour patterns of the dominant culture.

**6. Managing differences:** This strategy is adopted by synergistic organizations. These organizations recognize the impacts of cultural differences that lead to both advantages and disadvantages. The managers in synergistic organizations believe that "our way and

their way of believing and managing differ, but neither is superior to other". In this case, the managers and employees minimize potential problems by managing the impacts of cultural differences, not by minimizing the differences themselves. Similarly, managers maximize the potential advantages by managing the impacts of cultural differences rather than by ignoring them. The organizations which use the strategy of managing differences train their managers and employees to recognize the cultural differences and to use cultural differences to create advantages for the organizations.

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 comprehensive knowledge about the impacts of the culture on the international business and prepared with all sorts of precautionary actions to be successive. This requires: (a) Doing thorough market research; (b) Doing internal research to identify the cultural impacts among the employees (c) Adaptation to the differences; (d) Developing commonly accepted standards which to be followed by all the stakeholders of the business, and (e) Customization to a greater extent

Ongoing business between India and its global customers is, of course, perpetuated by mutual interest, but personal relationships are what make it possible. False rumours, supplier defaults, and customer cancellations are prevalent. Therefore, the greatest importance is assigned to contacts and business associates who can be fully trusted and whose culture-influenced perceptions are understood and predictable. Indian society is at least as ethnically and culturally diverse as that in Europe, and business practices are probably even more varied than in Europe.

#### **XVI. MEASURES TO AVOID CROSS-CULTURAL MARKETING BLUNDERS**

Marketing is what makes people in a new market aware of your product and convinces them to buy it. If you sell pharmaceutical products, having a presence in local magazines, on websites, and on television can push a potential customer to ask for your product at the doctor's office. But beyond where you advertise or promote your product, it's the language that helps you connect to people.

That's the case whether you're marketing in English, Telugu, Hungarian, or Finnish. Specifically, when marketing to an audience other than an American one, it is imperative that you understand what makes that audience tick. The language, message, and delivery may not be successful if it is a verbatim translation from the source text. That's where the input of a

marketer familiar with the target audience comes in handy.

#### **XVII. UNDERSTANDING NUANCES IN LANGUAGE**

It is much simpler to translate a technical document from English into another language than it is to translate marketing copy. Marketing tends to have a very stylized format and is subjunctive in how it is written and translated. Slogans and idiomatic expressions aren't always successfully translated. And the organizations can't overlook their product name. Chevy is an example of a cross-cultural marketing blunder. Just look at the old urban legend of Chevy selling its Nova car in Latin America...where it meant "no-go". It turns out this wasn't actually true, but it proves a point that knowing the audience and changing the names and copy so that organizations will be successful in a new market.

The tone and voice, too, are important considerations in marketing copy. In the United States, the organization might be able to reach an audience with a casual tone with their copy, but in Japan, where people are more formal, this might be offensive or a turnoff. The more a global firm invests in getting its messaging right from the start, the more successful its product launch and marketing campaign will be in the new market.

#### **XVIII. CONCLUSION**

The borderless economies all over the world are undoubtedly creating abundant business opportunities, but for market entry, survival and growth of a firm in global business require a thorough understanding of cultural differences to be the winner in the 21st Century markets. As the globalization process is widening, cultural differences are bound to be found in global markets.

Cross-cultural marketing is the strategic process of marketing among consumers whose culture is different from that of the marketer's own culture. Examples of the fundamental cultural aspects to be considered include social norms, values, language, education, religion, economic systems, business etiquette, laws, and style of living. Typically, cross-cultural marketing takes advantage of the ethnic group's different cultural norms to communicate to and persuade that audience.

This paper brought out the important cross-cultural differences and similarities that express the fact of cultural universals. It has covered a perspective on culture, culture elements, cross-cultural marketing, dimensions of cross-cultural differences, cross-cultural marketing blunders, and the practices to be performed

to overcome the challenges being faced by the organizations due to blunders and market differences. It has given specific examples of the impact of culture, society and marketing blunders on the global level marketing in the consumer products area.

In order to overcome cross-cultural differences and cross-cultural marketing blunders, this paper suggested solutions like understanding the foreign culture, languages of different countries, respect towards customers religion and culture, understanding nuances in language and must choose good translators to translate the organization products' slogan into other languages. By adopting all the above suggestions, the organizations can overcome cross-cultural marketing challenges globally.

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