Impact of Cultural Differences in Marketing on Buying Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Culture and differences in culture across the globe form an important aspect of marketing. One of the biggest factors that is taken into consideration by both marketing analysts and consumers is culture. Cultural Marketing, therefore, has gained importance as a way of marketing and market research. Especially when it comes to international trade and global marketing. The volatile nature of cultures as a concept makes it very difficult to predict the success or failure of a product or service. Cultural differences in marketing, therefore form the fundamental decision-making factors in the international marketing arena. This paper studies the consumers’ perception towards marketing strategies that align with their culture and the subsequent decisions they are likely to take based on these factions. Understanding this psychology is crucial to ensuring that a company can get a good return on its market investments while still generating a profit. Hence understanding the culture of a particular region before entering it is crucial and can play a huge role in the success of the company in that region.

Keywords-- Marketing, Buying Behaviour, Cultural Differences

I. INTRODUCTION

Marketing and advertising form one of the most important cruxes of business management. Marketing strategies and marketing management techniques have become highly evolved as a result of years of research and observation. Immense study and research go into formulating marketing strategies; a number of factors are taken into consideration and targeted marketing strategies are formulated for specific pools of audience. Buying behavior patterns and purchasing behavior are highly affected by these marketing strategies. One of the biggest factors that is taken into consideration by both marketing analysts and consumers is culture.

The culture in a region is generally identified by its language, social norms, food, geography, ethnic and social beliefs of the population in the region among other factors. These factors shape the consumer and his mindset. They are deeply rooted in his psychology and form one of the influencing factors for any and every decision he takes. His loyalty or affinity towards a brand, a product, a service is in some ways affected by this influence of culture.

Cultural Marketing, therefore, has gained importance as a way of marketing and market research. Especially when it comes to international trade and global marketing. Organizations need to conduct months of research and analysis the audience before they design their strategies to market and sell their goods and services. Cultural differences make this process much more complicated and complicated. The volatile nature of cultures as a concept makes it very difficult to predict the success or failure of a product or service. Cultural differences in marketing, therefore form the fundamental decision-making factors in the international marketing arena.

Cultural differences in marketing are perceived to be of the highest importance when launching goods or services internationally, as the cultural environment is different for every country. This process becomes even more complex and confusing when the target country is one with a vast area and high levels of diversity, such as India. The 29 Indian states each present their own culture, language, affinity, religious beliefs and opinions. This means that multinational companies have to go through the process of studying and understanding the culture of a specific state before launching a marketing strategy. In a country like India, it is a rare occurrence that a single marketing strategy works throughout the country. We see minor differences to major strategic changes in the same brand or product’s marketing strategies as we move across various states. This study aims at studying how these differences in the marketing strategies employed by companies fare with the consumers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture and Cultural differences form a crucial part of the marketing mix and play a vital role in influencing both consumer behavior and marketing decisions. The influence of culture and cultural differences has been highlighted as a major influencing factor by a number of authors. “Cultural differences in, and influences on consumers’ propensity to adopt innovations” a study conducted by the Department of Marketing, Norwegian School of Management, states that consumers come from large power distances and collectivistic cultures and can be convinced into adopting new products by the use of high interpersonal communication, especially that delivered in native languages. This paper takes into consideration new and innovative products and establishes the importance of culture specific marketing to convince the consumers to
try out new products using cultural factors to influence their decisions.

‘Consumer buying behavior: the roles of price, motivation, perceived culture importance, and religious orientation’ a paper written for the Journal of Business and Retail Management Research, Saudi Arabia analyses the interrelation between four important factors in consumer buying Behavior: price motivation, perceived culture importance, and religious orientation. The authors Mohamed Abdellatif Abu Auf, Houcine Meddour, Oussama Saoula, Abdul Halim, Abdul Majid pine that while price and motivation form the initial opinions of the consumers, the final decision of whether to purchase a product or not is made after taking into consideration the product’s portrayal of their religion and culture. The primal gap in this study remains the fact that its scope is limited to Saudi Arabia and a few Islamic nations. However, the paper goes a long way to influence the hypothesis that cultural differences affect purchase decisions when it states that a nation like Saudi Arabia, not very different from India in terms of the degree of cultural influence, makes its purchasing decisions with inputs from cultural factors.

A paper that further supports this stand is ‘Exploring the Impact of Culture and Acculturation on Consumer Purchase Decisions: Toward a Micro cultural Perspective’ by Denise T. Ogden, James R. Ogden and Hope Jensen Schau for the Academy of Marketing Science Review. This paper studies the relationship between culture, specifically what has been termed ethnicity, and its impact on consumer purchase decisions. Similar to the former paper, this study too is limited to the subcultures of the United States. A very diverse approach is presented by ‘When marketing strategy meets culture: the role of culture in product evaluations’, a study by Michel Laroche for Journal of Business Research covers the social aspect of cultures. It presents to cultures with respect to socialization, materialism, identity and religiosity and language effects. However, it focuses on culture centric communication strategies and does not explore much of the other aspects of a marketing campaign that affect consumer behavior.

‘An Exploratory Study About Culture and Marketing Strategy’ by Acar, Jeevan Madhusaka Premasara, Joahua Gle for the Asian Journal of Business Research showed that people from individualistic countries tend to choose differentiating and niche marketing strategies and people from long term orientation countries prefer focusing on the local market and take time to extend to new markets. However, this study did not measure cultural dimensions on the respondent level but just used country scores from Hofstede for each respondent. Moreover, the sample size of the study was too small.

‘Factors affecting consumer buying behavior’ by N Ramya and Dr. SA Mohamed AI for the International Journal of Applied Research 2016 analyses the role of culture in buying behavior among other factors. The Study is centered in India, takes into consideration food and geographical factors as opposed to language, morals and subculture, the major indicators of culture as perceived by a majority of consumers.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The following paper is a qualitative study of the topic ‘Cultural Differences in Marketing and their effect on Consumer Behavior. This paper analyses how the cultural differences in marketing affect buying behavior. It studies the consumers’ perception towards marketing strategies that align with their culture and the subsequent decisions they are likely to take based on these factions.

Research Design

The purpose of this research was to gain an in-depth understanding of the effect of cultural differences on buying behavior exhibited by consumers. It aims at understanding and studying the relationship between cultural differences, marketing and consumer behavior, and the effects of this relationship on their product choices, studying the factors that could potentially affect their decision making.

Data Collection

The presented study is exploratory in nature. The data used for this study is primary in nature. The primary data was collected from a population of young adults with a sample size of 100 pupils. The data was collected by way of an online survey. The reports published by the International Journal of Marketing, Indian Journal of Advertising and a number of independent studies form the basis of all the facts that have been presented in the Literature Review and across the study. The results obtained from the primary data collected by the researchers remain the access point of most of the studies that have been referred to while writing this paper.

Data Analysis

The paper is a qualitative study. As mentioned earlier, data was collected from a primary research questionnaire as well as papers and journal. This data was compiled and a content analysis was conducted. The views, points and inferences presented in this paper are the result of the said analysis.

Justification

Cultures across regions and their influence on consumer mindset in nations are highly complex and encompass a number of factors. Therefore, a qualitative analysis based on the previous studies conducted justifies the purpose of this study; to understand these indicators that help companies chalk out their marketing strategies. It enables the researchers to conduct an in-depth study of the consumers’ perception towards the differences in marketing strategies and form their own opinion, conclusions and inferences about the topic.
IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

As the literature review states and identifies, culture and cultural differences form a crucial factor in a consumer’s decision-making process. The marketing mix designed by companies is often created taking into account these cultural differences. Campaigns are altered, marketing strategies are modified and the campaigns are tailored to align with the culture, social construct and consumer beliefs in the particular target market. The researchers wish to identify whether these cultural differences influence our fundamental decisions of whether to buy a product or not, whether to stay loyal to a brand or service or not, based on how they interpret or present our culture. Thus, this study aims at understanding what kind of influence does a brand or product’s interpretation of presentation have on their potential consumers’ buying behavior. It analyses the extent of negative and positive effects the adoption of cultural marketing has on their sales and the consumers’ loyalty towards the brand.

Thus, the study aims to fulfil the following objectives:

- To identify whether cultural differences in marketing affect the buying behavior of consumers
- To identify whether the use of culture and portrayal of region or nation specific culture marketing strategies increase the affinity of the consumers towards the product or the brand
- Furthermore, the study also wishes to analyze what are the factors that consumers consider as a portrayal of their culture and the usage of which factors while creating marketing strategies which influence their purchase decisions or their affinity towards a product or a brand.

Thus, the researchers identify the following objective:

To analyze which of the below factors are the most likely to affect the consumer’s purchasing decision or brand loyalty.

1. Language
2. Brand Image (Psychological portrayal of culture)
3. Morals
4. Visuals
5. Audio

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This primary data was collected from a population of adults with a sample size of 107 pupils. The data was collected by way of an online survey. Survey is a research technique where data is collected from a sample of people through their responses to questions. Various questions in relevance to cultural impact on consumer buying behavior were asked in this survey. Following are the questions that were included in the survey and a comprehensive analysis of the answers given by the participants. The response to each question is depicted in form of a pie chart or bar graphs, as relevant to the data to be presented.

I. Question: Do you think the use of culture in ads influences its credibility?

![Figure 1](image)

The above chart shows that nearly 68.2% of the respondents believe that the use of culture in advertisements influences its credibility while 28% are skeptical about this and think that use of culture might have an impact on the credibility while only 3% of people do not think so. This shows that people tend to rely and relate to those advertisements which depict their culture and takes in perspective their cultural aspects and values and are most likely to trust a brand that uses their culture in the advertisements.
2. Question: To what extent do you take into consideration, the society beliefs while shopping for a product?

The above bar chart shows that the majority of the respondents (67.3%) take in consideration the society beliefs while shopping for a product while 32.7% of the people say that the society beliefs doesn't affect their choice of product while shopping. This shows that the majority of people consider the society norms, values and beliefs and accordingly make a choice while shopping. People are more likely to buy products on the recommendation of their family, friends and peers. This means the brands should study the general beliefs and ideas of people of a particular society before entering the market so that people are able to relate more to their brand.

3. Question: to what extent do you believe culture specific marketing by products (language, food preferences, clothing, geographical factors, etc.) influence our choices?

The above graph shows that the majority of the respondents, nearly 90.7% of them believe that culture specific marketing by products like ads aligning with the language, food preferences, clothing, geographical factors, etc. of their culture influences the choices they make while only 9.3% of the respondent don’t believe so. This shows cultural aspects specific to their culture like the language, food, clothing, festivals, etc. effect how much they can connect with the brand and how well can they comprehend the message and relate with it. Hence, for successful marketing, brands must take into account these aspects while entering a new market.

4. Question: How likely are you to buy a product if the advertisement uses regional languages or references?

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The above graph shows that majority of the respondents that is 65.7% of people think that they are more likely to buy a product if the advertisements use their regional language or references and only 24.3% of the people think that this factor does not have an effect on their decision, This means that people are more likely to relate with the ads which use their regional language and preferences as people are influenced by their mother tongue and culture and it is easier for them to understand the message that the advertisements aims to give and helps them comprehend it in a better way.

5. Question: How likely are you to withdraw from purchasing a brand which somehow misinterpreted your culture?

![Figure 5](image_url)

The above graph provides the information that nearly 48.6% of people say that they are very likely to withdraw from purchasing a brand if it misrepresented their culture, while 37.4% people say that there is a very less chance that they will withdraw from purchasing that brand and 14% responds are unsure if they would do so. This shows that majority of the people would get offended if their culture is misrepresented or displayed in a wrong manner as the culture and heritage of a person is of importance to them as it is a part of their identity and would stop buying from a brand which does so. Thus, companies should do thorough research before launching their marketing campaigns and products in order to avoid misrepresentation.

6. Question: Would you prefer to buy a product you previously did not buy if it changes its marketing style to highlighting your culture and region?

![Figure 6](image_url)

The above chart shows that nearly 29.9% of the respondents would prefer to buy a product they previously did not buy if it changes its marketing style to highlight their culture and region, while 50.5% of the respondents say that maybe it would have an impact on them and 19.6% of them say that this would have no effect on them. This shows that the majority of the population is attracted to and prefers the marketing campaign which depicts their own culture as it makes it more credible and easier to relate with and would change their response to a product if it highlights their culture.
7. **Question:** How likely are you to relate to an international product if the advertisement and promotions are done in your native language or Hindi?

The above graph shows majority of the people i.e., 81.5% say that they are more likely to relate to an international product if the advertisement and promotions are done in their native language or Hindi while only 16.8% people don’t think so. This shows the importance of using language as a tool to reach out to your potential customers as people are more likely to understand the message that is being conveyed by the brand in a better manner as people are influenced by their mother tongue and culture and it is easier for them to understand the message that the advertisements aim to give and helps them comprehend it in a better way.

8. **Question:** How likely are you to shop from a brand which is internationally established but does not take in consideration your cultural values?

The above graph shows that nearly 29.9% of the respondents say that they are likely to buy from a brand which is internationally established but does not take in consideration your cultural values while 43% say that maybe they would buy and 17.1% of the people say that they would not buy from such brand. This shows that in the case of an internationally established brand, people would take into consideration the image of the brand and how it’s trusted and well known worldwide is more important to them than if the brand takes into consideration their cultural values and hence culture is not very significant influence on consumer when it comes to well established brands.

9. **Question:** Would you prefer to spend a little extra money on a particular product because you relate to the advertisement from a cultural perspective?

![Figure 9](image_url)
The above pie chart shows that nearly 32.7% of the respondents would spend a little extra money on a particular product because they relate to the advertisement from a cultural perspective while 33.6% say maybe they would spend extra and 33.6% say they would not spend extra. This shows that people are willing to pay extra for a product because they can easily relate with the product and can trust that product more if it aligns with their culture and customs. This means that people generally spend more on products that they trust and relate with.

10. Question: What are the cultural factors you relate to when looking at an advertisement/product packaging?

![Figure 10](image)

This above graph gives us a comprehensive analysis of what cultural factors do people relate with the most when looking at an advertisement/product packaging. Nearly 40.2% of people relate to ads when ads are presented via their native language. 54.2% of the people rely on the brand image and if it portrays their culture. 41.4% of the people say they relate more to the morals of the brand that is if the marketing aligns with their cultural beliefs. 52.5% of the people relate more when the colors, writing style, visuals portray their culture and are appealing to their eye. 27.1% of the people relate to the audio used in the ads that is when the music, background score (in case of advertisements) portrays their culture and region while 16.8% of people say that none of the above factors influence them. This shows that language, morals and visuals are important factors to consider while advertising a product.

11. Question: A brand/product you previously related to revamped itself and no longer aligns itself to your culture. How likely is your loyalty to the brand to be affected?

![Figure 11](image)

The above graph shows that 39.3% of people say that their loyalty towards a brand would be highly affected if a brand they earlier related to revamped itself and no longer aligns itself to their culture while 31.6% of the people say their loyalty might get affected. 29% of the respondents say that it would have very less or no effect on their loyalty. This means that people change their preferences when the product or service no longer aligns with their culture and hence, they cannot relate to it anymore. This shows that customer loyalty towards a brand keeps changing and those cultural aspects can have a huge impact their loyalty towards a brand.
VI. MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

One aspect of a company’s globalisation strategy that sticks out is the necessity to interact with customers. A consumer is more than an asset to a corporation; he is a metric by which that firm can assess its market success. This is why it’s critical to understand consumer behaviour, as well as the elements that influence it. So, it is important that companies consider that their campaigns are altered, marketing strategies are modified and the campaigns are tailored to align with the culture, social construct and consumer beliefs in the particular target market.

This research focused on studying what kind of influence does a brand or product’s interpretation of presentation have on their potential consumers’ buying behaviour and the extent of negative and positive effects the adoption of cultural marketing has on their sales and the consumers’ loyalty towards the brand. It focused on identifying how cultural differences in marketing affect the buying behaviour of consumers. Through a thorough analysis of the survey conducted it was found that individual purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by cultural variables. Every person develops his or her own set of behaviours, beliefs, and ideals based on his or her surroundings and upbringing. It was concluded that people tend to rely and relate to those advertisements which depict their culture and takes in perspective their cultural aspects and values and are most likely to trust such a brand. It was found that the majority of people consider the society norms, values and beliefs and accordingly make a choice while shopping and are likely to buy products on the recommendation of their family, friends and peers. It was discovered that people are more likely to relate with the ads which use their regional language and preferences, food, clothing, festivals, etc. because it helps them to understand and comprehend the message in the ads in a better way. It was also found that people prefer the marketing campaign which depicts their own culture as it makes it more credible and easy to relate with and would change their response to a product in a positive way if it highlights their culture and would change. It was found that culture is not a very significant influence on consumers when it comes to well established brands. It also showed that people are willing to pay extra for a product because they can easily relate with the product and can trust that product more if it aligns with their culture and customs. Also, cultural aspects like language, morals and visuals are the main aspects that consumers relate to the most when looking at an advertisement/product packaging. It was also comprehended that customer loyalty towards a brand keeps changing and that cultural aspects can have a huge impact on their loyalty towards a brand and that people change their preferences when the product or service no longer aligns with their culture and hence, they cannot relate to it anymore.

Overall, it can be concluded that culture is the most important aspect that a company should research and do a thorough study of when aiming to enter a new market so that they can align their marketing strategies and products accordingly. They should specially consider the general beliefs and ideas of people of a particular society before entering the market as it has a great influence on consumers. For successful marketing, the brands should consider cultural aspects specific to that particular culture like the language, food, clothing, festivals, etc. so that people can relate to advertisements in a better way and makes it more appealing to the consumers.

The bottom line is that there are significant disparities in consumer preferences based on cultural backgrounds. Companies must be aware of these distinctions, particularly if they intend to sell items in a new region or country. Understanding these distinctions is crucial to ensuring that a company can get a good return on its market investments while still generating a profit. Hence understanding the culture of a particular region before entering it is crucial and can play a huge role in the success of the company in that region.

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