

CULTURAL DIAGNOSIS AND BYPASSING; THE EFFECT ON SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Globalization and its effect on business continue to propel firms to look beyond local markets for opportunities for market development and as a source of growth. However, Cultural differences in various markets continue to exert enormous pressure on international market operations as a result of cultural bypassing or misdiagnosis and this requires international marketers to undertake robust cultural analysis to ensure successful market servicing strategies. This paper reviews and discusses the crucial role of culture in successful internationalization; key reviews of marketing strategies and failures of some major corporations presented, cultural analytical frameworks have been evaluated and novel theoretical propositions made to segment cultural elements into soft and hard cultures. The paper provides a logical step approach framework to guide the international market practitioners analyzing foreign market cultures.

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KEYWORDS: International marketing, Culture, Diagnosis, Market failures, Soft and hard culture

INTRODUCTION

The role and influence of culture to international business operations is paramount in a globalized environment where consumers are more informed and discerning than ever before. The cultural dispositions and grounding of individual consumers affect their attitude and behavior towards a product or service. The environment in which the individual or group socialized affects the attitude and behavior (Zeenat 2011). However, numerous firms continue to misdiagnose, bypass or fail to consider the cultural implications of their international marketing decisions leading to preventable market failures.

Many researchers in the area have acknowledged the critical place of culture in the successful internationalization of firms and brands. Wilson & Gilligan (1997) confirms that the most fundamental and indeed closest influencing force on behavior is the culture of a people which proves to be the most enduring. Similarly, Subhashini (2007) noted that the dimensions considered in shopper behavior in India do not only examine the individual motivations but also the cultural differences that influence shopper behavior. Culture consists of the values, beliefs, and norms of a society and they represent the most influential factor to a successful product launch or failure (Young & Javalgi 2007).

Many companies consider new market development as a strategic growth path (Ansoff, 1957) and mostly they see the development of international markets as the fastest means of growth or expansion.

The process leading to internationalization would be clearer and less cumbersome if international market operators appreciate the fact that markets are not the same in terms of consumer profiling and behavior and that it is rare to transfer wholesale what pertains in the local markets into the foreign markets. As Kotler (1988) cited by Wilson & Gilligan (1997) suggest that, human behavior is largely a result of cultural socialization leading to the development of set of values, perceptions, preferences and behavior. It has been suggested that the marketer's main focus in the internationalization process is to understand the similarities and differences in cultural norms and values and to adapt their offering to suit the differences and similarities (Keegan, 2002). Further, social values and the culture of that society influence international marketing is strongly (Papadopoulos, Zikmund and d'Amico, 1988). Following from the above role that culture plays in the internationalization process, a critical cultural examination and

analysis is very crucial for any firm going international. The accurate analysis and diagnosis of the foreign market culture enhances the effective delivery and success rates in the foreign market operations.

In spite of the undisputed critical role of cultural values to successful internationalization of brands, there has been several complete brand failures as a consequence of cultural bypassing (CB) either inadequate research into the cultural norms and values of the foreign market or completely ignoring culture as a critical factor in the successful internationalization process. Very little empirical research exists testing the influence of culture in international marketing.

There have been several reports of international market failures because of cultural misdiagnosis (CMD) or cultural bypassing (CB) captured in various literature on international marketing. This has not influenced international marketing operations, as there has not been any systematic review and classifications of such failures into source documents on cultural failures within the marketing elements structure, where potential international marketers and academics can review these failures in a comprehensive manner with the objective of avoiding similar mistakes in international marketing operations. This paper seeks to explore this very important subject matter and bring to fore the crucial need for in-depth information on cultural failures.

Prior researchers in this area (Durand & Durand 1968, Van Fleet 1973, Ricks 1983, Shanklin 1986, Makridakis 1991, Garry Knight 1995, Dalgic & Heijblom 1996) have concentrated on general international market failures and mistakes with little attention on culture only as a major area of likely international failures. Pepsi in Japan with slogan 'come alive with Pepsi' was interpreted by the Japanese to mean 'bring back your dead ancestors with Pepsi' The fact that there continue to be terribly avoidable cultural mistakes in recent times makes the case for this study even more critical in the international marketing operations literature.

The study focused on most recent cases as a means of adding to the previously published ones and has examine the value of culture in the international marketing operations, identified and discuss major failures in international market as a result of practitioners bypassing cultural values and norms and the effect on the marketing mix elements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Taylor cited by Crown Lee (1999) defines culture as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society'. Lackman, Hanson and Lianas (1997) in their exposition on culture of societies include language, rituals, technology, and style of dress, ways of producing, food, religion and political and economic systems in a particular society. The consumer's attitude towards a product, service or any object is thus the culmination of his experiences because of socialization within the socio-cultural environment. As Kotler (1988) put it, because of the influence they exert on buyer behavior, it is pertinent that much effort is devoted to understand how culture and society interact and ultimately influence purchase behavior. Wilson and Gilligan (1997) in a similar vein observes that an individual's behavior is largely as a result of a learning process and as such individuals grow with a certain set of values, beliefs and perceptions that direct their attitudes and behavioral patterns in society. Empirical studies have provided evidence of some cultural dimensions including; man's relations to nature, time, personal activity and the others around the environment influencing the consumer behavior especially in high involvement decision process (Henry, 1976).

Schiffman and Kanuk (1983) cited by Wilson and Gilligan (1997) collaborate this by indicating that the individual develops a sense of achievement, individualism, freedom of action, success, efficiency, humanitarianism and these are the key drivers of behavior. The fundamentality and influence of culture

in the behavioral exhibits of the individual is thus an ingrained factor established and cannot be underestimated in the study and practice of international business operations. (Hollensen 2007) indicates that, there are variations in cultural beliefs and values across foreign markets and cultural issues are of significance in terms of impact on the acceptability and adoption of a product or service and the accompanying marketing mix elements in the international market.

Slowikowski & Jarratt (1997) in their study to understand the impact of culture on the adoption on high technology products between migrant Vietnamese and Polish in Australia found that culture especially beliefs, religion and fatality had a very strong compelling role in the adoption of high technology products. Similarly, the impact of cultural affected Disney world strongly when they transferred their strictly no alcoholic policy without adaptation into the French market. The French resisted the policy in a culture where wine was part of the daily meals and fun (Hollensen, 2007).

In a similar vein William(1991) cited by Slowikowski and Jarratt(1979) indicated that firms continue to establish global harmony in consumer taste in their manufacturing and marketing for economies of scale, but these consumers react differently as the various economies, geography, religions and historical antecedence differ. Zakaria and Abdul-Talib (2010) notes that national culture which underlines employee cultural values, beliefs and attitudes have remarkable impact on firms' performance and hence should not be undermined. Many research work points to the importance and influence of culture in international marketing operations (Douglas and Dubois, 1977; Munson and McIntyre, 1979) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Attributes of Culture

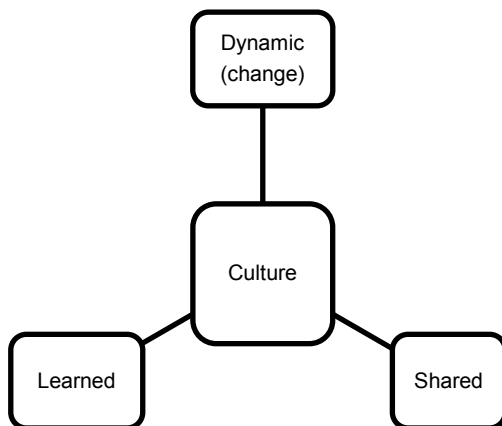


Figure 1 describes the key attributes on which culture is grounded and based on which individuals and societies are socialized and shaped

Culture has attributes and characteristics that make it a unique phenomenon and enduring in societies. People in a society through experience and individual education learn culture (Granot, 1996). The socialization of individuals into various cultures from their early lives through norms, values, beliefs, customs and attitudes accepted in that society impact on behavior. From generations to generations, societies passed down culture. . The learning process makes these attributes enduring and guides individuals in their decision making process.

The international marketer should explore to understand what is learned and enduring in any market with the objective of adapting to those values to influence positively the consumers' perception towards the product or service. Amongst a group of people they share culture also defined as knowledge shared by a society (Romney, 1999); Garcia, et al., 2004). Culture thus permeates a society and it is consistent with members of that community. Garcia et.al.(2004) notes that the people in a particular society view and

interpret values, norms and traditions in a similar manner Individuals believe and share in the ideals of culture.

Culture is also dynamic (Yaprak, 2008). It is not static and changes from time to time although they are enduring. Cultural changes take time to unfold and the values and norms subject themselves to environmental conditions such as technology, education, communication, science and research without losing their core meanings to the society. As Volkman, (2006) puts it; rich and robust traditions will continue to flourish even in the global market storms. Nakata, (2003) argues that whilst cultures may be enduring, individuals in society may construct and reconstruct their beliefs and perceptions, attitudes of norms and values in the light of changing circumstances and globalization. This changing nature of culture means that international marketer must develop systems and structures that will consistently measure and evaluate any shifts in cultural values especially non -core values and norms. Various elements make up culture worth exploring, Carter (2002) intimate that any comprehensive analogy of culture must encompass the elements encapsulated in societal practices material and immaterial. These elements include; language, religion, values and attitudes, education, social organization, materials culture, law, politics and aesthetics (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Elements of Culture

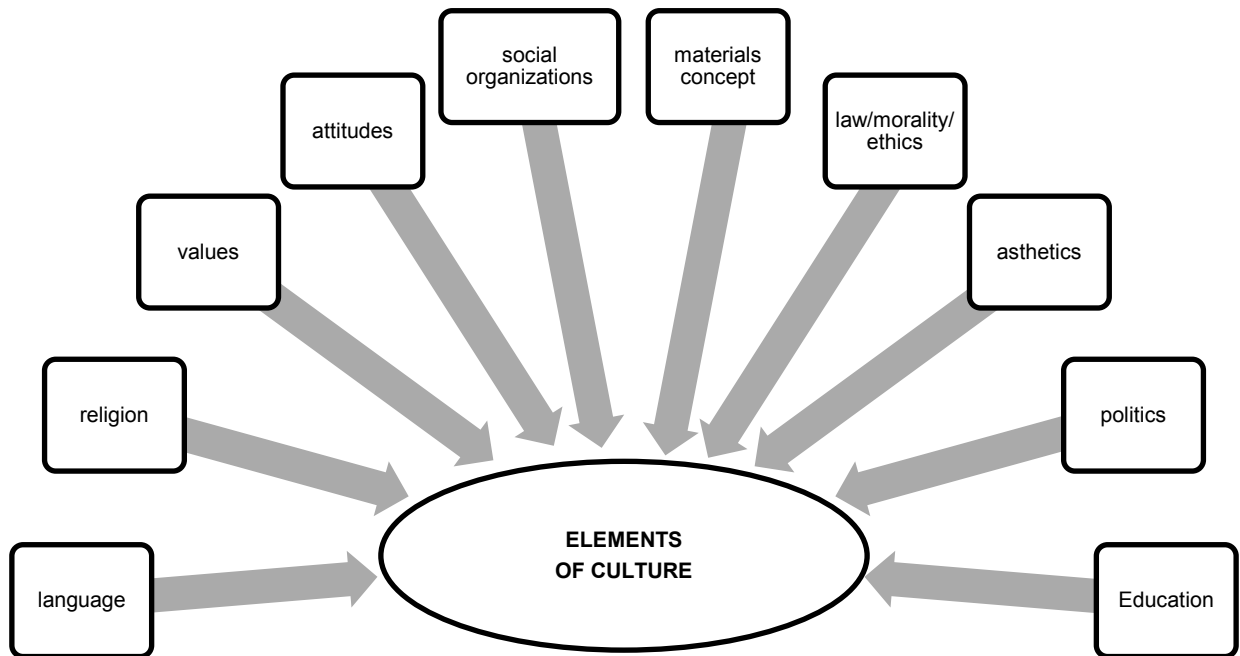


Figure 2- Depicts the key elements of culture that require critical attention in examining foreign market cultures.

The language of a people is the fundamental medium for information exchange. They are unique and the meanings of words in one market may be unbelievably different from that of another market (Freitag , 2005). International marketing practitioners have the arduous task of ensuring that the meanings of words are clear before using them in foreign markets. In the Frafra language in Northern Ghana the word ‘Calabar’ means a prostitute with negative associations while the same word is a city in Cross River State in Nigeria.

The famous Kentucky Fried chicken slogan; ‘finger-licking good’ was misinterpreted as ‘eat your fingers off’ in Chinese (Freitag, 2005). American Chevrolet also suffered a similar international failure when they bypassed language culture and marketed their Chevy NOVA in the Mexican market which indeed meant

‘does not move or does not go’ (Ingram, 2001). These earlier failures of respected multinational firms indicate the severity of the cultural situation, which persists even in the 21st century.

Another critical element of culture worth examining in international market diagnosis is religion. It establishes the belief in a supreme being controlling the laws of life and humanity and thus impact on the behavior of individuals and societies as a whole. Religion involves sacrifices, practices, norms, laws; ethics and morality of human living that distinguish one people from the other.

In India for example, the people of the Hindu religion taboos the cow for food because it is seen as their totem that guides them and gives them luck in their daily lives. Similarly, in some African traditional religions a woman in her menstrual period cannot serve food to the husband and therefore must stay away until it is over. In the Islamic religion women are expected to cover their bodies in public and have very little role to play in decision making in the home.

These practices are important to understand the movement from one market to the other in order to determine their impact on consumer perceptions attitude and behavior towards a product or service. Babakus et al. (2004), in their research to establish reactions to unethical behaviors across cultures found that religion was a critical predictor of consumer ethical perceptions and behavior. Religion also dominates the determinant of individuals’ beliefs and value systems. Safire Mokhlis(2009) in his research on religiosity and consumer behavior established that shopper behavior was widely influenced by their religion.

Vassilikopoulou, Siomkos and Mylonaksi (2006) established that there was a difference in consumer behavior patterns between Muslims and Christians when they researched the impact of micro culture on consumer behavior in Greece. The research also confirmed the differences between the two groups in their perception of ideal stores to shop and their buying selection criteria.

Values systems and attitudes components of different cultures have also been found to impact greatly in the international marketing operations and behaviors (Belk, 1985 and Hofstede, 1997 cited by (Luna and Gupta, 2001). Values are one common set of cultural factors reoccurring in most literature as influencing social organizations, conventions, habits, communication systems, roles and status in society.

Cultural values differ from one society to the other and they constitute the beliefs, norms, ways of life, concepts of what is relevant and what is not, moral values and ethics accepted and practiced by a society or group of people (Slowikowski and Jarratt, 1997; Vassilikopoulou et.al 2006). Henry 1976 established that cultural values play a crucial role in shaping the individual attitudes and final behavior in his study of the automobile market in America.

Other cultural established to impact on international marketing operations are the materials culture and aesthetics. Aesthetics relates to the concept of a people on art, color, shapes, clothing, artifacts, any other material aspects of life that adds value to the society’s appreciations of products and services. O’neal(1998) refers to aesthetics as the study of human reaction to the non-instrumental qualities of an object or occurrence.

Aesthetics provide consumers with various dimensions emotionally, physical experience and evaluative values to determine the quality of apparel (De-Long, 1998) cited by M de Klerk and Lubbe, 2004). Moving into another market may require a better understanding of the aesthetic culture of the market in order to satisfy their expectations.

Social organizations in culture including; status, class, social distance, family structures, subordinate-superior relationships are very important in international business operations. Whereas some societies

hold them against an individual because of class societies, others do not consider social organization as a serious barrier to doing business internationally. In most Arabic countries, women do not shake hands with men and most countries such as Nigeria where there is power distance; subordinates take instructions strictly from their superiors and cannot take decisions on their own.

Culture is a learned disposition of the individual acquired from generations to generations. It is a learned behavioral pattern. (www.anthro.palomar.edu). Culture thus influences the perceptions and beliefs of the individual about objects. Beliefs are the knowledge and inferences an individual hold about an object, product, service or society (Mowen and Minor (2000).

These beliefs serve as the pillars for the formation of attitudes, which eventually expresses overtly in behavior towards the object in a linear manner. Hernandez, et al. (2008) confirmed the positive effects of cultural beliefs on consumer behavior in their study of superstitious beliefs on consumer novelty and independent judgment in China. Marketers must seek to influence the perceptions and beliefs about their offerings in order to balance the hierarchy of effect in consumer decision making.

The variability of the international marketplace requires firm and robust structures and frameworks to diagnose and comprehend behavior. The influence of culture on behavior is acceptably very strong and no single framework has been adequate in clearly analyzing culture completely. This perhaps accounts for the continuous grievous mistakes and failures in international market operations. This notwithstanding, many researchers have developed sustainable frameworks to serve as tools for international market analysis for decision-making.

Hofstede (1980) led the path by initiating the literature and discussions on the cultural frameworks in international market research and diagnosis. Others however preceded his work like Hall (1976) who classified culture into two broad segments of low and high context cultures based on how different cultures communicate information and the considerations placed on meanings and interpretation. A large amount of research undertaken in this rather important aspect of international marketing, (Fiske, 1992; Trompenaars, 1993; Triandis, 1994); House et al., 2004). These studies have sought to improve and develop on the weaknesses of the Hofstede's model (1980) (Figure 3).

Whereas all these models and frameworks have in one way or the other contributed to the development of the international marketing discipline, there are no common approaches for their application in analyzing the culture of potential markets. They represent the informational component in the analytics and serve as guides for international market operators and do not direct the approaches and methodologies for analyzing the information for decisions, leaving practitioners to their own manipulations, thus generating the need to have practical based approaches for international cultural analysis for to avoid failures.

METHODOLOGY

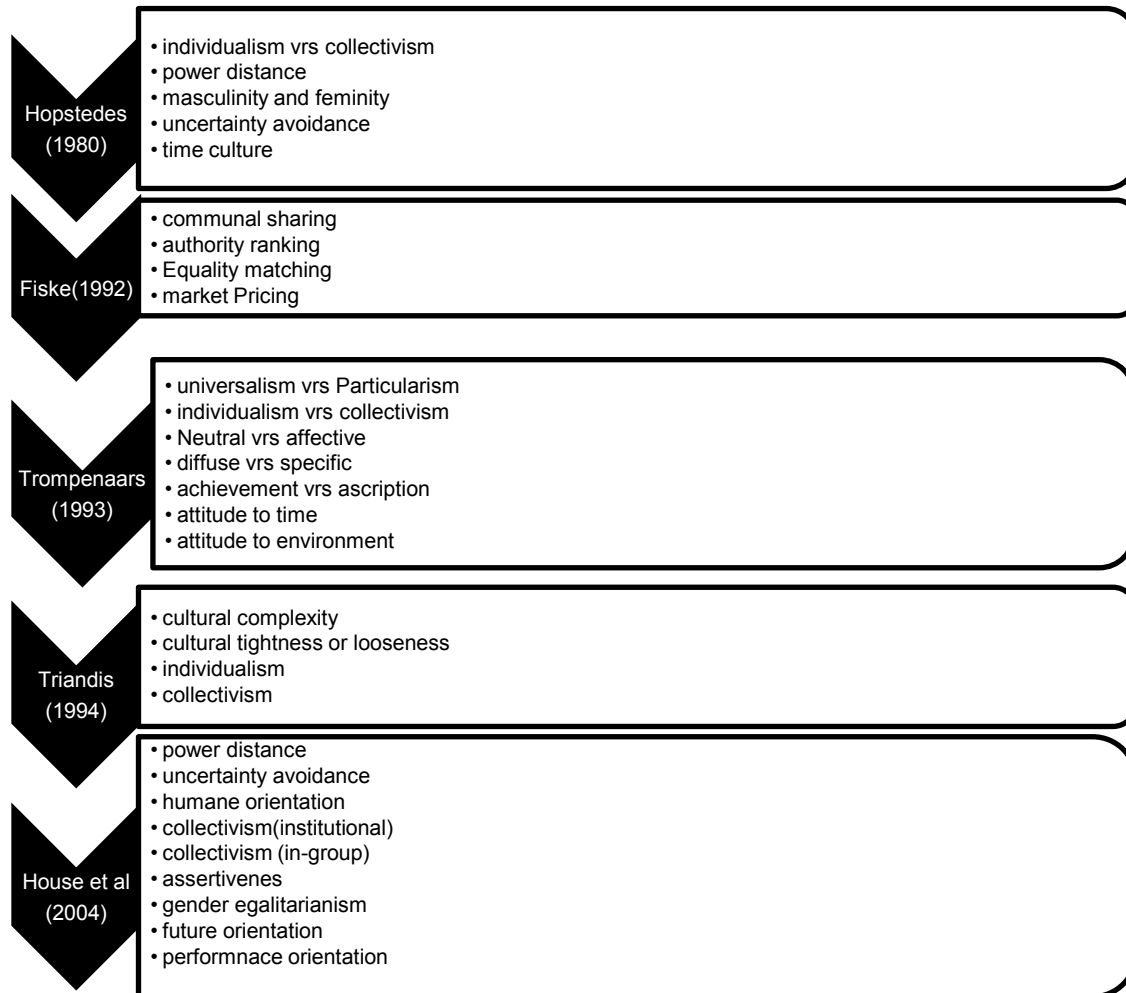
The research adopts a secondary research method for the purposes of this research. This involved the use of desk review to collate and analyze some major international marketing cases and literature on culture and foreign market failures resulting from cultural bypassing (CB) or cultural misdiagnosis (CMD).

The main sources of the information generated from the desk review are the academic journals, the World Wide Web using search engines, books and other electronic sources. The desk review covered the key areas in international marketing mix decisions of product, price, place, promotion and people. (53) literature sources reviewed including 36 peer-reviewed articles on culture, five (5) websites, twelve (12) books and magazines.

Selected cases cover global businesses mostly in developed countries as most firms in developing countries may have mostly primary commodities for the international market. Thirteen (13) multinational

firms reviewed with one diplomatic case and a personal service product. The cases selected also ranged from brand name failures, promotions, personal selling, product, pricing to cover most parts of the marketing mix elements.

Figure 3: Cultural Diagnostic Frameworks-(CDF)



A framework depicting chronologically some of the major research works done in the area of cultural analysis and the variables therein that separates different cultures on those bases.

RESULTS

A review of the literature and documents in the subject matter in this paper has revealed serious failures and blunders from diplomacy to global businesses. Some of the most recent and interesting cases have been articulated here as lessons for international market operators to consider in order to avoid repetition. Four basic categories and sections presented for easy review.

Brand Name/Product Failures

Case 1: In the year 2003, the Japanese government named the country's diplomat called Takauchi Kumamoto and the wife Kunyamavi Kayashika as an Ambassador and posted to Tanzania in Africa. The

Tanzanian government immediately protested the posting of the Ambassador and the wife to that country and they were immediately withdrawn from Tanzania. The Tanzanian government made it clear that the protest had nothing to do with the personality and the wife (the products) but their names were very offensive to the people of Tanzania. The name Kumamoto means something very vulgar on the female genitals in Swahili, while the name of the spouse Kunyamavi was also uncomfortable. The country immediately recalled and replaced the diplomats. This avoidable mistake is a result of language cultural diagnosis. Which the Japanese government failed to consider in the personality names (brand).

Case 2: In 2002, Unbro a British sportswear and kit manufacturer based in Manchester UK received many protest on its shoe brand Zyklon. Apparently, the word Zyklon bears the same name as the lethal gas used by Naxis in the concentration camps during the Second World War to extinguish enemies. The company withdrew the brand and apologized for the name used for the brand. Following this withdrawal, BBC news reported that Bosch Siemens Huasgeraete was withdrawing their applications to register the name Zyklon for its own products to avoid any protest.

Case 3: The Hershey Company, incorporated in 1927 is a manufacturer of chocolate and sugar confectionery products for global markets. In the early 1990's, the Hershey company introduced on the Japanese market a Chocolate named Mr. Good chocolate bar made of peanuts and chocolate. Consumers in Japan avoided this as Japanese believe that chocolate and peanuts cause nose bleeding. Sales of the chocolate dwindled because of this cultural belief about peanuts and chocolate.

Case 4: In the year 2003, the General Motors Corporation organized a focus group discussion on its new car the Buick Lacrosse introduce into Quebec, the French speaking part of Canada. During the discussions moderators realized that most of the young adults were laughing and giggling. When they found out, the name Lacrosse was the French slang for masturbation or Just got screwed or just got taken which embarrassed the General Motors officials. They decided to hold the name and to rename the car. It later became Allure in Canada.

Case 5: Honda Motors in 2001 introduced a new brand Honda Fitta in the Nordic countries but quickly re-named the brand to Honda Jazz as the name Fitta was a slang, which meant the woman genitals in Swedish, Norwegian and Danish. This is an obvious case of cultural bypassing in the selection of the brand name for the car. There was no proper cultural diagnosis in the Scandinavian market done to avoid such a grievous mistake.

Case 6: The Indian market is quite huge with a population over one billion. This markets size seems to cloud the judgment of many marketers entering that market. This is what happened to Kellogs breakfast cereal in 1994. They entered the market with big optimism that the figures represent the best market for their product in numbers. However, after entering the market, the demand for the product was sluggish and did not meet their expectations. The officials of Kellog had lost site of the Indian breakfast eating habit and culture that really promoted the consumption of hot vegetables in the morning. The company has since marketed its brand with an additional objective of changing the Indian breakfast eating habits endured for years. They have had to promote the brand name strongly to introduction other Kellog products into that market.

Case 7: A European hardware chain store Gotzen opened a branch in Istanbul Turkey. Little did the company know that the name Got means ass in Turkist. The company immediately changed its chain name to Tekzen that has since become one of the largest chain stores in Turkey.

Case 8: Euro Disney suffered cultural backlash and made losses for two years before making some profits in the French market. The company had operated successfully in California, Florida and Tokyo on a no alcohol policy in all its sites. This policy implemented without any regard to the French culture, which

encouraged a glass of wine after meals when the amusement park opened in Paris in 1992. By the end of 1993, the company had to amend this strictly no alcohol policy, which saw the attendance and patronage increase. Although the initial failures cannot be totally attributed to culture only it was a major factor in this case.

Promotional Failures

Case 9: At the introduction of Coca Cola in China, the translation of the name in Chinese read Ke-Ke-ken-la, which meant bite the wax tadpole or female horse staff with wax. Promotional materials sent out extensively. The company did not realize it until a research commissioned on the brand revealed the negative and the translations changed to Ko-kou-ko-le, which means happiness in the can or the mouth.

Case 10: During the 1994 world cup, associated press reported that two major firms (Coca Cola and MacDonalds) suffered cultural failures when they had to cease the production and circulation of some marketing material meant for the world cup promotion. Whilst Coca Cola placed the flags of all the participating teams on a can of soda, MacDonald has placed the flags of all the participating teams on a carry out bag, which included the flag of Saudi Arabia. The inclusion of the Saudi Arabian flag drew the attention of the Muslim communities who protested against the use of the Saudi Arabian flag, which contains the Shahada professing the Islamic faith. The act considered by Muslims, as desecration of the flag and the companies had to halt further production of these paraphernalia.

Case 11: In 1994, the telecommunications company Orange had a serious criticism of its promotional theme in Ireland dominated by the Catholic faithful. The company ran a promotion, which stated ‘the future is bright, the future is orange’; this interpreted to mean the future of Ireland lay in the ‘orange order’ that is a protestant religious sect group. This angered the catholic community and the company had to change the promotional theme to suit the Catholic dominated Northern Ireland (www.il8guy.com)

Case 12: Samarin is a Swedish over the counter stomach upset reliever produced by Cederroth Company. When the product print adverts was run in Arabic newspapers, the product sales did not pickup. The reason was very simple, Arabs read traditionally from right to left and not left to right so the pictures that depicted the product usage was negative in the Arabian reading sense.

Scenes 1: A man seen holding his stomach with pain

Scene 2: A man seen drinking Samarin

Scene3: A man seen happily jumping and smiling

From the Arabic reading community, it will read like this:

Scene1. A man seen jumping and smiling

Scene2. A man seen drinking Samarin

Scene3. A man seen holding his stomach in pain.

This is totally the inverse of the intent of the communication, as the message was negative and hence affected the brand sales performance.

Case 13: A Latin American country had decided to improve its communications network, because of the magnitude of the work they invited an American company to pitch for the business. The American firm decided to send their senior sales manager from home instead of their regular Latin American representative. On his arrival, the American Trade Attaché coached him on the way Latin Americans do business. The sales Manager failed to secure the contract although in spite of the thorough brief.

The reason was indeed very intriguing, in Latin America business is done based on trust and relationship, they never in a hurry to negotiate business, they spend most of the time building relationship with the potential supplier and will call for business when they are ready.

The Sales Manager spent days drinking tea, touring historical sites and having wines with the Minister in Charge of the contract without discussing a bit of the business. The Sales Manager became impatient after days and when the Minister showed him a statue and said “there stands the most cherished and greatest hero in the world, the liberator of mankind”, the Sales Manager at this time could not hide his frustration and asked the name of the person. When told, he remarked, “I have never heard about him” and then walked on. This conduct of the Sale Manager offended the Minister and this was the last time the Sales Manager saw the Minister, the contract went to a Swedish firm. The American sales manager failed to recognize the way the Latin American country does business and lost the contract because of cultural bypassing.

Pricing Failures

Case 14: The pricing strategies of countries and cultures differ. An America Business school Professor was said to be negotiating the terms of his visiting professorship contract with a University in Africa. He was not used to the negotiating tactics of the African country and almost lost the job because he thought the negotiation culture of the University was very ‘insulting’ and lack of recognition for his value.

He consulted with some Africans and complained bitterly. The Professor sought explanation and realized that, the culture of most Africans to negotiate from high or low ceilings or floors, and continues creeping up down. The parties reach a consensus as to what is acceptable eventually and an agreement signed. This was contrary to the Western styles of fixed prices for services mostly non-negotiable. He picked up the job after getting the understanding of the negotiating culture in that country.

Relationship Marketing Failures

Case 15 : In the year 2004, the British business icon Richard Branson’s Virgin Atlantic took 49% of the shares in the collapsed Nigeria Airways as the majority shareholder. The deal announced with all the glamour under the presidency of President Olusegun Obasanjo. After the change of government, the relationship changed and virgin had its wings clipped as it could not use the domestic terminal for its international operations and forcibly ejected. A situation Richard Branson described as “Mafioso tactics”.

In 2008, the company after several legal battles had to sell off its 49% stake and take its brand out of Nigeria Airways, now christened Air Nigeria. What Richard Branson and his virgin team failed to recognize was the fact that in doing business in Africa a network of relationship culture was key to success and thus, failed to court the relationship of the new government. One Virgin Atlantic official remarked ‘an agreement is an agreement and as far as we are concerned we have all the requisite documents’. www.news.bbc.co.uk (June 09)

Discussions

Culture is the bedrock of behavioral instincts. There is evidence of the influence of culture on consumers’ behavior in various researches and thus not discounted in the international marketing schematic framework for success. It is enduring and at the same time dynamic in nature. Individuals and societies cherish and protect their culture that socialized in their generations.

The myriad of cases noted here some of which are very recent, is an indication of firms’ lack of commitment of resources in the diligent investigations of international markets in their effort to internationalize their brands especially concerning cultural similarities, convergence and divergence.

Most of the cases reviewed are product and promotional mix element failures relating to brand names selection and interpretation, product acceptability, promotional goofs and ignorance of cultural value

implications as well as consumption cultural bypassing, which impinge severely on consumer choice of products and services.

The critical nature of brand name selection in international marketing makes its consideration a well thought out decision. International marketers must systematically evaluate the meaning and word references in languages of their target markets to ensure their accuracy before carrying them across. (Lubliner1993).

Brand names for products and services may portray different perceptions about a product as most names have natural associations to the brand attributes and values. Salciuviene et al (2010) found that services with French names perceived as more hedonic. 'In the context of hedonic services, the incongruence between brand names in foreign languages and country of origin leads to higher perceived suitability and perception for brand names in foreign languages'.

International marketers must systematically research brand names, logos, and symbols used into deeper spheres when going international with their products. The interpretation and meaning of names, symbols and logos sometimes completely differ in another language or culture thus affecting the brand negatively. Brand names must be simple, easy to recall, and appropriate and relevant to the brand and the target market. The brand failure cases discussed in this paper are avoidable with research insights.

Promotional failures are very common in international marketing, however they are avoidable when designers of promotional material for especially advertising consider and research the use of personalities, symbols and artifacts in their promotions. Pre-tested of advertisements meant for foreign markets with a sample of the target audience to ensure that ambiguous features including; the use of words, personalities, dressing, symbols, slogans and taglines, are properly scrutinized and treated before using the material is required to minimize mistakes.

In developing advertisements for international markets, it is also crucial to benchmark with existing regulations and legislations, cultural and sub-cultural practices in the target market to avoid failures. Certain practices may be unacceptable in particular countries because of socio-cultural and legal barriers. The review also covered key effects of culture on consumer behavior across markets, with various frameworks used to undertake cultural diagnosis.

The inclusion of some of the most respected and global icon corporations in the recent failures and cultural blunders make the subject matter a serious area for continuous research and highlighting to reduce the incidence of cultural failures in international marketing. Indeed some of the failures could have been avoided with international market research and scanning before implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATION

There have been several research and frameworks which have contributed immensely to the body literature in this important aspect of internationalization, most of them are etic or emic in nature and does not allow for a holistic analysis of culture for international marketing operations and culture has been acknowledged to contribute enormously to the success in any international marketing venture.

Despite all these, international marketers continue to make serious mistakes and blunders as those reviewed. Manrai and Manrai (1996) acknowledges that existing models are often too complicated to be practicalize and contain abstract terms and constructs that managers cannot fully appreciate and use . Luna and Gupta (2001) suggest that researchers must design and implement theoretically sound and practically efficient methods that are easy to measure and operationalize in consumer acculturation.

Following from the discourse and the critical nature of the subject matter this paper proposes and recommends the segregation of cultural elements into soft and hard culture. Soft culture (SC) referring to those elements that centers on the specific values of the society which are subliminal in nature in the market under review. These societal specific values are usually not obvious or easily discovered and yet affect the most on consumer behavior.

The hard culture (HC) refers to those elements of culture easily detected and can be discovered from even outside of the society or market under review. The categorization into soft and hard cultures will allow the application of varying methodologies to capture all aspects of society’s culture and elements for effective market exploration across borders. Culture should appropriately be segregated into soft and hard; with the step approach suggested here applied in the analysis to ensure that every aspect is covered with the most suitable methodology. The focus should be on the elements to not only support product, pricing, place, promotion and other strategic marketing decisions but also highlight issues on business interactions such as in negotiations, gift culture, relationships lines and social interactions and organization (Tabla 1).

Table 1-Soft and Hard Culture (SHCM Model)

Soft Elements of Culture	Hard Elements of Culture
1. Respect for authority	1. Religious beliefs
2. Role of family in buying decisions	2. Rituals
3. Social class systems and strata	3. Symbols
4. Gender roles in buying decisions	4. Language
5. Materialism culture	5. Artifacts
6. Morality and Ethics	6. Politics
	7. History
	8. Food
	9. Music

Tabla 1 Soft and Hard Culture Model (SHCM) source: Author This theoretical SHCM model proposed to help international marketing operators diagnose cultural elements in a more structured manner. The application of different tools depending on whether they fall within the soft or hard category.

The Logical and Practical Steps in Diagnosing Foreign Culture

Existing models and frameworks really are too theoretical for practitioners, a proposed simplified step approach that will be practitioner friendly for even the beginner to use as a guide to analyze foreign cultures effectively put forward in this paper.

Table 2: The Step Approach to Analyzing Foreign Market Culture

Step one	Approach the analysis with an open mind and objectivity without any prejudice. The least prejudice may lead to a slip or cultural misdiagnosis. Many international market practitioners cloud their judgment with their self reference criterion which does not work for every market
Step two	Identify and segregate the elements into soft and hard cultures to make examination and analysis easier
Step three	Identify the most appropriate methodologies to assemble the information on each element
Step four	Identify the divergent and convergent elements in both the soft and hard cultures in relation to home country characteristics.
Step five	Decide on which parts of the marketing elements ought to be standardized or adapted based on culture to reduce the risk of failure in the foreign market.
Step six	Confirm findings with expert opinion within the researched market or society
Step 7	Use findings as a basis to implement international marketing decisions and review results for amendment

Table 2 describes the step approach to diagnosing international market cultures in foreign markets. Source: Author

CONCLUSION

The discussions in this paper have reviewed the pivotal role of culture in international marketing and the need to address appropriately all cultural concerns to limit international market failures.

Previous research findings and frameworks on culture examined and some of their limitations highlighted. Some avoidable foreign market blunders evaluated to reinforce and effectively diagnose culture in the attempt to market internationally.

The paper has made some novel propositions in the subject matter with the objective of adding to the existing body of knowledge and has simplified the phenomenon to ensure a better understanding and applications of the cross-cultural marketing tools.

The proposal to segregate culture into soft and hard culture (SHCM) model is worth examination and measurable studies done to make meanings of their degrees of influence on consumer behavior and international market operations. A simplified step approach to cultural diagnosis easier for international marketing operations with the objective of limiting mistakes in foreign markets proposed for practitioners. New terminologies borrowed from the medical field including; diagnosis as it relates to culture, surgical bypassing as it relates to complete circumvention of culture has been introduced into the international marketing literature to project the critical role of a meticulous analysis in the successful international marketing operations.

The mistakes and blunders used in this case would serve indeed as lessons for firms and individuals involved in global and international marketing to view the cultural implications with keen attention if they are to avoid future mistakes. The step approach to international market cultural diagnosis provided in this paper should also be a relief to international market operators as it is devoid of the theory and academics that is usually difficult to apply.

The fundamental limitations with this research paper are the domination of multinationals from developed countries. The inability to reach most of the firms reviewed here for deeper insights of the matters raised in the paper which could have enriched further the understanding of readers of the paper is also a major limitation. The theoretical propositions of segregating culture into soft and hard elements and the logical steps proposed to analyze foreign market culture successfully in this paper needs validation.

Future researchers may test the theoretical propositions empirically to determine their validity. The corporations cited in this case are mostly multinationals and thus provides an avenue for future researchers to localize the research to their environments where they can interact in-depth to drill further into the case studies to bring out a broader perspective to the discussion.

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