

Marketing: Cultural Adaptation

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The world we live in today is ever changing and ever evolving. Globalisation has helped marketers establish an international presence. It has made the world a much smaller place and gives us access to all the products across the globe. Just like domestic diversity, global diversity presents organisations with opportunities for a wider customer base, increased revenue streams etc. The international market is highly diverse. As the world economy grows it becomes more and more diverse. With the growing diversity organisations will have to face a greater number of challenges such as the cultural barriers, geographical differences etc (Weck & Ivanova, 2013). The cultural barrier can be identified as the main challenge for marketers while facing the international markets. It is considered as the most abstract way of measuring human behaviours and preferences. A single country can have multiple cultures. Languages, beliefs, religion, symbols, appearance etc are some elements of the culture (Murray et al., 2002). Each of them plays a huge part in the role of the making of the culture and cannot be overlooked. Diversity can pose multiple challenges to marketers, especially cultural diversity. Culture has a very strong influence on the needs of the customer. Culture of a certain place also decides on how consumers react to certain messages. Every culture is different in terms of Individualism – collectivism, power distance, Masculinity – femininity, The uncertainty avoidance etc. Making sure that all these aspects are taken care of can be a very demanding process for marketers.

For instance, the Middle Eastern culture is very collective, masculine and has a major power distance. They are very conservative and are quite reluctant in accepting changes as well. As per their religious practices, wearing an Abaya is mandatory for women (Mokhlis, 2010). Dolce and Gabbana were one of the high-end brands to introduce Abayas to their product line that sells in the Middle East. Many top brands also custom make clothes for the middle eastern market which is a great example of how brands adapt to cultures. They also have restrictions on public advertisements that feature women as it can be offensive if there is too much skin shown in them. Meanwhile the same advertisement in the US can be displayed without any such filter.

Culture is such a powerful element in marketing that it can influence not just the product but the price, promotion and the distribution. A product/ service has to be well aligned with all these elements of the culture and only then they will be accepted by the target audience. Meat that is not

halal cannot be served in the Middle East and a vast majority will not consume the meat without the halal stamp is on the packaging.

Understanding and adapting to the cultural changes does not come around easily. It requires a high level of tolerance (Cateora et al., 2011). However, adapting to a different culture does not require the organisation to give up on its own culture completely. The Geocentric approach can be useful in such scenarios where the standardisation and adaptation can both prove successful.

References

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