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Comparison of Cultural Changes and Buying Behavior Paten of Indian Consumers

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Abstract

Comparison of cultural Changes and buying behavior Paten of Indian Consumers is the study viewed as influencing the daily life and behavior of the individuals. The word 'culture' is derived from the Latin word "colere", meaning to build on, to cultivate, and to foster. The main objective of the study is to explore and examine the cultural differences between four cultures representing four regions of India: Gujarati in west, Tamil Nadu in south, Bengali in east and Punjabi in north. Methodology adopted in undertaking this research begins with a brief description of cross-cultural research, followed by the research methods adopted in this study. The issues in cross-cultural research methodology are elaborated and accordingly the chapter follows the five step sequence: problem definition, approach development, research design, fieldwork, and data analysis. The researcher found that the cross-cultural research becomes far more complex and complicated in a multicultural, multilingual and pluralist India

Keywords: culture, ideological, colere, artistic, custom, fuzzy, behavior

Introduction

Culture has been increasingly viewed as influencing the daily life and behavior of the individuals. It is man-made part of environment and it largely determines the course of our lives (Herskovits1969 p.305). Winick (1958 p.144) elucidates that it is everything that is "non biological and socially transmitted in a society, including artistic, social, ideological, and religious patterns of behavior, and the techniques of mastering the environment." The term 'culture' still remains elusive and fuzzy, which has been defined and interpreted in innumerable ways.

LITERATURE REVIEW: CULTURE AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

The word 'culture' is derived from the Latin word "colere", meaning to build on, to cultivate, and to foster (Dahl 1998 p.8). In the early stages of the philosophical debate on 'culture', the term often refers to the opposite of 'nature', whereas 'culture' was referred to something constructed willingly by men, while 'nature' was given in itself (ibid.). Culture is rather a fuzzy and elusive concept. It has been defined and described in innumerable ways. Kroeber and Kluckhon (1952) have reviewed about one hundred and sixty different definitions and the conceptions associated with culture (Herskovits, 1969 p.305; Usunier, 2000 p.4). This often quoted work of Kroeber and Kluckhohn in literature of identifying more than 164 definitions of culture suggests that culture defies a single all purpose definition and there are almost as many meanings of the culture as people using the term (Groeschi and Dohetry 2000 p.12). The seventh edition of Oxford Learners Advanced Dictionary describes it as the "customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group". Taylor (1874) gave one of the best earliest definition of culture who described it as "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Herskovits,1969 p.305). It is regarded as everything that is "non biological and socially transmitted in a society, including artistic, social, ideological, and religious patterns of behavior, and the techniques of mastering the environment" by Winick (1958 p.144). Herskovits (1969 p.305) believes that culture is man-made part of environment and emphasizes that it largely determines the course of our lives.

OBJECTIVES:

- To explore and examine the cultural differences between four cultures representing four regions of India: Gujarati in West, Tamil in South, Bengali in East and Punjabi in North.
- To examine the consumption pattern of selected commodities across these four states.
- To investigate the impact of the five cultural dimensions on the consumption pattern of different commodities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the methodology adopted in undertaking this research. It begins with a brief description of cross-cultural research, followed by the research methods adopted in this study. The issues in cross-cultural research methodology are elaborated and accordingly the chapter follows the five step sequence: problem definition, approach development, research design, fieldwork, and data analysis. Defining a problem in cross-cultural research is more complex than in domestic research (Malhotra, Agarwal and Peterson 1996). The formulation of the research problem is the single most important step in the research process (Green, Tull and Albaum 2004). The understanding of the cross-cultural environment is a basic necessity for research objective formulation, so research objectives in different cultural contexts are different than for single culture. Different approaches can be employed for conducting cross-cultural research including anthropological, sociological and psychological (Malhotra, Agarwal and Peterson 1996).

DATA COLLECTION

During research design formulation considerable attention needs to be paid to the equivalence and comparability of data from different culture groupings. For comparison of two cultures they must have some features in common, and should also differ in some features. Survey methods like telephone interview, personal interview or mail interview can be employed for conducting a survey. The questionnaire is "formalized framework consisting of a set of questions and scales designed to generate primary raw data" (Hair, Bush and Ortinau 2003).This study uses Values Survey Module 1994 (VSM 94) questionnaire to operationalize culture and to assess the

cultural values of the four Indian states. The sampling issues in cross-cultural research include the "selection of cultures, individuals, stimuli and responses". The total number of questionnaires that qualified this criteria were 316 and the number of questionnaires state wise were 65 from Gujarat (43 were excluded), 100 from Tamil Nadu (10 were excluded), 66 from West Bengal (4 were excluded) and 85 from Punjab (14 were excluded). The data from these questionnaires was coded and entered. different analytical methods used by researchers- frequency tables (Kahle et al. 1999; Liefield et al. 1999), correlation (Rose et al. 1999; Lee et al.1999), analysis of variance (Kropp et al. 1999; Donoho et al. 1999), factor analysis (Yu and Albaum 1999).T-tests are used if there is metric data, while chi-square analyses is used in case of non-metric data. Peng et al. (1991) are of view that multivariate techniques provide better understanding of cultural differences (Salciuviene, Auruskeviciene and Lydeka 2005).

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY
The findings show that cultural power distance, cultural individualism, and regional socioeconomics affect the performance of functional brand image strategies like problem prevention and solving. The cultures high on uncertainty avoidance consumers focus on risk aversion, problem solving, and prevention and thus become ideal candidate for functional brand image. Similarly these cultural dimensions affect the social brand image strategies like group membership and salience, and sensory brand image strategies like novelty, variety and sensory gratification. The social brand image strategies best fits for high power distance cultures. The cultures in which there is low uncertainty avoidance, the risk aversion is low and the consumers are more open to variety and novelty. The cultures with high individualism tend to seek variety whereas collectivistic cultures tend to conform to group behavior thus becoming candidates for social brand image strategies.

Conclusion
This study consisted mainly of understanding culture and its effect on the consumer behavior in the Indian context. It recognizes that culture is a factor of paramount importance that influences the behavior in general and consumer behavior in particular. The study relied on the presumption that holistic cultural values cannot be ascribed to the whole of India as it is a multicultural and multiethnic country. So similarly generalizations about consumer behavior cannot be made for the whole of India. The study began by assuming that the four regions of India i.e. North, South, East and West are culturally different and so the consumer behavior of the four regions could be different. It used Hofstede's (1980; 2001) dimensions to operationalize culture and compare the four regions. The four states Ahmadabad, Chennai, Kolkata and Chandigarh were selected as the representatives of the four regions West, South, East and North respectively. The study further attempted to find the relationship of these cultural values with the consumption pattern of various products and services. The consumption pattern of the various regions was studied in relation to demographic features. Further the effect of cultural dimensions on the demographic features was studied.

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