

# Cross-cultural differences in marketing communication



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Marketing communication is one of the core elements in marketing strategy, which role is to deliver messages and promote products to the customers (reference). In today's increasing competitive business environment, it is important for companies to have strong marketing communication strategy, particularly for companies expanding their businesses internationally.

Globalization together with technological progress increased the accessibility of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and fasten the process of transferring information and its availability Lowell and Thakkar (2012). However, due to globalization, economies are integrating and the product promotion is highly affected by the cultural patterns of different countries.

Cross-cultural differences are among one of the main challenges that many international businesses still struggle to cope with. It represents an "invisible barrier" interfering the economy at the macro as well as micro level (Tian and Borges 2011). In general, cross-cultural awareness reflects the behavior of the company in the international markets. It can determine company's success or failure. What's the most important is that nowadays, international markets are known as worldwide and cross-cultural (Tian and Borges 2011). Customers differ from country to country, so do their attitudes, perceptions and needs. Therefore, to address customers with certain cultural background, should be done from the "cultural perspective" (Usunier 2005). Marketers should also emphasize more on the strategy, how to effectively communicate the message, their products and services to their target market. The better the communication the more effective brand

promotion becomes, stipulating higher demand and therefore strengthen the business relationships.

As the markets are becoming more saturated, companies are forced to seek for new opportunities in emerging markets. According to many researchers, marketing communication requires “ the new way of thinking” (reference). Integrated marketing communication (IMC) represents a new form of consumer-oriented communication, which is a complex coordinating all the promotional activities of the company, from advertising through personal selling, public relations, sales promotion to direct marketing. The main feature of IMC is to build up strong relationship between the marketers and customers. (Joshi 2017). According to Kotler and Keller (2006), “ marketing is used in order to create, communicate, and deliver value to customers”. Kotler and Keller (2006) highlighted the importance of marketing, the possibility to reach wider audience, which increase product awareness through marketing activities.

Therefore, this research study will pay attention to integrated marketing communications activities regarding Skin Care products and how they are modified by cross-cultural differences in Vietnam and Slovakia.

## 1. 2. Problem identification

Based on the literature examined, (Tian and Borges 2011, Schnalke and Mason 2014, Kaur and Chawla 2016), the most significant factor affecting business’s marketing communication is culture. The problem occurs, when customers from different countries are unable to proceed marketing communication practices of marketers. According to Fill (2006), Usunier and <https://assignbuster.com/cross-cultural-differences-in-marketing-communication/>

Lee (2009), ethnicity and cross-cultural differences are two major elements that needs to be included in the process of developing company's Marketing Communication Mix (MCM). However, there is little attention paid to the field of marketing communication channel preferences from the customer's perspective. Moreover, the lack of information about cultural impact on individual aspects of MCM raises the question to which extent the standardization of marketing communication should be done, when conducting business internationally (Orth et al. 2007). Therefore, the research study will be focused on cultural differences as a mediator towards Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) and expose the differences between the customer perception towards different Marketing Communication Mix (MCM). In other words, how and to which extent marketing communication strategy is modified by the cultural factors, across different countries.

Slovakia and Vietnam have been chosen as the key markets of interest. The main similarity that " culture and social factors are equally important", applies to both countries (Thrassou and Vrontis 2009). Slovakia is a developed country (according to OECD) located in Central Europe and is a member country of European Union. Thrassou and Vrontis (2009) defined " developed countries" as the most advanced nations having high-per-capita-income, high labor costs, however skilled and educated labor force and the economy with relatively low inflation rate. On the contrary, Vietnam is one of the fastest-growing emerging markets among countries in Southeast Asia. Even though, as a developing country it is quite isolated, it has opened its market, providing new opportunities for foreign investors. Vietnam with the

highest economic growth rate in Southeast Asia, following with the increasing population, appears attractive especially for the foreign companies focusing on consumer goods. Additionally, the consumer's purchasing power of the Vietnamese consumers appears to have a significant increasing trend in the recent years (reference). Furthermore, to retrieve secondary data for construction of questionnaire and application of the theoretical framework, FMCG sector specifically consumer products has been chosen as the main focus.

Nowadays, skin care products, as a part of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), are subjects to many changes and innovations due to high competitive environment in the Cosmetic industry. According to the latest statistics, the Slovak and Vietnamese skin care market is expected to have increasing trend during the following period (CAGR 2018-2021) (reference) In this case, competitive advantage can be achieved with the strong marketing communication strategy through focused marketing activities.

The research area is worth to be examined, due to their obvious differences there is still lack of information available about customers characteristics and cultural impact on marketing communication strategies regarding those two markets. It will be quite interesting to see the comparison between the marketing communication strategy in both countries. Therefore, the research will be focused on the marketing communication of facial skin care products as a part of FMCG (Fast Moving Consumers Goods) sector.

Research question and objectives

The main objective of the study is to analyze the influence of cross-cultural differences on marketing communication of the Skin Care products in Vietnam and Slovakia.

Based on the problem identification, the main research question was developed:

„ To which extent is marketing communication of the skin care products modified by the cross-cultural differences in Vietnam and Slovakia?“

-„ How does MC channel preferences of Slovak and Vietnamese customers differ?“

One of the main reason behind this research study is to investigate how cross-cultural differences between both countries affect the modification and adaptation of MCM of IMC, as well as, consumers' perception towards each aspects of marketing communication mix. In addition, the results and findings will serve as key insights for a deeper understanding of customers' attitude and their preferences towards marketing communication tools and media, researched from the cross-cultural perspective.

Therefore, the research study will be mainly focused on current marketing communication tools and media. Firstly, due to the globalization and advanced technology, the Internet penetration and social media users are increasing significantly in most of the countries.

Secondly, the continual change in customer's perception towards online marketing in the researched markets is also worth the consideration. Hence,

the reasons behind choosing the above mentioned aspects are, as they  
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support the proposed marketing communication framework, which emphasizes on ICT and E-commerce.

### Relevance

The contribution of this research paper is mainly focused in the field of cross-cultural marketing within the FMCG sector. The problem is, that even though firms are aware of cultural differences, sometimes they failed to articulate them (Tian 1999). It serves as a source of useful information to support development of marketing, communication strategies and management of promotional tools within the FMCG sector. Main aim of researcher is to underline the importance of cross-cultural differences in the marketing communication and how customers differ across countries. For any additional suggestions to be provided, the Business-consumer relationship model, developed by Thrassou and Vrontis (2009), will be used for better understanding the concept of The Marketing Communication application within the new framework. The research will only focused on the aspects of marketing communications that add value into the context of the proposed framework. There are many research has been done on the impact of cross-cultural differences influencing the marketing communication. However, there is little attention paid to attitudes and perceptions towards different MCM from the customer's perspective.