

The effect of language on international marketing assignment

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Index * Introduction * Definition of Culture * Significance of Language The Impact of Language on Communication Decisions * The Impact of Language on Product, Distribution and Pricing Decisions Examples of Language Blunders Made by International Marketers * Conclusion * Recommendations *

References Introduction Marketing in the simplest description attempts to understand customers in terms of what they buy, when they buy, why they buy, how much they buy, where they buy it, and with what they buy.

Internationally, this means understanding culture.

How marketing efforts interact with culture determines the success or failure of a product. " There are many examples of cultural differences that have affected marketing success or failure. " (Bezel) The relationship with culture comes into play with the realization that each of the consumer behavior factors noted above varies from culture to culture. One of the most influential cultural elements is language. " Every form of culture is identified in terms of language. " (Mummer) In short, every language serves as a vehicle of the culture of the people who speak that language.

Consequently, global companies, when entering a foreign market, need to know what is the message they are trying to convey and what is the message they are actually conveying about their product. Definition of Culture 1 org stimuli. It is also the total way of life and thinking patterns that are passed from generation to generation. " A cultured person is one who behaves in a becoming way according to his society's standard of behavior; one who has cultivated taste for what society judges admirable and worthy of the human spirit. " (Mummer) It is the patterns of behavior and thinking that people living in social groups learn, create, and share.

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It encompasses norms, values, customs, art, and beliefs, distinguishing one human group from others. A people's culture includes their beliefs, rules of behavior, language, rituals, art, technology, styles of dress, ways of producing and cooking food, religion, and political and economic systems. Culture is a problematic issue for marketers since it is inherently nebulous and often difficult to understand. " It is a convenient catchall for the many differences in market structure and behavior that cannot readily be explained in terms of more tangible factors. Bezel) Inevitably, global companies need to develop a capability to conduct cross-cultural analysis of foreign markets, in order to better their understanding of their cultural context. " By understanding a nation's national culture the global manager understands how the inhabitants of that country behave and form opinions and therefore can anticipate changes in sales and make important decisions based on these understandings. " (Robbins) Accordingly, the company's international marketing plan must be modified and adapted to the dictates of the foreign market. Significance of Language

As established, culture plays an important role in the field of international marketing. Of all the cultural aspects, language may be the most critical, as it can be one of the biggest barriers a company has to face when it becomes global. It is certain that language has been involved in a number of cultural confusions. Thus, good communication linkages must be set between a company and its customers, suppliers, employees and the governments of the foreign countries where it performs business activities. Conversely, poor communication can obviously cause various difficulties.

For example, the fact that English is widely spoken in India can be very misleading, as there is a difference between Indian English and the English we know. Some words or terms sound like English but they are Indian-English, giving them a completely different meaning. For instance what sounds as “ a lack of rupees” could mean “ lake of rupees” signifying a 100,000 of them. (Gonzales) One of the challenges international marketers need to surmount is a practice called the self-reference criterion. Unconsciously, individuals tend to use the standards of one’s own culture, including language, to evaluate others.

Foreign marketers should language. ” (Cater) The important thing for marketers is to consider how these biases may come in the way when dealing with members of other cultures. A country’s language is key to its culture. Language expresses the thinking patterns of a culture; what is important and what is not important to a particular culture can be ascertained by what is present and what is not present in its language. The words of the language are merely concepts reflecting the culture from which it is derived.

It is the spoken language that dominates as it changes more quickly and reflects the ultra more directly. Eskimos have many words to describe the concept of snow because the difference in the forms of snow plays a much more important role in their daily life than say, a native of Bermuda or Haiti. Furthermore, regional differences and dialects may be subtle, but they can produce substantial differences within the same language. Americans,

British, Canadians, Australians, and New Slanderer, although from the same Anglo background with less than a 250-year spread, are diverging.

It is not only with humor that one speaks of the Americans and British as two nations divided by a common language. For example, natives from Minnesota, Mississippi, and Boston in the U. S. May not be able to easily understand each other or a word may mean one thing in a Latin American country, but something coarse in another. Brown sugar is referred to differently according to Hispanic local backgrounds; in New York (azure negro), Miami (azure priest), California (azure cafe), South Texas (azure Moreno) and elsewhere (azure pardon).

Four different ways exist to say tire in Spanish depending on where one is; the Spanish call it intimation, the Peruvians gaucho, the Mexicans leant and the Argentinean coma. Former West Germans and former East Germans have difficulty communicating. The language of West and East Germans diverged for 45 years since they were divided in 1945 and until their reunification in 1990. The Weiss, as a West German is called in East Germany, have different words and different meanings for the same word than did their cousins in the East.

Habitually, cultures are proud of their native tongue. In today's modern world, concerns exist in many countries that one's language is becoming obsolete. France passed a law in 1994 which became effective in 1996 that French radio stations have to devote at least 40 percent of their prime time music programming to songs in French. France is seeking to protect its culture against what it considers the perfidious influence of the English

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language, ignoring the fact that English is the language of choice for the hip in France.

Undeniably, French consumers prefer American television and tune out French programs, as well as American films accounting for over 70% of all box office receipts in the European Union. As a result, laws were passed in France that the French language must be used on television and forbidden if an adequate French word is available. For a foreign company attempting to enter the French market, these edicts will pose any number of problems and complication for the company's international marketing efforts.

As one of several examples, Disney was taken to court because seven of its Paris' retail stores' 5, 000 items did not have French labels. Furthermore, the elite in Paris lambasted the Ruddiness project as an affront to French cultural traditions, resulting in Disney deciding that French would be the first official language at Ruddiness as a response to these concerns, in order to maintain the French customer's goodwill for the project. The Impact of Language on Communication Decisions As the significance of language is ascertained, its impact on the elements of the international marketing mix is indisputable.

As the marketing mix should in itself be a product of understanding the consumer, keeping in mind that language is an integral part of that consumer, it follows that mastering the nuances of the new market's language helps the organization to target its marketing mix, namely product, price, distribution and communication, more closely on the potential consumer. Language plays the biggest role in the communication element of

the marketing mix, as it may impede communication across groups because of a lack of shared or common cultural values.

To make consumers accept a product, language is used to promote that product through advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and publicity, all of which cannot be effectively used without language. Marketers going into any foreign market need to understand this and fundamentally believe in it. This is the reason why a standardized advertisement may have difficulty communicating with consumers in foreign countries. Advertising and promotion require special attention because they play a key role in communicating product concepts and benefits to the target segment.

Advertising copywriters should be concerned less with obvious differences between languages and more with the idiomatic meanings expressed”.

(Cater) One source of difficulty among international companies is that of effective communication with potential consumers, as there are many possible communication barriers. For multinational businesses sending messages to consumers on a regular basis is a customary and vital practice. Sometimes messages can be translated incorrectly, while other times when the message does arrive, its ineffectiveness can cause it to be of no value. Carelessly translated advertising statements not only lose their intended meaning but can suggest something very different, obscene, offensive or just plain ridiculous. ” (Cater) When advertising, global companies need to know what their message actually communicates, instead of what they think it announces. “ A dictionary translation is translation suffice”. (Cater) When American Airlines translated the commercial Fly n Leather to Latin American countries, the output sent was to encourage people to Fly Naked.

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Chevrolet kept the American name for the model Nova to sell it in Mexico, which means in Spanish Does Not Go. Parker made a mockery of its brand when their ball-point advertising Use Parker and avoid embarrassing situations was translated in Spanish improperly. Consumers understood that Using Parker reduces the possibility of pregnancies. A U. S. Toothpaste manufacturer promised its customers that they would be more interesting if they used the firm's toothpaste.

What the advertising coordinators did not realize, however, was that in Latin American countries, interesting is another euphemism for pregnant. Several international marketing experts correspond with these concepts in their writings, where Bezel singles out language as the major cultural element affecting advertising and promotion decisions, while Sunnier devotes considerable attention to communication strategies. As far as advertising is concerned, he observes that there are considerable variations from country to country, with language mainly affecting advertising copy and slogans.

The Impact of Language on Product, Distribution and Pricing Decisions When introducing a new product to a market, consumers may not always want it and even if they do, in most cases the product needs to be substantially modified to fit their local preferences and tastes. " If an attribute of the product is perceived differently or negatively in a foreign market, then appropriate product adaptations have to be made. " (Sunnier) Language plays an important role in this element of marketing, as adaptations of the product often include translation of the labeling on the package to the new market's language.

This may not always be a straightforward process, as can be seen in the case of medical containers made in the U. S. , bearing the words Take off top and push in button, which sounds harmless in its domestic market, but carries sexual and humorous connotations in the British market. As we come to distribution and price, the role of language, while not as major as with the two previously discussed elements of the marketing mix, it is by no means insignificant.

A rather substantial body of writing is utilized when dealing with foreign distribution systems (Sunnier), the length of which vary according to culture, requiring a rather extensive deployment of the foreign country's language. One could argue that language, as a dimension of culture, definitely affects the quality of the relationship between manufacturers and their foreign-based distributors. Keeping tabs on the legal and economic forces at play in a foreign market, both of which affect the price level, necessitates a high degree of expertise in the foreign country's language.

Additionally, as with the element of distribution, knowledge of the new market's language facilitates communication with trade intermediaries, who largely affect the setting of the product's price. In various cultures, language plays a regard to pricing. (Sunnier) Examples of Language Blunders Made by International Marketers Generally, the major blunder in language comes from mistranslation, lack of understanding of slang or idioms in the native language and use of the wrong dialect, which usually causes the company large amounts of money already spent on marketing, distribution, packaging, etc.

The name Coca-Cola in China was first rendered as Eke-kook-eke-la. Unfortunately, the Coke company did not discover until after thousands of signs had been printed that the phrase means bite the wax tadpole or female horse stuffed with wax depending on the dialect. Coke then researched 40, 000 Chinese characters and found a close phonetic equivalent, OK-kook- OK-lee, which can be loosely translated as happiness in the mouth. A Spanish translation for Budweiser; King of Beer used the wrong gender; as beer is a noun of the feminine gender in Spanish and therefore cannot be the King but must be the Queen of Beers.

The American Jolly Green Giant was translated into Arabic as Intimidating Green Ogre. When the American film City Slickers went to France, its title was changed to Life, Love and Cows. Ford introduced a low cost truck, the Ferreira into some of the less developed countries of Latin America, with the name meaning ugly old woman in Spanish. Language misunderstandings may not just be dangerous but may also prove fatal, as with the international shoe company, Beta, whose sandals caused a riot in Bangladesh, resulting in over fifty people being wounded.

Muslims demonstrated because the logo on the sandals resembled the Arabic writing for Allah, meaning God in the Arabic language. The logo was intended to be a stylish drawing of three bells. As a result, the government banned the sale of the sandals. Some of the idiosyncrasies caused by ignorance of the foreign market's language prove to be humorous, albeit embarrassing to the company, sometimes very much so. The name Sees meant stalled car when pronounced phonetically in Japan.

Its replacement of Once referred to a sewage disposal truck. Cue toothpaste was introduced in France by Colgate-Palmolive who did not realize that Cue in French is a pornographic word. Creep, a Japanese coffee creamer, and Super Pips, a Finnish product for unfreezing car locks, were products introduced into the United States which, not surprisingly, did not prosper. Its top of the line automobile was introduced in Mexico as Clients, which is slang there for a street walker.

In Japan, a soft drink called Picador Sweat was a success, as this name conveyed a positive, healthy, thirst-quenching image to the Japanese consumer. This product's name, however, did not transfer well to the American consumer. In Taiwan, the translation of the Pepsi slogan Come alive with the Pepsi Generation came out as Pepsi will bring your ancestors back from the dead. Also in Chinese, the Kentucky Fried Chicken slogan finger-licking' good came out as eat your fingers off. In Italy, a campaign for Cheapest Tonic Water translated the name into Cheapest Toilet Water.

Renovator translate a document or ad from the original language to the intended language and having a second translator independently translate the message back to the original language. If the incoming and outgoing messages agree, the translation is likely to succeed. If there is disagreement, analysis of the message must be made, the message changed and back-translated again until the two match. For example, the term entree means appetizer in Australia but main course in Israel. If the product was labeled an entree, its price and market position would need to differ considerably in those two countries.

Although back-translation will solve the problems of literal translation issues, it does not eliminate the problems of whether or not the context of use is the same. Conclusion International marketing exists everywhere. In this global era, a company cannot do business anywhere without having to take into account the international dimension. It is the driving force behind international trade, encompassing all business activities that involve exchanges across national boundaries and providing an efficient way of entering the market.

Furthermore, a firm's international marketing program must be adapted to foreign markets to account for differences in the business environment and target markets from nation to nation. The marketing mix may require modification in terms of cultural, social, economic and legal differences. Accordingly, companies have to deal with foreign consumers, suppliers, distributors, bankers, etc. Therefore, the understanding of language becomes not just critical, but mandatory, if a company is to succeed in the international marketplace. Language may be the most difficult ultra element to master, but it is the most important to study in an effort to acquire some degree of empathy. " (Cater) Recommendations The following recommendations are advanced to assist international marketers in overcoming the difficulties posed by the difference in language when entering a new foreign market: " Extent company needs to consult with knowledgeable foreign nationals, distributors, consultants and the like, to benefit from their knowledge of the language and expertise in the foreign market. Seeing as straightforward translation of a message does not guarantee its appropriateness in diverse cultures, the company needs to

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employ the services of a cultural translator, whose job is to translate “ not only among languages, but also “ AS was mentioned previously, companies entering foreign markets should employ the bastardization technique, which is a very effective tool in avoiding cross-cultural language blunders. “ XA most important practice that companies should engage in is appropriate market research and testing. They should never assume transferability from one language to another.