

Western culture in the united states

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Cultural diversity is all around us. Each culture identifies with unique characters. And while much of behavior may be thought to be innate, there are also external factors that can impact an individual's behavior. What is thought to be culturally accepted behavior or norms in one area of the country may be offensive and unacceptable in others. There are many examples of this practice. For instance, the legal drinking age in the United States is 21, while in Austria; an individual who is 16 may consume 'light' alcohol such as beer, wine or champagne.

The "OK" symbol while used in the Western culture as "I'm ok" or "are you OK?" is found to be very offensive in Turkey and Venezuela where there it references a symbol of homosexuality. Since China accounts for over one-fifth of the 1.73 billion people around the world that take to the web, American-based Google, wanted to embark on this global domination but missed important cultural sensitivities and did not dominate this market as hoped. Cultures adapt to meet specific sets of circumstances, such as climate, level of technology, population, and geography (Schaefer, 2009, p. 69). For those that visit other countries may find their food and or people vastly different from what they are used too.

Someone from the United States may be stunned to learn in certain areas of China dog meat is the specialty, a woman from strict Islamic culture will find offense to the provocative dress of the United States and while we Westerners think cattle are to be used for food might look down on India's Hindu religion and culture, which views the cow as sacred (Schaeffer, 2009). The culture in India is vastly different than that of our Western society; yet

we still see a subculture created by those whose job requires that they serve customers in the United States.

These individuals have adapted to their circumstances and have a somewhat different lifestyle than others as it relates to their job. Not only must these employees be fluent in English; they are also expected to adopt Western values and work habits. They also get U. S. holidays such as Thanksgiving and Labor Day (Schaeffer, 2009). In return they receive perks such as Western-style dinners, dances, and coveted consumer goods (Schaeffer, 2009, p. 69). But because of the negative backlash from more traditional Indians these individuals have created this network of subculture to counteract what they experience.

It is important for any company seeking to build and grow abroad to research the culture of where they wish to go; Kellogg's had to find out the hard way. India seems deceptively comfortable or easy. It can also create a feeling that the market is easy to assess, as well as easily conquerable by transplanting business techniques and products that work elsewhere in the world (Prasso, 2008). While most enjoy progress and change, that is not necessarily the case in India as many American companies have discovered. As Manvinder Singh Banga states, " they overestimate the market" (Prasso, 2008).

Since Americans love their cold cereal for breakfast so much Kellogg decided they should launch their cereal in the Indian market. But their product did not take the Indian market as they'd hoped and as Bhagirat B Merchant's optimism suggested a lot of Indians found the idea of cold cereal for breakfast rather odd as the most common way to start the day in India was

with a bowl of hot vegetables (www.brandfailures.com). When MTV India was launched, the aim was to bring Western rock, rap and pop to the sub-continent.

Now, however, the music policy has shifted to accommodate Indian genres such as bhangra (www.brandfailures.com). When Whirlpool launched its refrigerators on the Indian market, it found the market unwilling to buy larger sizes than the standard 165 litres. Coca-Cola was not a huge success either. Most Indians initially thought that the new entry to the market wasn't fizzy enough additionally to them, the bottles were too big, prices were too high and the brand was too American (Prasso, 2008). We can also look at the failure of Google in China and Japan. So why did Google fail in China? For a couple different reasons as a matter of fact.

First and foremost they did not research their new market nor did they consider local competition. What we can fault the tech giant for, is the fact that it arrogantly took years to find out even the most basic facts about its local competition, such as Baidu and Tencent Holdings. They also did not realize and ignored free music downloads - an element that just happens to make Baidu extremely popular. Google has not had much luck in the Japanese market either. A major reason, analysts say, for Google's struggle is Yahoo Japan's cultural history and local identity -- a problem Google has yet to overcome (Deltorio, 2010).

Google is still seen as an American company which is a detriment compared to Yahoo Japan's familiarity with the country. Yahoo Japan is a Japanese company, and most of their employees are Japanese people who fluently

understand how the Japanese mind-set and business work (Deltorio, 2010). American companies cannot fully understand the culture Unless Western companies wish to fail in the manner Wal-Mart did, they should do their research on the market, the culture and what people need. In doing so, this will enable them to be informed and understand what will work in their new market and what will most likely not.

Don't underestimate local competitors. ' The trick is not to be too big. ' Do your homework. Why did Kellogg's cereals have a tough ride in India? ' It was just clumsy cultural homework,' don't try and make consumers strangers to their culture (www. brandfailures. com). Local competitors already know what motivates their customers and are sensitive to their culture because they too are a part of that culture. If companies will practice strategies that provide them with insights to their desired culture they may just make it; only time will tell.