

Beef exports to china global analysis assignment



Understanding the marketing concept as organizational culture Gregory B. Turner Livingston University, Livingston, Alabama, U S A, and Barbara Spencer Mississippi State University, Mississippi, U S A The marketing concept is now firmly established among marketing scholars and practitioners as perhaps the optimum marketing management philosophy (Bennett and Cooper, 1979; Houston, 1986; Nearer and Slater, 1990).

Because it focuses on the customer's point of view, this concept has stimulated a great deal of research on nonuser needs and market characteristics. Certainly, an understanding of these issues is imperative for the formulation of effective competitive strategies. Just as critical, however, is the ability to translate these understandings into action. To date, there has been a neglect of research on issues concerning the successful implementation of the marketing concept.

Practitioners are simply expected to accept the concept as the gospel of marketing, but few guidelines or techniques are offered to help facilitate implementation (Houston, 1986; Kohl' and Gasworks, 1990; Lush and Lacking, 1987). Recently, a new perspective for viewing the marketing concept has emerged within the marketing literature ? one which we believe may help to clarify the implementation issue. Some scholars are beginning to stress the relationship between organizational culture and the philosophy engendered by the marketing concept (see Deckhands and Paranormal, 1986; Kohl and Gasworks, 1990; Nearer and Slater, 1990).

Indeed, according to Deckhands and Webster (1989), the marketing concept defines a specific organizational culture, a shared set of beliefs and values

centered around the importance of the customer in the organization's strategy and operations. Consideration of the role of organizational culture with regard to the implementation of various policies and programmes has slowly begun to permeate the marketing literature. For example, Anderson and Oliver (1987) incorporate the "clan" concept into their discussion of salesrooms control systems.

Similarly, White et al. (1986, p. 183) integrate organizational culture into their model of selling effectiveness with the proposition that "organizational culture developed through management practices can foster an intrinsic reward orientation in salespeople and thus result in effective adaptive selling". Unfortunately, while the importance of corporate culture in a marketing context may appear obvious, "little scholarly research has specifically European Journal of Marketing, Volvo. 31 No. 2, 1997, pp. 10-1210 MAC University press, 0309-0566 addressed this issue" (Kerri et al., 1990, p. 415). Deckhands and Webster (1989, p. 3) concur Walt tons assessment Ana assert Tanat aspect ten Importance AT organizational culture to marketing issues, there is a void of "scholarly study of its impact in a marketing context". Deckhands and Webster (1989, p. 13) conclude their discussion of organizational culture in a marketing context with two challenges for marketing scholars seeking to address this issue.

First, researchers must describe clearly and defend carefully the theoretical approach used to define organizational culture. Second, they must develop theoretical structures to make sense of the relationships between cultural variables and the marketing phenomena they are trying to understand. The purpose of this paper is to take initial steps towards addressing these

challenges. To do this, we will draw on the organizational symbolism paradigm to support our view of the marketing concept as culture.

Second, we will apply this perspective by presenting techniques for the implementation of the marketing concept. The marketing concept as culture

The marketing literature provides varying definitions of the marketing concept: A philosophy of business management, based upon a company-wide acceptance of the need for customer orientation, profit orientation, and recognition of the important role of marketing in communicating the needs of the market to all major corporate departments (Manager, 1972, p. 51).

The marketing concept... Insists of the organization determining the needs and wants of argue markets and adapting itself to delivering the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than its competitors (Kettle, 1980, p. 22). The marketing concept is a company-wide consumer orientation with the objective of achieving long-run success (Boone and Kurt, 1989, p. 11). The marketing concept holds that the planning and coordination of all company activities around the primary goal of satisfying customer needs is the most effective meaner to attain and sustain a competitive advantage and achieve company objectives over time (Walker et al. 1992, p. 22). Understanding the marketing concept 1 1 1 An analysis of these definitions, and others, reveals several common threads. Specifically, the marketing concept is: a consumer orientation represented by the ability to recognize targeted customers' generic wants, needs, and preferences and satisfy them by continuously creating and delivering superior value; backed by a company-wide integrated effort of all functional areas within the

organization; and a manner of achieving long-term corporate goals and objectives.

State (1983, p. 6) defines organizational culture as “ the set of important understandings (often instated) that members of a community share in common”. According to Daft (1989), an organization’s culture is defined as the European Journal of Marketing 31, 2 112 values, guiding beliefs, and understandings that members of an organization share. Culture helps provide organizational participants with a clear understanding of how to act and think. It also gives direction to participants and helps build commitment to something larger than the individual.

By integrating these definitions of culture and ten marketing concept, Zonal Ana Gasworks 1) have created a blew AT ten marketing concept as culture. In their view, an organization which adopted this perspective would include: (1) one or more departments engaging in activities geared toward developing an understanding of customers’ current and future needs and the factors affecting them, (2) sharing of this understanding across departments, and (3) the various departments engaging in activities designed to meet select customer needs (p.). Similarly, Nearer and Slater (1990, p. 21) define a market orientation as an “ organization culture that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviors for the creation of superior value for buyers... . The major proposition underlying this view is that when organizational culture is comprised of organizational-wide shared meanings, values, and beliefs placing the customer at the centre of the decision-making process, the attainment of long-term corporate goals and objectives will be facilitated.

Organizational symbolism and the organization as culture Conceptual support for viewing the marketing concept as culture may be found in the organizational symbolism paradigm. This paradigm views culture as a metaphor for the shared symbols and meanings of organizational participants. Organizational symbolism advances the idea of understanding organizations as culture; culture should be treated as “ what the organization is” as opposed to “ something that the organization has” (Smirch, 1983, p. 347).

Such a perspective highlights the importance of examining the meanings people assign and attach to organizational events, processes, and behaviors (Frost, 1985). In other words, researchers cannot hope to understand what is actually occurring in human collectivities such as organizations without recognizing their symbolic nature. Our choice of this paradigm as a vehicle for understanding culture is based on the fact that human beings are distinguished from all other living species by their ability to create and use symbols as a basis of discourse, and as a means of forging their individual lives (Pond et al. 1983). Shared symbolic systems are an inherent outcome of the communications involved in the social interaction of human beings. These shared symbols allow for the continued interaction of individuals without the need constantly to renegotiate meaning. In this way, individuals working together gain a unified understanding that facilitates their coordinate action (Smirch, 1982). Therefore, the aim of most symbolism research is to explain “ how to achieve common interpretations of situations so that coordinated action is possible” (Smirch, 1983, p. 51). This paradigm views organizations as being created and maintained through symbolic

actions that facilitate shared meanings and realities (Deckhands and Webster, 1989; Smirch, 1983). Organizations are not viewed solely in economic or material terms, but instead, are perceived “ in terms of their expressive, additional, and symbolic aspects” (Deckhands and Webster, 1989, p.). Culture is a metaphor for these shared symbols and meanings. Representative of this view of organizations as cultures is Smirch and Stabber’s (1985, p. 27) definition of the organization “ as ten degree to winch a set AT people snare many Delete, values, Ana assumptions Tanat encourage them to make mutually-reinforcing interpretations of their own acts and the acts of others”. Thus, the relationship between organization and culture is viewed as both process and outcome. Culture plays a role in shaping the social interaction process but it is also an outcome of this interaction. From this view, to understand an organization’s culture, one must learn to read and to interpret its patterns of symbolic discourse.

The researcher must not only attempt to show how symbols are linked in meaningful relationships, but also how they are related to the actions of organizational members. Ultimately, the researcher’s task is to document the creation and maintenance of organization through such symbols as rituals, slogans, myths, ideologies, stories and specialized vocabularies. From a practical standpoint, the emphasis is on how to create and maintain a sense of organization, and how to achieve common interpretations to facilitate co-ordinate efforts (Smirch, 1983, p. 351).

To apply an organizational symbolism perspective to the implementation of the marketing concept would require the researcher to examine the extent to which shared meanings, values, and beliefs regarding the role and

importance of the customer are vital elements of the organization's decision-making process. Symbols depicting the customers' vital interests, stories concerning employees' determined efforts to meet customer needs, rituals and/or ceremonies documenting the importance of serving the customers would all provide evidence of a customer-oriented culture.

For the practitioner, the question becomes, "how can one develop and sustain these symbols". These processes, and their link to the marketing concept, are further discussed in the next section. Organizational symbolism and the marketing concept Managerial use of symbols From a symbolic perspective, leadership can best be understood as "the management of meaning and the shaping of interpretations" (Smirch, 1983, p. 351).

Similarly, Smirch and Morgan (1982, p. 262) contend that the "key challenge for a leader is to manage meaning in such a way that individuals orient themselves to the achievement of desirable ends".

In order to facilitate this process, leaders may use "language, ritual, drama, stories, myths, and symbolic construction of all kinds..." (Smirch and Morgan, 1982, p. 262). Understanding the marketing concept 113 European Journal of Marketing 31, 2 114 It should not be assumed, however, that organizational culture is just another organizational subsystem or variable that can be McCollum easily or changed quickly. As noted earlier, the symbolic perspective denies that a culture is something an organization has, embracing instead a view that a culture is something an organization is (Smirch, 1983, p. 347).

This more complex approach recognizes that cultural beliefs, values and norms of behavior are enacted by individuals throughout the organization, not simply by managers. These outlooks may be widely shared, or may vary across groups or subcultures within the organization. Although managers can tap into shared symbols and daily rituals to increase their understanding and promote commitment to the organizational mission and strategy, they cannot impose their interpretations on all organization members. Does this mean that a manager should ignore culture and concentrate on other aspects of the organization?

Our answer is a resounding no. According to Smircich and Stubbart (1985), management must use values and symbolic meaning to generate understanding and direction for the firm. They must constantly work to build consensus on values and to ensure that those within the organization view reality in similar ways. Indeed Proffer (1981, p. 15) maintains, that when social reality construction and sense-making activities are neglected or ignored, shifts in power and instability will occur. Because symbols are inherently powerful, they can be of great use to managers who wish to create, preserve, or change organizational values and behaviors.

Indeed, Peters (1978) argues that symbols are the very stuff of management behavior. Moreover, as noted earlier, Smircich (1983) suggests that symbolic processes serve to construct shared meanings which in her view is equivalent to saying that they act to construct the organization itself. Yet, on the surface, these views may make the use of symbols appear to be too simplistic. Therefore, before we attempt to describe the ways that symbols

can facilitate strategy implementation, it behooves us to point out a few caveats, or possible pitfalls, in the use of symbols as management tools.

First, although all symbols are socially constructed, they can vary a great deal in the extent to which they are shared by the members of a particular organization (Pond et al. , 1983). Some symbols can even evoke different meanings in different individuals or different groups. Because the same symbol can be used to make sense of the world in different ways, managers who attempt to create symbols to convey particular beliefs or values may find that their plan has backfired.

The corporate report aimed at convincing investors that the company is financially sound, may in turn provide union leaders with a belief that they deserve a share of the benefits. The company picnic may be intended to show that the employees are valued by the organization; instead it may be interpreted as another move to make management look good. A second caveat is that symbols may be created consciously or unconsciously (Pond et al. , 1983). In one organization with which we are familiar, the elevator leading to the executive suite was fitted with plush carpet and brass rails.

The stated rationale for this upgrade was to present a more positive image to visiting constituents. Organizational employees who spent much time riding unadorned elevators from floor to floor saw it as a symbol for the personal gerrymandering of top management. Finally, to understand some symbols, one must learn to interpret their detailed patterns in an appropriate manner. Pond et al. (1983) use the example of a Japanese garden to make

this point. Because symbolic meaning is not necessarily apparent, it may be dismissed too easily or overlooked by the casual observer.

The deeper meaning of symbols may be discerned only after much time, effort and careful observation are applied. The obverse of this point suggests that a manager cannot simply take a symbol and lay it out there in the hopes that the appropriate meaning will be obvious. A company creed posted in the lobby may have little effect on organizational life. To give deeper meaning to the creed, other actions ranging from the CEO's own behaviors with employees and customers, to employee supervisory training, to employee award ceremonies and so on may be required to build the creed slowly into a shared view of reality.

Given these caveats, we remain optimistic that symbols are a viable tool for managers in their quest to implement the marketing concept. While this is by no means a simple task, it is also not hopeless. In the next section, we will provide some ideas and some examples to show how this might be done. Using symbols to implement the marketing concept The remainder of this paper will focus on relating various forms of symbols to achieving customer orientation and integrated effort. As pointed out by Dandier (1982, p. 1), "symbols carry us beneath the objective surface of organizational life, into the underlying value structure and feelings inherently there. A symbol elicits or directs individual members' feelings or values. To the extent that any element of organizational life functions in this way it acts as a symbol".

Therefore, symbols may take on numerous forms including: physical symbols or artifacts, rituals, slogans, myths, ideologies, stories, ceremonies, language

and specialized vocabularies, heroes etc. However, due to space limitations, only those forms illustrated in Table I will be presented.

These Type of symbol Language Stories Implementation techniques Develop specific sayings or slogans that emphasize the importance of the customer Repeat customer-oriented stories in training programmers so that new employees are initiated to the customariness culture Hold regular employee gatherings which celebrate the company's customer- orientation Reward employees who exhibit the type of customariness behavior which you would like to see repeated Understanding the marketing concept 1 1 5 Ceremonies Physical symbols Table I.

Symbols and information techniques European Journal of Marketing 31, 2 116 forms were chosen due to their pervasiveness and universal existence in most forms of social collectivities such as organizations. Language . Veered (1983, p. 26) points out that the organization does not possess an objective reality, " but rather is created daily by the linguistic enactments of its members in the course of their everyday miscommunication between each other; that is, by the way in which members talk, hold discourse, share meanings".

Discourse is the meaner by which ideological structures in organizations perpetuate themselves (Dietz and Numb, 1984). An organization's vision statement epitomizes the use of language to set a tone, provide direction, and gain commitment from employees for something larger than their individual concerns (Smirch and Stubborn, 1985, p. 730). Yet fancy words posted on a wall are not sufficient to generate shared values - instead

management must actively work to bread the word to employees and must reinforce their words with consistent actions every day.

At Emerson Electric, for example, division presidents and plant managers meet regularly with all employees to establish profitability as a state of mind. The company's low-cost strategy is supported by shared values: AT Involvement, Intensity discipline and persistence. To instill these values, management includes employees in the planning process, provides them with complete information on business basics, customer needs, and the competition. They listen carefully to employees and make changes when they hear a good idea.

Finally, they claim that every employee can answer four essential questions about his or her job. These include naming the cost reduction project they are currently involved in, naming competitors, recalling when they last met with management, and describing the economics of their job (Knight, 1992). Victor SIAM used a simple technique to get employees at Remington to learn his company's vision. He would walk into the factory at odd moments, pick an employee at random, and pay \$10 if that person could recite the vision. At first no one could answer, but within a week, he was paying out cash (Wall et al. 1992). Obviously, memorization is not the same as commitment, but it is a step in the right direction. If managers demonstrate their commitment to the words, through their own actions and those which they reward, the chances that employees will adopt stated values increase. Square D, a leading manufacturer of electrical equipment, has created an in-house academy called Vision College which teaches employees to speak the same language. All 19, 200 employees of this company have been through a today <https://assignbuster.com/beef-exports-to-china-global-analysis-assignment/>

programmer of lectures and seminars which stress the primacy of quality and customer service.

Since its inception, sales from continuing operations have increased by 37 per cent (Honked, 1990, p. 48). Perhaps the most successful use of language to create a customer orientation was achieved by the late Sam Walton, the founder of Wall-Mart. Walton spoke the same language since opening the first Wall- Mart over 30 years earlier. The Wall-Mart culture is a fearsome weapon which cannot be duplicated at any price. The company gospel is relatively simple: Be an agent for consumers, find out what they want, and sell it to them for the lowest possible price (Seaports, 1991, up. 8-9). The Wall-Mart example clearly illustrates the long-term commitment that is accessory to develop and nurture a customer-oriented culture. While we are not proposing that it takes 30 years to develop a particular culture it is clear that it does not happen overnight. Emerson, Square D, and Remington all show that open communication and employee training are needed to build commitment to the programmer. S tort sees. Stories are usually based on true events that occurred in the organization's past and are repeated to new employees to help them to understand the organization.

Stories provide a shared understanding among all employees and serve as a reminder of the values that they share with others in the firm. When employees share the same stories, " those stories provide general guidelines within which they can customize diagnoses and solutions to local problems" (Wick, 1987, p. 125). Stories based on past customer-oriented actions will be most beneficial in shaping a consensus of attitudes. For example, at Robinson Jeweler's the story of a store representative who delivered a

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wedding ring directly to the church because the ring had been ordered late is told to new members during a training programmer.

New members also hear the one about Lou Schwartz, who once delivered an engagement ring in the midst of a blizzard. These stories stress the values of Roding Jeweler's, which are customer service and value (Data, BABY, p. Delta airlines, stories of employees going the extra mile to please customers abound - ticket agents who drive passengers 50 miles to make a connecting flight, or the flight attendant who lent an outfit to a passenger whose luggage was lost before an important business meeting. These stories foster a sense of pride and commitment by motivated workers and the results are clear.

While management-labor relations at American and United have been frosty at best in recent years, the mood has dated mostly warm and fuzzy at Delta (Labial, 1991, p. 84). Ceremonies. Ceremonies are usually elaborately planned events for large audiences held on special occasions. These occasions reinforce specific values and create a bond among employees for sharing a mutual understanding (Daft, 1989, p. 507). Peters (1987) intimates that "well-constructed recognition settings provide the single most important opportunity to parade and reinforce the specific kinds of new behavior one hopes others will emulate" (p. 70). Furthermore, change within the organization may be effectively accomplished through "... the creation of patterns of activity, and the staging of occasions for interaction" (Peters, 1978, p. 9). The effective manager must learn and practice the ceremonial skills needed to help facilitate the appropriate atmosphere for the behavior reinforcement to occur. These skills may include a "... Flair for the dramatic

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and the expressive in speech and action... ” (Buyer and Trice, 1986, p. 21).

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2 118 Again we turn to Sam Walton to illustrate our point.

During his visits to various Wall- Mart stores, Walton would gather the store employees together as in a revival eating. The employees sat on the store floor while Sam Walton got down on one knee and led the cheer. “ So what’s our challenge? Customer service, that’s right. Are you thinking about doing those extra little things? Are you looking the customer in the eye and offering to help? ” (Hey, 1991, p. 54). Physical symbols. Marketing theorists have long realized the benefits available from the use of powerful symbols.

Large promotional budgets are annually aimed at gaining customer recognition of company symbols (trademarks, brand names, etc.). A unique physical symbol depicting the importance of the customer was reported by Smirch (1982) in an account of her ethnographic study of an insurance company. The symbol was an actual wagon wheel mounted on a flat base. The slogan, “ Wheeling Together”, was coined to represent the symbol’s meaning. The spokes of the wagon wheel represented the various departments within the company while the centre of the wheel represented the customer; indicating that the company revolved around the customer.

Physical symbols may also allow employees a sense of accomplishment when these symbols are used to convey appreciation for a “ Job well done”. These physical symbols should reflect the organization’s underlying values of customer commitment and communicate them to employees. In recognition of their accomplishments, awards should be presented to those employees

who exhibit the type of customer-oriented behavior that management would like to see repeated. In order to communicate tense sealer Dangerous effectively to toner employees, tense awards snouts D presented in the well-constructed recognition settings discussed earlier.

Employee recognition is a powerful tool for creating customer satisfaction, as evidenced by USA insurance company. Employees are grouped into teams with names like Top Guns, Noble Eagles, and Success Express. Teams with the best monthly customer service scores are singled out for public awards. Programmers such as these must be working, 99 per cent of USA members renew their policies every year and Consumer Reports rank them second in service among 51 automobile insurers (Honked, 1991).

Implications In this paper we have argued that the marketing concept defines a specific organizational culture, a shared set of beliefs and values centered around the importance of the customer in the organization's strategy and operations. In order to ransoms these cultural values to organization members, managers can utilize symbols ranging from language, stories and celebrations to physical symbols. In reality, however, these symbols only scratch the surface.

Scheme (1985) views culture as a deep phenomenon which operates unconsciously and defines in a basic "taken for granted" fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment. To affect these deeper levels, management's words and symbols must be consistent, continued, and reinforced by a pattern of actions over time. If management wants employees to put the customer first, they must do so themselves. At one of

the author's colleges of business the new dean has made it clear that our customers are to be considered in all aspects of what we do.

These include both the business executives who hire our students and provide us with money, and our students. One of his first actions was to set up a corporate board of business executives (mostly alumni in high ranking positions) whom he brings in twice a year to discuss policy and educational issues. The bulletin boards have been transformed from cluttered eyesores to bright advertisements concerning job placement for students, publications and faculty achievements, and posted calling cards from business contacts.

Brief faculty meetings are held once a month to discuss matters ranging from the cleanliness of the building to vision and values. These symbols may seem to be operating only on the surface. However, the constant barrage of words and messages, and the reinforcement through the reward structure and allocation of resources ranging from graduate assistant assignments to pay increases, sends a deeper message. Slowly but surely, real change in the culture is beginning to emerge. From another perspective, symbols not only help managers to rate a culture but to interpret it.

Management must become adept at recognizing the multiple interpretations of organizational events and processes. The ability to distinguish between the desired organizational reality and competing realities is the first step in helping employees adopt a shared view of "what it is we do around here and why". Comics posted on office doors, the time spent by faculty in lounges or visiting with external constituents, the typical mode of dress, the extent to

which students are included in committees and task forces - all of these send a message as to what is valued.

Careful use of symbolic meaning, backed by dedicated management actions, can create a culture in line with the tenets of the marketing concept. The implications to marketing academicians are also notably clear. Pedagogy must include organizational culture concepts such as symbolism. In order to help our students gain a more thorough understanding of real world realities, marketing has fallen behind in this regard while other disciplines, such as organizational behavior, have made great strides into theoretical modeling and empirical research on the topic of organizational culture (Deckhands and Webster, 1989).

Additionally, there are implications for research. Traditional quantitative methods of study alone may prove inadequate at revealing the deeper meanings, shared value systems, and conflicting value systems which are represented by an organization's culture. As a result, a renewed emphasis needs to be placed on combining qualitative and quantitative research methods in marketing research. Understanding the marketing concept 119 European Journal of Marketing 31, 2 120 Conclusion Organizational symbolism admonishes attempts to treat culture as a strategic lever which may be turned on and off.

This perspective contends that culture should be studied as organization and vice versa. The focus is placed on what leads people to organize and how a similar view of reality is created. When viewed through this perspective, the marketing concept becomes more than a philosophy of how things should be

done. Indeed, our discussion presents the marketing concept as culture and, thus, as the organization. The marketing concept is then viewed as what the company is as opposed to something that the company has.

To gauge progress towards total customer commitment, the extent to which shared meanings, values, and beliefs regarding the role and importance of the customer are vital elements of the organization's decision-making process must continuously be monitored. While we have stressed that change will not occur overnight, each day that employees perceive management's commitment to the customer to be legitimate brings them closer to fully accepting these values themselves.