

# Socio-cultural influences on international marketing

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



There are some social and cultural factors which has effects on International business. These factors are the main consideration for developing international marketing strategies in different parts of the world. Social and cultural factors influence all aspect of consumer and buyer behavior. In the following I will focus on developing understanding of one of the components of culture which is Religion and its impact on consumer behavior and the implication of international marketing strategies.

Below you can see the components of culture; First of all we need to define culture in relation to International marketing; " the sum total of learned beliefs , values and customs that serve to direct consumer behavior n a particular country market. " The common mistakes among firms which expand internationally and build market presence in foreign country is that assumption that foreign market will be similar to their home market. There are many socio-cultural influences on International marketing. One of these is Religion.

Religion's impact on global marketing becomes more apparent when the observer compares one religion to another. Global marketers need to search actively for any possible influences even when the influences are not very apparent. Developing an initial awareness of he impact religion has on one's own culture is often very helpful in developing cultural sensitivity. Religious beliefs play a significant role on social behavior. Differences in religious affiliations tend to influence the way people live, the choices they make, what they eat and whom they associate with.

Besides individual differences between people, religion is the main driving force that separates humans into groups. Religion defines the ideals for life, which in turn are reflected in the values and attitudes that shape the behavior of societies and individuals. Such values and attitudes shape the behavior and practices of institutions and members of cultures and are the most challenging for the marketer to adjust to. A person's religious beliefs can affect shopping patterns and products purchased in addition to his or her values.

For this reason marketers should adjust their strategies according to specific nations' religion and culture. For example, when Procter & Gamble launched its Biomas laundry detergent in Israel, it found orthodox Jews a challenge because they do not own traditional media such as television sets. The solution was the focus on the segment's core belief that they would aid those less fortunate. A Biomas truck equipped with a washing machine traveled around key towns. People would donate their clothing, and Biomas would wash and distribute them to the needy. As a result, the brand's share has grown 50 percent among the segment. The religion's impact will vary depending on the strength of dominant religion tenets. While religion's impact may be quite indirect in Protestant Northern Europe, its impact in countries where Islamic fundamentalism is on the rise may be profound. What are the dominant religions of the world; Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism.

International Marketing managers must be aware of the differences not only among the major religions but also within them. Religion Impact on

Restriction of Some products Religion, will affect the food that people eat it as well as their attitudes to a whole range of products from deodorant to alcoholic drinks. The impact of religion on consumption patterns usually relates to the restriction of certain foods and beverages, for example, Jews and Muslims do not eat pork, Hindus do not eat beef. Religion affects the marketing of products and service delivery.

When beef or poultry is exported to an Islamic Country, the animal must be killed in the halal method and certified appropriately. Moreover, drinking alcohol is frowned upon if not forbidden by Islam and strict Protestants. Recognition of religious restrictions on products (e. G alcoholic beverages) can reveal opportunities as evidenced by successful launches of non-alcoholic beverages in the Middle East. Religious beliefs of different cultures send direct and indirect messages to international marketers regarding the selection of goods and services.

Religious holiday impact on marketing campaign Also, major holidays are often tied to religion, holidays will be observed differently from one culture to another, and the same holiday may have different connotations.

International marketing managers must see that local holidays to make it marketing programs. For example; . In the United States and other Christian nations, Christmas time is a major sales period. But for other religions, religious holidays do not serve as popular times for purchasing products.

Holidays are actually quite important as they vary considerably from culture to culture. It is advisable to recognize some of the most widely religious

celebrated holidays in the countries where you do business in order to better appreciate what people in different markets deem important in their lives. Again, it is necessary to step outside the box many people in North America have grown up in, the box that says the main holidays are Christmas, Easter, New Year's, and Thanksgiving.

Not every culture celebrates these days, and for those who do, they might not celebrate in the same way or on the same day as those in North America. Many of these cultures will therefore not appreciate images of snow, Santa, Easter, or turkeys. When doing business internationally, it will serve you well to become familiar with the religious days on which the main holidays in your target market fall and also determine how your actual markets celebrate these days. Religion Impact on Promotion and Branding In some countries religion is most dominant cultural force . Or Instance; an Islamic market such as Saudi Arabia , no violation of religion by advertising and other promotional practices, no matter how significant, will go unnoticed or unpunished either by the government or consumer. Its can cause problems for advertisers. Shaving advertisements can not be shown if the male actor shows too much of his chest. The nature and complexity of the different religions an international marketer could encounter is pretty diverse. The organization needs to make sure that their products and services are not offensive, unlawful or distasteful to the local nation.

This includes marketing promotion and branding. For example; ; In China in 2007 (which was the year of the pig) all advertising which included pictures of pigs was banned. This was to maintain harmony with the country's Muslim

population of around 2%. The ban included pictures of sausages that contained pork, and even advertising that included an animated (cartoon) pig. Religion is important consideration. You need to make yourself aware of the local religion to ensure that you don't accidentally or carelessly offend people.

It is important that you remain sensitive and tolerant to different points of view and ensure that your brand doesn't contain any symbolism that could be offensive in the local religion. The understanding of how various religious beliefs and their intensity influence offence towards the advertising of controversial products is of great importance to international advertisers and advertising agency managers in their efforts to improve advertising effectiveness without offending or alienating their target audience. To sum up, Religion is a major cultural variable and has significant effects on marketing strategy.