

## A SUMMARY OF NORMATIVE BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS AS CULTURAL BARRIERS TO INTERNATIONAL MARKETING COMMUNICATION

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The subject of international marketing communication encompasses many facets. Communication is a major part of marketing activities. By our definition, international marketing communication is usually cross-cultural communication—that is, communication between a person in one culture and a person or persons in another culture. However, international marketing communication is not synonymous with cross-cultural communication. In fact, it is possible that insofar as cultural differences occur within a single nation, advertising within that nation might also be cross-cultural in varying degrees. For example, at least 14 major languages are spoken in India; and, since language is an important part of the culture, cross-cultural communication can occur within the political boundaries of a single nation<sup>1</sup>.

### Subjective Culture

It is a common observation, even among members of the nation, there is no conformity to the nation. For an efficient international marketing communication, we must be aware of "subjective culture" affecting communication in both our own culture and the culture of the other participant. "Subjective culture" is a cultural group's characteristic way of perceiving the man-made part of its environment. The perception of rules and the group's norms, roles, and values are aspects of "subjective culture"<sup>2</sup>. By "cultural group" C. H. Triandis means a homogeneous group of people who speak a mutually understandable dialect. But to what extent, we would say that a cultural group is a homogeneous aggregate. To say that, for instance, Arabs or Americans and almost all cultures on the surface of the earth view their social environment in a particular way is often being stereotype.

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- 1 Miracle, Gordon E., Albaum, Gerald S., *International Marketing Management*, Richard D. Irwin, Inc., Illinois, 1970, pp. 454-455.
- 2 Triandis, C. Harry, *The Analysis of Subjective Culture*, U.S.A., John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1972, p. 4.

In international marketing situations, the main communication problem is that each participant is unable to control the behavior of other. Because s/he does not know and understand the causes of the other's overt behavior. S/he does not know, for instance, how the other communicator views and analyses her/his overt behavior and constitutes a reward for the other. As G.R. Miller states: by heightening your awareness of these behaviors, you will increase your control over the course of relationship in which you wish to be involved<sup>3</sup>.

### Approaches from the Behavioral Sciences for Effective and Efficient International Marketing Communication

Effective and efficient international marketing communication require "isomorphic attributions"<sup>4</sup>. Isomorphic attributions correspond to this idea: If I had been raised in that culture and had had the kinds of experiences that s/he has had, I would do exactly what s/he did. Isomorphic attributions result in a positive evaluation of the other<sup>5</sup>. In other words, critical discriminator here will be the combination of knowing and accepting and adhering to the normative beliefs and overt behaviors of the other, as proposed by E.L. Sarbaugh<sup>6</sup>. On the intercultural level, we do not know the right cues of normative beliefs and behaviors indicating what is rewarding to another person. For instance, in Egypt one might express approval of food served by a host by belching. This is a cue which can be seen as a direct compliment. In other cultures, of course, the same behavior is most impolite.

T.M. Newcomb has proposed that the processes of norm-building and communication are circularly related to each other. Norms arise through communication, which in turn is made possible because norms already exist. Every child is born, into a society whose members already make use of shared ways of perceiving things. Norms, then, are developed about anything and everything which is of shared interest to two or more people who interact with each other<sup>7</sup>.

Many communication situations are guided and controlled by cultural norms. Thus, knowledge of one cultural group's normative patterns and behavior, roles or its prevailing expectancies allow us to predict probable responses to certain messages.

On the international level, for instance, when certain members of Asian culture raise their voices, they are expressing anger and loss of self-control, when North Americans raise their voices, they may merely be emphasizing a point. In this

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3 Miller, Gerald R., and Steinberg, Mark, *Between People: A New Analysis of Interpersonal Communication*, Science Research Associates Inc., 1975, p. 218.

4 One could substitute "valid" or "correct" for isomorphic.

5 Triandis, C. Harry (Ed.), *Variations in Black and White Perception of the Social Environment*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976, p. 14.

6 Sarbaugh, Lawrence E., *Intercultural Communication*, Rochelle Park, Hayden Book Company, Inc., New Jersey, 1979, p. 51.

7 Newcomb, Theodore M., "Social Psychological Theory: Integrating Individual and Social Approaches" in Rohrer, John H. and Sherif, Muzafer (Ed.) *Social Psychology at the Crossroads*, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1951, pp. 31-49.

international situation, to the Asian the North American is angry, to the North American the Asian is emphatic. To say, in China an American businessman is trying to explain her/his intent with higher voice to the Chinese businessman in an international enterprise. Then, if American Businessman's high voice is perceived as an anger or loss of self-control by the Chinese businessman that is communication breakdown on the international marketing level.

The case mentioned above lead to L.E. Sarbaugh's principle: As level of knowing and accepting of the normative beliefs and overt behaviors by participants in a transaction moves from both knowing and both accepting to neither knowing and neither accepting, the difficulty of carrying on the transaction increases and the probability of communication breakdown increases<sup>8</sup>. Because, in the case of above, the Chinese businessman is not aware of cues of American businessman's behavior. As Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman have asserted: self-awareness is one thing. Awareness of others is another. When you are self-aware, you know what is going on in your own "Awareness-Wheel", your senses, thoughts, feelings, intentions, actions, ....., using the "Awareness Wheel" and expressing self-awareness can put you more in tune with yourself.

Awareness of others means tuning into their immediate experience-their "Awareness Wheel". When you are intimately and accurately aware of someone else's sensation, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and the meaning of their actions, you are truly aware of him/her. But just as it is not easy to become completely aware of yourself in a situation, it is tough to be completely aware of another person as well. In fact, it may be impossible. But you can become more aware of others<sup>9</sup>.

That is why communication makes it possible to learn to a great extent about a cultural group without actually living in it. As a businessman you were planning to visit Saudi Arabia or China, for instance, you would probably read books about the country, watch televised programs concerning it, and discuss its customs and taboos with friends who had visited there. By the time you actually arrived for your travel, you would have accumulated a great deal of information about the country's culture and would be able to make a number of predictions about the probable effects of certain communication behaviors. But there are still some communication competencies can be learned only by direct experience with a cultural group. After living in the new culture for a while you would probably increase your "Awareness Wheel" of the host cultural group and would be able to predict more accurately. Direct experience with the cultural group is far more than knowing its normative patterns. C.H. Triandis suggests: the similar basic life experiences of the people of a cultural group shape similar cognitive structures which in turn cause that cultural group to perceive their environment in certain consistent ways. He has called this "cognitive aspect of culture"<sup>10</sup>. H.H. Kelley in 1950 demonstrated the influence of

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8 Sarbaugh, Lawrence E. ...., p. 75.

9 Miller, Sherad, Nunnally, Elam W. and Wackman, Daniel B., *Alive and Aware: Improving Communication in Relationship*, Printing Arts Inc., 1975, p. 103.

10 Triandis, C. Harry, *The Analysis of Subjective Culture*, p. 21.

expectancy on perceptual readiness showing that perceivers expecting a person to be "cold" had dramatically different perceptions of him than ones who expected that person to be "warm". Then, if and when such a minor previous experience can significantly affect the perception of a person, we should expect culture (the accumulation of a multitude of previous experiences) to strongly affect the perception of people.

Thus, we mean here that a member of a culture can hardly make "isomorphic attributions" the expectancies of members of another culture without direct experience with that cultural group for a while, particularly on the international level, because of a higher degree of dissimilarity of perception.

### Conclusions

Finally, the essentiality of cultural norms in the communication process is plausibly remarked by T.M. Newcomb: people can interact without any common body of norms, but they cannot communicate in the sense of sharing meaning through their interaction ..... Communication is a process by which a person refers to something ..... in such a way as to lead another person to have a more or less similar experience of it. Communication, in this sense, presupposes norms which are shared by the communicating persons, so that similar meanings are shared by them<sup>11</sup>.

Influence cannot flow from producer to consumer unless communication takes place, and communication, in turn, depends upon a sharing of meaning between interacting parties. Without communication, the most essential functions of marketing — those of exchange — could not exist<sup>12</sup>.

The successful foreign marketer must become culturally sensitive - attuned to the nuances of culture so the other culture can be objectively seen, evaluated, and appreciated<sup>13</sup>.

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- 11 Newcomb, Theodoro M., *Social Psychology*, New York: Dryden Press, 1950, pp. 267-268.
  - 12 Zaltman, Gerald, *Marketing: Contributions from the Behavioral Sciences*, Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1965, U.S.A., p. 103.
  - 13 Cateora, Philip R., Hess, John M., *International Marketing*, Richard D. Irwin, Inc., Illinois, 1979, p. 89.

## Türkçe Özet

### ULUSLARARASI PAZARLAMA İLETİŞİMİNDE KÜLTÜREL ENGELLER OLARAK NORMATİF İNANÇLAR VE DAVRANIŞLAR : BİR ÖZET

Uluslararası pazarlama iletişim süreci içinde taraflar açısından normatif inançlar ve davranışların nasıl ve neden engel oluşturdukları özet olarak açıklanmış ve çözüm yolları aranmıştır. Konuya iki ayrı kültür grubundan işadamlarının uluslararası düzeyde pazarlama eyleminin sorunları olarak bakılmıştır. Uluslararası pazarlama iletişim süreci içinde kültür olgusunun önemi vurgulanmıştır.

C.H. Triandis'e göre (1972), uluslararası pazarlama eylemi içinde farklı kültür grubundan gelen işadamlarının kendi kültür grubu diğerleri tarafından "subjektif kültür" olarak algılanmaktadır.

Uluslararası pazarlama iletişim süreci tarafların normatif inançları ve davranışları ile etkilenmektedir. Çünkü, farklı kültür gruplarından geldikleri için tarafların normatif inançları ve davranışları iletişim süreci içinde "yanlış", "eksik" ve "olumsuz" yönde algılanmakta ve yorumlanmaktadır. Böylece, taraflar arasında uluslararası düzeyde pazarlama iletişimi kopar. Bu nedenle, daha "etkili" ve "verimli" iletişim akımının sağlanabilmesi için davranış bilimleri açısından türlü çözüm yolları ve yöntemleri aranmaya çalışılmıştır. Bunlar arasında C.H. Triandis'in (1976) "isomorphic attributions" ve Miller, Nunnally ve Wackman'ın (1975) "Awareness Wheel" yaklaşımları da yer almaktadır.