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Business and Culture: Navigating Cross-Cultural Marketing in the Age of Globalization

Abstract

The rising prominence of globalization has been a consistent influence on how international companies approach the question of marketing. While globalization has undeniably opened many doors for companies to expand their horizons, the subsequent shift in the commercial landscape of the world has caused a ripple effect on all business-related practices, ranging from logistics to brand management. This phenomenon has only grown more influential and difficult to overlook with the continuous surge in technological advancement of the past century. The incessant leaps in technology have found new ways of breaking down the previously established boundaries between international trade actors. The ability to communicate across immeasurable distances introduced new ways of reaching customers, which subsequently led to the progressing relevance of international marketing. The companies that were unable to adapt to the new world order ended up ceasing to function, while the ones that caught up with the new wave of business communications enjoyed newfound success. Given the everlasting impact of globalization, our society has grown more connected than ever before, which makes the matter of being able to communicate through our existing cultural boundaries all the more important.

This study emphasizes how globalization has diluted the cross-cultural boundaries between different countries to such an extent that most products and services have become standardized to appeal to the most common denominator. This paper examines how standardization has lost its initial appeal and the cultural countermovement that has followed. It also examines how such practices as localization and adaptation are currently being employed by organizations in order to recapture the favor of an average consumer who is no longer interested in products bereft of any presence of their cultural identity. Additionally, it puts forward existing real-life examples that underline how abandoning standardization practices in favor of employing a more locally oriented approach to achieve global success has paid off.

Keywords: *globalization, localization, adaptation, cross-cultural boundaries, standardization*

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Biznes və mədəniyyət: qloballaşma dövründə mədəniyyətlərarası marketinqdə naviqasiya

Xülasə

Qloballaşmanın artan əhəmiyyəti beynəlxalq şirkətlərin marketinqə yanaşmasına davamlı təsir göstərmişdir. Qloballaşma şirkətlərin öz üfqlərini genişləndirməsi üçün bir çox qapılar açsa da, dünyanın ticarət mənzərəsində baş verən dəyişikliklər bütün biznes fəaliyyətlərinə — logistikadan brend idarəçiliyinə qədər — dalğavari təsir göstərmişdir. Bu fenomen, son əsrdə texnoloji inkişafın sürətlənməsi ilə daha da təsirli və nəzərəçarpan olmuşdur.

Texnologiyada baş verən davamlı sıçrayışlar beynəlxalq ticarət subyektləri arasındakı əvvəlcədən mövcud olan sərhədləri aşmaq üçün yeni yollar təqdim etmişdir. Uzaq məsafələrdən ünsiyyət qurmaq qabiliyyəti müştərilərə çatmağın yeni üsullarını ortaya çıxarmış və bunun nəticəsində beynəlxalq marketinqin əhəmiyyəti artmışdır. Yeni dünya düzəlinə uyğunlaşa bilməyən şirkətlər fəaliyyətini dayandırmış, əksinə, biznes kommunikasiyasındakı bu yeni dalğaya uyğunlaşanlar yeni uğurlar əldə etmişdir. Qloballaşmanın davamlı təsiri nəzərə alındıqda, cəmiyyətimiz heç vaxt olmadığı qədər bir-biri ilə əlaqəli hala gəlmişdir və mövcud mədəni sərhədlərimizi aşaraq ünsiyyət qurmaq bacarığı daha da vacib olmuşdur.

Bu araşdırma qloballaşmanın müxtəlif ölkələr arasındakı mədəni sərhədləri o qədər zəiflətdiyini vurğulayır ki, əksər məhsul və xidmətlər ən geniş auditoriyaya xitab etmək üçün standartlaşdırılmışdır. Bu məqalə standartlaşdırmanın ilkin cəlbədiciliyini necə itirdiyini və bunun nəticəsində yaranan mədəni əks-hərəkəti araşdırır. Eyni zamanda təşkilatların lokalizasiya və adaptasiya kimi yanaşmalardan istifadə edərək artıq öz mədəni kimliyindən məhrum məhsullara maraq göstərməyən orta statistik istehlakçının rəğbətini yenidən qazanmağa çalışdıqlarını tədqiq edir. Bundan əlavə, qlobal uğura nail olmaq üçün standartlaşdırma təcrübələrindən imtina edərək daha lokallaşdırılmış yanaşmalar tətbiq edən şirkətlərin real həyatda əldə etdiyi müsbət nəticələri vurğulayan mövcud nümunələri təqdim edir.

Açar sözlər: *qloballaşma, lokalizasiya, adaptasiya, mədəni sərhədlər, standartlaşdırma*

Introduction

Background and Context

In order to distinguish the ways in which globalization has impacted the way organizations of today approach marketing, it's important to put the phenomenon in historical context. Societies of the past weren't too different from their successors and had always had great fascination with what can be found over the horizon. We can trace the beginnings of international global trade being formed all the way back to the 15th-16th centuries, when European explorers successfully breached new geographical borders in order to expand trade routes of existing empires. This caused the formation of new trade relations as well as a surge in the diversity of new products. As new innovative means of transportation started to take center stage during the Industrial Revolution and leading up to the development of new means of communication and production during the 20th century, the world experienced unprecedented changes that breached preexisting regional barriers and promoted economic integration. Political, cultural, and economic elements forged the new world order, where countries have grown to be increasingly dependent on one another for resources in order to function properly. As of 1989, right when the Iron Curtain finally fell, globalization as we know it today started to form (Ramya & Sivam, 2024).

Due to such a high level of friction between so many international actors, average consumers with different cultural, economic, and societal attributes were presented with the same products. One thing became apparent to many successful organizations, and it's that human needs transgress individual differences. This approach eventually led to the standardization of products and their attributes. The driving focus became utility and universal appeal as opposed to cultural distinction. This led to the philosophy of the eradication of any elements that could be "alienating" to any particular customer demographic. In today's day and age, however, we can observe how the evolving influence of social media channels has propelled consumers to share their lived experiences and the ways in which it disagrees with standardization practices. Such a cultural trend allowed people to push for adaptation to their varying ways of living. This paper examines how the aforementioned development has created a countermovement in response to globalization. Additionally, it contributes to the currently circulating discourse surrounding cultural identity and global consumerism and delivers practical ideas of how organizations can approach the issue practically (Dave, 2017).

Research Objective

The primary goals of this study are to dissect the manner in which globalization has shaped the way organizations approach marketing and the counter-movement that is motivated by consumers who want to see the elements of their cultural identity adopted. With respect to current consumer

trends, the study aims to find the common ground between consumer expectations for more distinction and corporate limitations to address all facets of human identity. The study aims to answer whether standardization is as effective as it has ever been or whether adaptation should replace it as the default strategy for international organizations. Furthermore, this paper seeks to examine the extent of Western influence on the global cultural discourse and how such a trend interacts with countries that exist in different cultural dimensions. Additionally, one of the primary objectives consists in discerning what approach makes or breaks efficient multicultural marketing strategies so that organizations can approach the process of global integration with a greater degree of care by addressing proper avenues of development (Vaddadi & Thandava, 2019).

Innovation and Contribution

This study advances the understanding of the relationship between globalization and corporate marketing and offers practical solutions for potential international organizations to confront the lack of cultural understanding of the desired regions for expansion. This paper puts forward the idea that with respect to the differences in cultural dimensions as well as proper understanding of what does appeal to the most common denominator, organizations don't have to make grand concessions while simultaneously being inclusive of fundamental differences inherent to potential new markets. The primary contribution of this article is to highlight the importance of navigating the strive for universal appeal while leveraging cultural differences. The end goal is to help organizations decide what approach is more suitable for them and whether the "act locally, think globally" philosophy can aid them in the future (Khan & Khan, 2022).

Research

This study examines the extent to which globalization and cultural identity are connected through the application of such strategic marketing concepts as adaptation, localization, and glocalization principles. This theoretical foundation can allow us to approach the subject matter critically. In order to address the challenges of cultural integration, this research examines real-world examples and applies a theoretical lens in order to exemplify what about a particular case is practically feasible (Anendya, 2024).

Case Study Analysis

The applied case study is used to analyze whether standardization can be ineffective and how a situation can be salvaged by alternative means.

Case Study

Prior to 1996, McDonald's didn't have any outlets in the Indian subcontinent. With a population of almost a billion people, India has always been regarded as a very important potential market for any company that was serious about becoming a global actor. Missing out on such a potentially lucrative market when one of McDonald's biggest competitors, KFC, had already opened its first outlet there a year prior. The main disadvantage McDonald's had was the fact that, unlike KFC, an important chunk of its menu was comprised of beef, the consumption of which was prohibited by the most widespread religion in the region, Hindu. Not to mention that certain states had made cow slaughter illegal. The Muslim population that can consume meat couldn't consume pork products for the same reason. In addition, it's worth considering that a significant chunk of Indian population is also vegetarian and, therefore, can't consume meat products at all. In this particular case, McDonald's couldn't exactly go forth with their standardization like they had been doing so far and had to improvise. Beef and pork products were off-limits completely, and McDonald's wasn't exactly popular for its vegetarian products at the time either. Therefore, the company had to itemize and get creative (Vanham, 2019).

Solution

McDonald's decided to employ an adaptation strategy. The company completely erased beef and pork from its menu for the aforementioned reasons. Instead of its standard menu, McDonald's decided to tailor the new menu to the dietary restrictions of the Indian market. McDonald's had conducted proper research and decided to introduce a new Big Mac variant, "Maharaja Mac," which substituted beef for lamb initially but now is made with chicken. Upon its introduction, it became a bestseller

among the local consumers, but that wasn't the end to McDonald's localization practices (Ewah & Osang, 2018).

With the successful integration of Maharaja Mac, McDonald's decided to itemize further by addressing other areas of improvement. The company introduced a range of new burger variants, such as McAlloo Tikki, McVeggie, McEgg, Veg Maharaja Mac, and so on. All of these new options addressed the customer demand for vegetarian options as well.

Further down the line, McDonald's decided to introduce different serving areas and kitchens for vegetarian and meat items. This was done in order to bring people's attention to the existence of the vegetarian options in the first place and eradicate any possible confusion regarding the distinction between the two. They decided to color code vegetarian serving areas with green and meat areas with red in order to underline the differences. Additionally, they adapted the prices accordingly, understanding that many areas of India weren't the most affluent demographics and couldn't exactly afford its original prices, as evidenced by the fact that the more expensive items on their menu are in the ₹200+ range, which is a dollar equivalent of \$2.31 (Czapla, Glinkowska-Krauze, & Chebotarov, 2023).

Result

As a result, McDonald's had successfully integrated into the Indian market through the use of adaptation and localization strategies. They understood the importance of cultural and religious practices of the local consumers and adapted accordingly. They not only addressed the underlying issue of dietary restrictions but also understood that the economic disparity had to be taken into account as well. Overall, McDonald's integration into the Indian market was an overall success, thanks to their efforts to properly localize.

Conclusion

The impact of globalization on how companies approach marketing to this very day cannot be understated. The eradication of cultural boundaries is a continuous process, and its impact continues to shape business practices and consumer perceptions. However, it becomes increasingly clear that most products on the market shelf can no longer move forward with a one-size-fits-all approach. Given how the case study used had occurred all the way back in 1996, one cannot help but wonder if people have been looking for corporate entities to recognize their cultural distinctions all along. The existing dichotomy of practical homogeneity that many organizations have been practicing for the past few decades and cultural and identity-driven differences doesn't have to exist. There is a way to both appeal to majorities and integrate their differences practically, as long as businesses approach the subject matter with a great degree of care.

Declarations

The manuscript has not been submitted to any other journal or conference.

Study Limitations

One might find the case study example to be antiquated. With the existence of such social media channels as YouTube, TikTok, and X (formerly known as Twitter), the corporate integration into a new territory might look quite different due to a greater scale of scrutiny it might be put under.

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