

The Way How Anthropological Culture Shapes Consumes: An Exploratory Comparative Study

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Abstract

The world today is discovering new forces clashing together and creating new threats and opportunities in terms of Globalization. Because these forces are mainly local, and not only economic, business today must take into consideration all different aspects, usually marginalized features, such as anthropology, traditions, and popular beliefs; weather and geography; religion and culture (Foegel, 1964 Parker, 1997^{1,2,3}, 2000, Scaini 2013, 2015^{1,3}, Weber 1904/05, 1906). These revitalizing and reinforcing instances are pushing/forcing “Globalization” to face new challenges, defined in the following: 1. Integration of different products with different cultures (Appiah, 2006), 2. adaptation of old products and retail marketing strategies to specific local needs based on physioeconomic factors (Paganina et al, 2015, Scaini 2012, 2015^{1,3}) and 3. How people in different environments buy the same products but consume them in different ways due to different cultural influences. The present paper intends to prove the original different consumes by comparing the cultural forces behind the consumption of the same goods in two different contexts: western and eastern markets. Moreover, the present exploratory study proves different cultural motivations for consumers that pass through the unaffected bottleneck of purchase. Eventually, the anthropological instances that effectively and efficiently shape marketing strategies.

Keywords: Globalization, Physioeconomics, Culture, Economic and Consumer Behavior, Marketing Strategy

Introduction

Actual Problems in Glocalization

The relative constant failure of global strategies(Lynch, 1998, Scaini 2012, 2013, Stiglitz 2007) and the solutions offered by 2.0 marketing as an overrated panacea for the local instances (cultural conditions, traditions,

beliefs and their consequentially influenced economic behaviours) reveal the exigencies of new applications (Cova et al., 2008, 2014, Locke et al., 2001, Scaini, 2012, 2013). The strategies must be oriented not just toward purchases, as they are not affected by the same cultural problems, but toward consumes. In fact, a dialogical and unconventionally innovative approach needs the same cultural investigation in depth, in order to consistently and robustly understand the reasons of cultural resistance. Ignoring the consume-related problems actually risks limiting the interaction with purchases, widening the anthropological gap between local and global situation. Consistently, marketing must take in good consideration the specific stimuli that lie behind both the consumer and purchase behaviour, in order to satisfy both desires and needs, possess and consume. The fact is that high cultural contexts hinder strategies and products on the level of consumes, where companies result in a weak ability to encounter, understand and eventually merge with local instances (Locke, 2001, Scaini 2012, 2015³). In an unconventional and tribal dialogue, what Cova et al. said (2008) is surely important, but the dialogue itself urges to be based on a deep analysis and understanding of anthropological cultural frames, even until sharing. In this framework, the word “environments”, better than “markets”, fully expresses the meaning of “social, anthropological, and economical forces merging together and influencing peoples’ decisions” and consequential acts and reactions to products and marketing campaigns.

Analysis of the Marketing Problem

Most of the time, the penetration of a new market is managed (in the same manner as) placing some product or service in a physical environment limited to the sell-and-purchase. And the analysis is pursued taking into consideration mostly classic parameters in a mechanical way (Locke, 2001 and Cova and Saucet, 2014). The micro and macro audits are performed without a deeper analysis of the contextualization and re-contextualization of products that, even though not newly developed, are considered to be new relatively to the new cultural context. In fact, in every environment, people are influenced by different cultural forces, which shape the marketing process of consumes accordingly. This is because penetration and selling strategies have been studied more deeply, since they are more closely influencing the financial sphere, while the consumes, which are more linked with society and anthropology, have been mostly shelved and even the consumer behaviour relies more on purchases’ consequences.

An audit should be performed taking into consideration both phases of the marketing process and the deeper relationships beyond the selling interaction company-target (finally, people with a social anthropological culture). The technical data-based analysis, arguably important, is influenced

by, and becomes a consequence of the cultural one. People must not be managed as a physical part of the market but as the fluid and dynamic essence of it (Locke, 2001 and Cova and Saucet, 2014, Scaini 2013).

The “cultural problem” to be investigated lies on a deeper level than the classic economic parameters and is influenced by classic physioeconomics (such as weather and other physical conditions, religion, anthropology, as stated by Parker, 2000 and Foegel, 2004). This is a physioeconomic “cultural problem” itself which influences and leads people, intended like “A social group, gathered around common hetero and auto-acknowledged values, that behaves in some specific ways” (Cova et al. 2007, Scaini et al. 2015²). The cultural background causes specific and often unique reactions to marketing strategies through the interaction with products, intended for peculiar different cultures, and this is the limit of the present industrial and cultural approach (Cova et al. 2008).

Methodology

The methodology of investigation is based on the direct observation of the problem and consequential analysis.

Quantitative data were used to proof the background of the research: the fact that people everywhere buy the same product and, by direct consequence, consume them. The reasons why consume is influenced by cultural instances, whilst purchases are not, is investigated instead through qualitative research. The present paper aims to introduce a problem that should require both: 1. Deeper investigation of the topic itself (the practice of consumes and cultural influence) and 2. Wider research in further environments and fields.

The qualitative investigation has been conducted among people from two different environments-markets, Japan and USA, used as an initial and particularly useful sample to isolate the problem, narrow the test, and shape the problem on the most urgent instances, both practically and theoretically. From the initial sample, a number of 200 tests has been selected. The anagraphic characteristic was as broad as possible in terms of sex (50 M/F), age (30% each tier from 20 to 60 years old), education (BA, MA, and Superior) and social status. Further investigations will be pursued on an exactly chosen sample to confirm the initial results, to be intended like an investigation on the feasibility of a deeper and wider research.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis that this paper holds is that marketing strategies rely more on selling methods and on the reasons of the purchase behaviour, dangerously leaving behind the anthropological conditions of use (that are causes and goals of the consume of goods). Under a marketing tactic point of

view, consumers' reasons are linked to purchase under functional and factual motives. Present paper intends to explore the cultural instances behind the way how certain goods are used and adopted meeting, or not, peoples' expectations. People are not studied as shoppers, buyers and consumers only, but also as dynamic interactive elements of precisely shaped anthropological cultures.

Main Problems and Educated Questions

Statement: Cultural influence on the utilization of large-distribution product; not the purchases. This happens thanks to largely studied and boosted selling strategies.

1. In the broad frame of the clashing forces, is the local or national utilization of goods influenced in different ways by anthropologic culture?
2. How and through which forces does the specific cultural environment influence the utilization of the same products?
3. As a direct consequence of what was previously stated, and much narrowed on practical implications, can anthropological cultural inter-relationships be used to foster marketing operations?

Finally, since the thesis hypothesizes that physioeconomic forces can hinder the expected utilization and create the prerequisite for the adoption, in different ways, of a product that might fail to satisfy the new unpredicted usage and expectations, marketing should be the inter-cultural bridge that creates a dialogue and goes beyond commercial purposes, leading to a mutual comprehension in economic terms.

Data Analysis in two Environments: USA (low context) and Japan (high context)

The hypothesis is that cultural forces dangerously shape marketing strategies due to lack of deep studies and cultural investigations. The danger is both from the financial side of companies' interests and from the economic side of social groups-targets. The lack of anthropological behavioral investigation can affect loyalty and repurchasing rates if the product is wrongly interpreted as good or adapted to a different use or if there is no proper and clear communication from the company or, in some cases, no communication at all.

The entire investigation is based on few quantitative data proofing that the purchase of sample products and services is barely or non-influenced in markets with a different cultural contextualization, and moves to a qualitative research proofing that consumers are basically pursued in a way too different manner, relying more on cultural aspects. This means that people buying the same products, use them in peculiar and different ways that might affect the reliability of goods and their effectiveness.

Further, the hypothesis is also exploring these specific ways to adapt products, very local as well as very culturally or anthropologically influenced, they require precise and specific studies as well as a culture-oriented marketing analysis, to avoid both the clash of very culturally intended products with customs and a dangerous fail, especially in new markets, and in highly culturally contextualized markets (De Mooji, 2010, Esso and Dibb, 2004, Luna and Forquer 2001, MCClearly and Barro 2006, Mokhlis, 2009, Sood and Nasu, 1995, Wessel, 2009, Scaini, 20153).

The definition of physioeconomic forces, in the present paper and for the present purposes, is only limited to anthropologic cultural parameters, and is an exploratory study. Basically, the question was asked to 200 people who are equal in terms of origin; sex, age, education level, is much narrowed on how culture influences the consumer of four specific products/services: alcohol consumption, adult education, health and wellness, fashion clothes. The first characteristic question was intended to understand if people in different markets also feel the belonging to a specific cultural context. This is relevant to identify the consumer-culture relation.

Do you feel that you belong to a specific cultural context?	YES	NO	TOTAL
Japan	98	2	100
USA	55	45	100

Further, to confirm that there is none or little influence of the cultural context on purchases, the second question relied on the products/services purchased.

Do you usually buy / have you ever bought:	Adult Education	Health Services and Wellness	Alcohol	Fashion Clothes	TOTAL
Japan	90/10	98/2	91/9	100	100
USA	80/20	98/2	85/15	98/2	100

The results confirmed that in different contexts, anagraphically and culturally similar people buy the same products/services.

Finally, the research was oriented toward the utilization ways, modes and reasons; trying to identify the culturally-related motivations (answers were gathered into main categories)

Adult Education	What course have taken?	Why? (consider both causes and goals)
Japan	Languages, technologies 92 Painting, other creative courses 8	Learning 33 Usefulness for work ⁹ 67
USA	Languages, technologies 5 Painting, other creative courses 95	Personal Interest 74 Individual Expression 26

⁹ Work was considered different from career (work: 54, Career 3)

Health Services and Wellness Japan	What kind of sport or training have you done? Traditional Sports ¹⁰ 85 Other national sports 15	Why? (consider both causes and goals) Self-Discipline 62 Philosophy of Life 38
USA	Team Sports 65 Individual Disciplines 45	Societal Fitting (emerging) 69 Self-Discipline, Philosophy of Life (for self-empowerment) 31
Alcohol Utilization Japan	Where and How do you usually consume alcohol? Home 4 Clubs, Bars 96	Why? (consider both causes and goals) Societal Relax ¹¹ 100 Personal Fun 0
USA	Home 51 Clubs, Bars 49	Societal Relax 50 Personal Fun ¹² 50
Clothes and Fashion Items Japan	On which occasion do you buy clothes/fashion items? Work 75 Free Time 25	Why? (consider both causes and goals) Representation of work position 88 Other 12 ¹³
USA	Work 49 Free Time 51	Representation of social status 89 Other 11

A final panel was then prepared to link the representative values of the two identified socio-cultural groups (Japanese and American). It was asked to the tests if they rely (mostly) or not (mostly) on some precise value, linked with a consume influence.

CONTEXT	Q: VALUE JAPAN	Q: VALUE USA	Influence on consume in Japan?	Influence on consume in USA?
Work and Relax (Leisure) (product alcohol/amusement)	Hard Work	Freedom of Expression	Alcohol for social relax (relaxation) (drink after work / parties)	Alcohol both for social and personal fun (drink after work / parties)
Learning & Studying (product adult education)	Learning	Personal Freedom (individual)	Courses useful for work	Courses useful for self-empowerment
Self-representation outside (clothes)	Integrity	Self-Confidence	Clothes as representation	Clothes as representation of the (social) status

¹⁰ Martial arts, including other traditional disciplines or national sports, including baseball and soccer

¹¹ In Japan it includes “societal fun”

¹² In USA it includes “simple personal use”

¹³ In this case in Japan the 12 testes referred to “belonging to social groups”, all students. Certainly influenced by use of uniforms in Japanese schools

Health and Wellness (sport and training)	Self- Discipline	Personal Success	of the work position Traditional Sport	Sport for emerging, including individual (Social Inclusion)
Special final question: Relationship in the Group	Self- Confidence (Group)	Selfish-ing (selfishness)	Adapting to group values	Calling group to gather around own values

Findings, Conclusions and Actual Limitations

The expected outcomes of the present exploratory study were respected. 1. Actually, data proofs that the same products and services are sold and purchased in different markets by very alike buyers, but used in different specific ways by consumers: this offers interesting possible future improvements, in general, about distinguishing the role of buyers and consumers as researchers’ targets. 2. Given that the same products are sold and bought, and that they become ready to be consumed, the way how and reasons for the utilization are different and rely on belonging to specific cultural anthropological contexts, which influence the way how people behave in utilization, but apparently not in purchasing. 3. The reasons behind consumes are physioeconomic, considering two tiers: a first tier is the forces making a culture (physical, religion, traditions, and beliefs), the second, which has a stronger influence, is the anthropologic culture. The present study, based on facts and figures and a qualitative research supporting the investigation, shows how the original statement is respected: people do use the products accordingly with a precise social anthropological system of values (culture).

The theoretical implication is the analysis of a deeper level of the market, apparently far from the sphere of business and economy and closer to social sciences, and the need to reconsider economy as “management of a house” (*oikos nomea*), intended like a societal context closed, even surely cosmetically connected with other macro environments.

The practical implications of the study are connected with the development of a new level of analysis of cultures, clashing in the re-contextualization of a product or service that is the vehicle of cultural instances in a new context where different anthropological values influence behavior.

Limitations to the present paper are the considerations given to the two sample markets, one is highly contextualized, and the other one is low contextualized and that can be extended to more cultural environments/markets. Moreover, the few quantitative data adopted, being an exploratory study can be further examined.

Finally, and this is also a future improvement, the consideration given only to culture, among the many physioeconomic parameters: present paper is intending culture like a factor that is influenced by those further factors and the reference to few exemplificative products/services that can be narrowed to particularly detailed products and situations.

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