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ETHNOMARKETING AND TRIBAL MARKETING - GENERAL ISSUES

Review
Article

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Abstract

Ethnomarketing and tribal marketing can be regarded as subdivisions of intercultural management. This is the perspective intended to be analyzed in the proposed study, by valuing cultural specificity features that can support the effort of adaptation to a group that can be described by common features. The aim is to provide a general theoretical framework and proposals to adapt the marketing mix to a certain ethnic or "tribal" profile, in order to increase the company's performance.

INTRODUCTION

In present, managerial practices often imply: global vision and local action; delegation for rapid decision-making, in line with local realities; outsourcing to exploit the knowledge and experience of those who have demonstrated that they have extremely useful abilities for organizations; leadership, as an important quality in the management of an organization; the flat organizational structure, which allows responsibility be emphasized (Quintero, 2012). These practices are closer to the employee, the client and even other stakeholders. Local realities imply the consideration of specific contextual factors, perhaps culture being the most important of them. Hence the idea of valorization in marketing management, in various forms: intercultural marketing, ethnomarketing, tribal marketing etc.

Migration, as a complex and extended phenomenon of current reality, with multiple effects on national societies, reveals particular structural, socio-cultural and political aspects that can be considered in company's marketing strategies. Worldwide there is an extraordinarily dynamic population structure based on ethnicity, and this feature can be exploited positively through ethnomarketing. Specific cultural meanings conferred to products / services, to purchase and consumption acts should have at least the same importance as the provided products and services, while marketing approaches are developed. Therefore, in this article, we intend to emphasize the importance of ethnomarketing and provide the necessary benchmarks in substantiating the cultural marketing strategies, in order to create / strengthen the competitive advantage.

As well, the increased interest in integration in different groups featured by a subculture where the individual better fits in, inclusively by consumption (an aspect favored also by the development of virtual networks) leads to the development of new theories, such as tribal marketing. As a result, another aimed objective of this paper is also to provide analysis directions on this segment.

Considering the ethnomarketing and tribal marketing as present cultural challenges of marketing management, we offer some guidelines for designing strategies tailored to the socio-cultural framework where the individuals of a group are referred to, characterized by something specific that is meant to create a tight relation between them.

CONCEPTUAL SPECIFICATIONS

Global marketing proposes to impose the standardization of a concept / product without the concern to match it simultaneously to the elements of supply and the conditions of demand; it considers the phenomena specific to modern societies (globalization, standardization, flattening, etc.) and proposes the same approach of the market. Cultural dimension of the market is recognized only through an extension process that aims to find solutions for the design of standard products, accepted on any market (Zaiț, 2002).

International marketing is the variant of global marketing that takes into account the different aspects of the process of company's internationalization in the global environment. It also offers the option of adapting to the cultural specificity of the countries where the organization is present. While addressing to the challenges of the complex environment, the international marketing strategies do not only consider culture, but also the other factors that vary from country to country (competition, political environment, technological level, economic level, infrastructure, etc.). Culture is just one facet among many others, and the final decision may be the one of standardization or adaptation (Zaiț, 2002; Prime, Usunier, 2004).

Once the decision to adapt is taken, different cultural marketing orientations attempt to identify products / services for which certain aspects of the original marketing mix need to be adapted, to respond to the cultural profile of the target market. In this case, the cultural specificity is considered by demand, the offer being permanently adapted to market requirements, by consideration of cultural particularities.

Because the concern for cultural adaptation is the subject of several possible areas / approaches, we further present some useful explanations in their delimitation (Zaiț, 2002; Waldeck, Gosen, 2006; Romer, 2002, în Koeman *et al.*, 2010):

- *Intercultural marketing* emphasizes the similarities / differences between national cultures, in order to match products / services with the market, for a profitable international release. The focus consists in adapting the marketing mix to different cultures following the recommendations generally offered by intercultural management. It may propose adjustment solutions for cultural clusters (clusters that include several countries, depending on the cultural homogeneity criterion).

- *Ethnomarketing or ethnic marketing* is sometimes viewed as a method or set of rules for researching buying / selling rituals of ethnic groups; other times, it requires adjustments of products / services

and advertising messages, according to the characteristics and the needs specific to the ethnic groups in a country. It emphasizes the differences between minority groups.

- *Community marketing* is sometimes confused with ethnomarketing; other times it involves communication of brands to the target groups characterized by community and / or behavioral homogeneity. The analyzed differences are not necessarily of cultural matter.

- *Marketing of ethnic / community diversity* is the inclusive alternative of ethnomarketing or community marketing. It is an option that seeks similarities that could connect different groups. In this case, ethnic and / or community minority groups are not regarded as a different segment but as a part of the main market.

- *Tribal marketing* is a theory that focuses on subcultures considered to be the micro-groups' connection in postmodern society. Within this orientation, the ethnic variable may or may not be considered, but consumer goods become cult objects and emblems of belonging, influencing the purchasing behavior of individuals.

- *Urban marketing* pays the least attention to ethnic cultural differences. It can be considered a form of tribal marketing where the particularity of urban lifestyle arises at the heart of the development of communication and marketing strategies. For example, music styles (rap, hip-hop, etc.), street art (graffiti), street sports (roller skating, football, etc.), street dance, street wear etc.

The presented approaches can also be seen as subdivisions of intercultural management or at least as its beneficiaries, in terms of intercultural diagnosis and valorization of some elements of cultural specificity.

MARKETING AND CULTURAL SPECIFICITY

Language, religion, values, symbols, etc. are elements of culture that require careful analysis for an effective valorization in marketing decisions making (Waldeck, Gosen, 2006). The aim is not only to prevent errors, but also to gain a competitive advantage by exploiting cultural specificity.

Elements of cultural specificity have been highlighted by various research carried out in particular by anthropologists and psychologists, and described on the basis of some models that included certain sets of cultural dimensions or axiological orientations. The reference model in the field of intercultural management is the one provided by Hofstede *et al.* (2012), which presents the following cultural dimensions: power distance, avoidance of uncertainty, individualism - collectivism, masculinity - femininity,

permissiveness - austerity and pragmatism - normativism. There are also other models that offer cultural differentiation criteria useful in adapting to a particular culture / subculture:

- Values orientation to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961): orientation in relation to human nature, orientation in relation to the environment, orientation in relation to time, orientation in relation to activity, orientation in relation to connections between people;

- The cultural decoding to Hall (1984): cultural context (rich-poor), space, time;

- The theory of cultural dilemmas (Hampden-Turner, Trompenaars, 2000): universalism-particularism, individualism-collectivism, vision on detail-overall vision, gained status - assigned status, endogenous motivation-exogenous motivation, sequential perception of time - synchronal perception of time;

- The model of motivational values in work (Sagiv, Schwartz, 2007): hierarchy-egalitarianism, integration-autonomy and domination-harmony;

- GLOBE Project (House *et al.*, 2004) - power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, avoidance of uncertainty, orientation towards the future, performance orientation and human orientation.

We do not insist on the content of cultural dimensions because the specialists in this field know them well; we will further present a summary of criteria useful in the analysis of cultural specific elements, in order to valorize them in marketing management (Rosinsky, 2009):

- Meaning of power and responsibility (control - harmony - obedience);

- How to perceive time (rare - abundant, monochronic - polychronic, past - present - future);

- How to define identity and aim (to be - to do, individualistic - collectivistic);

- How the organization functions (hierarchy - equality, universalism - particularism, stability - change, competition - collaboration);

- Notions of territory and boundaries (protection / private space - sharing / public space);

- Communication models (implicit - explicit, direct - indirect, affective - neutral, formal - informal);

- Models of thinking (deductive - inductive, analytical - systemic).

These elements can be considered in advertising, promotion and sales, negotiation and operational management strategies (Zait, 2002). Practically, the attempt to differentiate from competitors, by a cultural suitability on demand, is accomplished with the help of the following dynamic intangibles (Cracco, in Dupriez, Simons, 2000), with a specific meaning and a more or less intensive valorization, depending by culture:

- *Homo oeconomicus* (purchase price, discounts, cost of use, etc.);

- *Prestige* (luxury effect, branding, etc.);
- *Aesthetics* (“fashion”, artistic sense, avant-garde style, etc.);
- *Tradition* (perenniality, roots, social security, etc.);
- *External social* (external groups, exteriorization, etc.);
- *Internal social* (family, internal groups, “closeness”, trust, etc.);
- *Performance* (technology, innovation, “uniqueness”, etc.).

In the sense of the above mentioned topic, we note the outcomes of a research regarding the issues approached by the marketing, to convince customers to buy / consume beer, according to their national values (Dahl, 2000), by tracking the TV advertisements provided in a certain amount of time:

- Friendship: dominated theme in Germany (60%) and Netherlands (50%);
- Eroticism: a dominant theme in United Kingdom (55%); it does not appear in Germany and Netherlands (where different national regulations also apply);
- Sport: a well-reflected theme in Netherlands (16%) and United Kingdom (22%);
- Tradition: well-exploited theme in Germany (40%);
- Relaxation: it appears in United Kingdom (22%) and Netherlands (33%);
- Humor: it is dominant in United Kingdom (88%), where we talk about a specific humor, well exploited in Netherlands (33%), and identifiable in Germany (10%).

The same study analyzed how the product is perceived, and the results highlighted the following:

- Drink that can be consumed daily: United Kingdom (77%), Netherlands (50%), Germany (20%);
- Occasional drink - United Kingdom (11%), Netherlands (33%), Germany (40%).

The ethical-normative aspect is interesting, because it limited the recognition that beer was a drink that can be consumed daily by Germans, known for their appetite for this drink (*idem*).

Other possible examples of cultural valorization according to the established dimensions, especially for the promotion part, are given in Table 1 (Onea, Dospinescu, 2009).

The culture - marketing relationship, which led to the elaboration of international and / or intercultural marketing strategies, is also the basis for the development of ethnomarketing and tribal marketing.

Ethnomarketing

Ethnomarketing involves the orientation towards a differentiated marketing by respecting the culture of origin of the target groups (Waldeck, Gosen,

2006). Different minorities in a country integrate the values of that country, but at the same time, they want to preserve their own values (Nardot, 2004). That is why ethnomarketing addresses cultural differences in a country and proposes solutions for adapting the marketing mix to the specific cultures of the minority groups.

Ethnomarketing can be viewed as a response to a new, multi-ethnic reality, where the traditional principles of marketing management, applicable to a segment of cultural homogeneity, are no longer working. We are actually talking about adjustments and development of knowledge within a new paradigm where the cultural factor receives a great importance in understanding consumer behavior. Practically, ethnomarketing, a concept introduced in marketing management in the 21st century, responds to current general principles that define the essence of management: imagination, vision, creativity, innovation, integration and monitoring (Quintero, 2012).

However, there are studies whose results express a certain reticence of practitioners in the field, and even of the representatives of ethnic groups. These concerns regard the economic benefits, the social impact and the opportunity to adapt the advertising messages to the cultural profile of ethnic minorities. Although, some of the representatives of ethnic minorities declare that they would be valued if there was a customized, targeted marketing (Koeman *et al.*, 2010). As a result, the marketing orientation towards adaptation should not be chosen under any circumstances. The following elements should be considered when making the decision to adapt: if there is a consistent ethnic mass with purchasing power; if the geographical distribution of minorities is favorable; if the considered products / services fit for adaptation. We may also add: if the economic benefit justifies the choice; if there is sufficient knowledge of the cultural particularities of the target groups (cultural dominance, acculturation aspects and inter-generational differences, religion, specific behavior of purchasing / using the product / service, etc.). The variables considered traditionally in segmentation should be considered: age, gender, income, lifestyle, etc. (Waldeck, Gosen, 2006).

There may be risks in both the focus on standardization and the orientation towards adaptation: „On the one hand, standardized messages might not sufficiently appeal to ethnic minority consumers; on the other, advertisers might lose ground with mainstream consumers if too much adaptation is implemented (Koeman *et al.*, 2010). If you opt for adaptation, not all the elements of marketing mix need to be adapted. Sometimes adjusting a single element in the marketing mix is enough. For example, adapting

the promotion message, that would also require the use of channels provided by ethnic media (*idem*).

In order to adapt to the specificity of ethnic groups, answers to various research questions can be sought (Usunier, 2002; Zaiř, 2002; Nardot, 2004; Waldeck, Gosen, 2006; Usunier, Cestre, 2007):

What are the products agreed by ethnic groups? How can a convergent offer be created? For new products, what can we do to increase their chances of acceptance?

What is the symbol of the act of buying? What is more relevant in choosing a product (price, brand, etc.)? Are there specific consumer issues? What religious dominants are behind the consumption of products? How can they be considered?

What is the attitude towards money? What is the reaction to promotions? Is the price associated with quality? Is there a latent availability for accepting a higher price due to the importance of the product?

What channels should be used for communication / promotion? How can ethnic media be exploited? What is the meaning given by ethnicity to advertising breaks during TV programs (pause, information, etc.)?

Which language should be used in communication? What issues raise the transmission of the message in that language? Are there connotations, hidden meanings that could distort the transmitted message?

What is the nature of the message (logical / emotional, formal / informal etc.) agreed by the target segment?

Which are the values of the ethnic group? How can they be valorized?

What type of message may create the connection with the country of origin? Which are the symbols and impact messages?

What significance have the brand images and the product's country of origin, in the mind of the ethnic consumer?

Which are the favorite distribution channels?

Starting from these guiding questions and deepening the cultural issues, adjustment strategies can be built for a coherent and well-articulated marketing mix, to ensure a competitive advantage.

Tribal marketing

The dynamics of modern society (characterized by fragmentation and instability) can be described metaphorically by the term "tribal" because it has common characteristics with the "tribe" (Cova, 2002):

- There is no central power to maintain social order / to constrain, in order to respect the collective rules;
- Groups represent a collective actor that balance the institutional power;
- Gather people not around something rational but around some archaic elements or relationships (locality, kinship, emotion, passion);

- Participate in the re-worship of the world, re-mythologization;

- The created relationships are not permanent, they do not involve interests, but repetitive symbolic rituals of the members, with the use of objects viewed as objects of worship or symbols of belonging.

The orientation towards "tribalism" is the orientation towards "something"; it is the escape from the "nothingness" (see dimensions "something" towards "nothing" to Ritzer, 2010). Fragmentation is, after all, the effect of globalization. Faced with a global, standardized offer, of a "flat land" if we are using Friedman's phrase (2007), which the consumers can not identify with, because it is meaningless, they are trying to participate in a social reconstruction, that actually has effects on consumer behavior.

Social networks contribute greatly to the "tribalization" of consumption, which means that the individual has to be analyzed from a holistic perspective, as part of the groups to which they report on and which influences their choices. The virtual universe disconnects them from the immediate social environment by connecting them to many other environments in which they find themselves. This indicates that their identity must be analyzed and interpreted by reference to this new reality, characterized by a permanent dynamic of association, but which is based on that "something" sought by the individual. As a result, the research of individual behavior within the tribe / tribes should seek, beyond the individual characteristics, to understand socio-cultural milestones that connect the group, myths and modalities of grouping that generate a certain type of consumption (Ortiz, 2016).

In order to outline tribal marketing strategies, market research can be carried out to provide answers to questions such as (Cova, 2002):

- Where are the rituals taken place (public spaces, meeting rooms, meeting places, places of worship or commemoration, sacred or ceremonial spaces, virtual spaces, etc.)?

- When are rituals taking place, what are the occasions when members are summoned?

- What objects / images / words do they use (specific or ritual clothes, magic or ritual words, idols, icons, objects of worship, sacred images, other objects)?

- What status have the participants ("member", "participant", "practitioner" or "sympathizer")?

CONCLUSIONS

At present, there is an increasing interest in ethnomarketing due to the intensification of the migration phenomenon. As a result, marketers consider segmentation by ethnicity a criterion that

is important when the size of the segment justifies the option of adaptation, and the economic situation of the group members is favorable to consumption. Social connections of individuals, multiplied by the virtual environment, generate also consumption behaviors that can be understood only by knowing the criteria of “tribal” grouping. These criteria help us to notice that products are perceived as symbols of belonging, that function, in a certain sense, as religious values; that give to individuals a reporting grid that can be highlighted and exploited with the help of tribal marketing.

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Table no. 1 - Cultural Dimensions and Valuation Register

Cultural Dimensions		Aggregated values and valuation register
1. Power distance	high	Compliance, formalism, politeness, addressing formulas
	low	Direct message, peer to peer, less formal
2. Individualism	individualism	The offer is addressed to the individual or to close family, valorization of autonomy and variety
	collectivism	The offer is addressed to extended family, group of friends, work colleagues, the idea of a "member"
3. Masculinity	masculinity	The opportunity to get new information, to have new contacts, to know successful people, to progress
	feminity	Emphasis on the quality of natural environment, self-care, care for own and family's health, outdoor exercise, relaxation, time spent with family
4. Uncertainty Avoidance	high	Security, safety, ecological, healthy, fresh, neatly, clean, tradition
	low	Unknown, new, divers, exciting, unexpected, extreme sports
5. Long-term Orientation	on long term	Balance in life, balance between work and relaxation, politeness, formalism, addressing phrases, respect
	on short term	Safety, reciprocity, respect for tradition

Source: Onea, Dospinescu, 2009