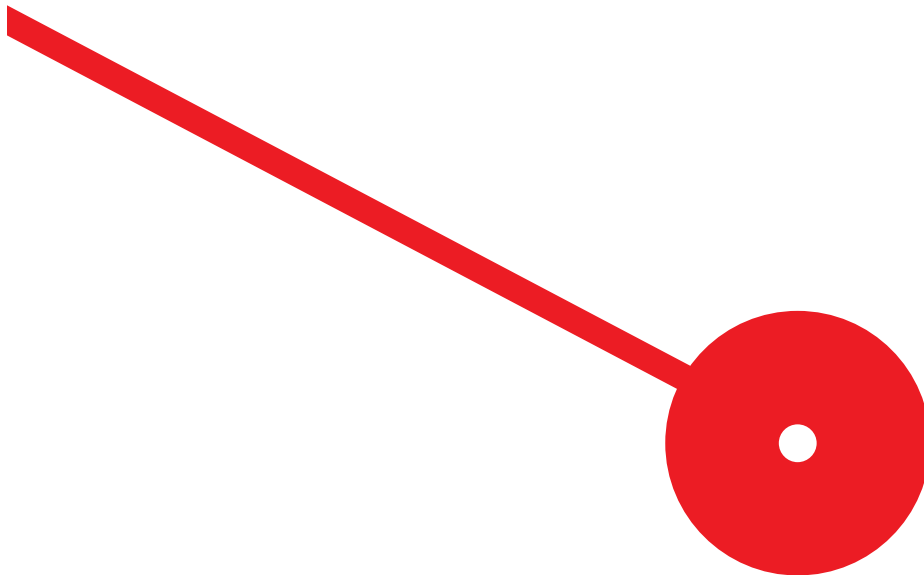




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Sílvia Patrícia da Silva Leal

10/2022

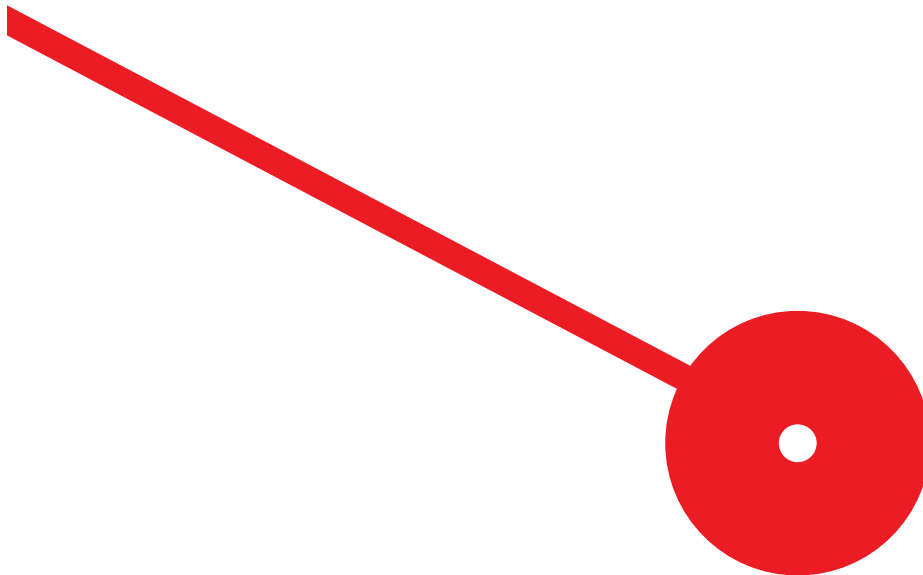




Marketing Strategies Among Different Cultures and Businesses

Sílvia Patrícia da Silva Leal

**Dissertation presented to Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e
Administração do Porto/Porto Accounting and Business School to
obtain the Master's Degree in Intercultural Studies for Business
under the supervision of Professor Carina Raquel Oliveira Cerqueira.**



Dedication

To all people who kindly supported me during this journey, I am grateful for all of you.

A thank you will never be enough.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my dear parents. This work would have never been possible without your support and inspiration to always pursue my dreams and always do what I love the most. I will be forever grateful to you for always showing me that I could do better and for never letting me give up.

I am thankful to all those with whom I have had the pleasure to work with during the course of the master's degree. Nevertheless, I would like to express my immense gratitude to Ana Rita, my dear friend who was always there for me. Thank you for your unwavering support, this would have been a much more difficult feat without you.

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Resumo:

Os fatores culturais influenciam o sucesso da comunicação entre pessoas de origens culturais diversas, todavia podem também ser cruciais quando se trata da realização de um negócio em mercados externos. Deste modo, quando uma empresa pretende ingressar em outros mercados deve primeiramente considerar a cultura do mercado-alvo para que seja possível averiguar como se deverá comportar transculturalmente. A competência cultural tornou-se atualmente uma grande vantagem para as empresas multinacionais. Poder contar com pessoas culturalmente competentes é essencial dado que estão cientes das barreiras que podem ocorrer durante os encontros e comunicações interculturais pois saberão como geri-las de forma a evitar possíveis conflitos. A cultura desempenha um papel relevante quando se negocia fora. Na área do Marketing compreender e avaliar as diferenças culturais pode ser um fator decisivo, pois pode auxiliar uma empresa a operar eficazmente além-fronteiras, de forma a diminuir a competitividade e a conquistar a sua segmentação de mercado com sucesso.

Esta dissertação foca-se em como exatamente a escolha das Estratégias de Marketing por parte de uma empresa afetam o negócio, através da análise de diversos estudos de caso que fornecem uma visão do que deve ser feito e evitado ao distribuir um produto ou serviço num novo mercado. O expectável é reconhecer se a adaptação cultural dessas estratégias influencia, e de que forma, um negócio e se as empresas atingem – ou não – o seu objetivo final. O enquadramento teórico deste estudo foi desenvolvido através da análise do conceito de cultura e de como a comunicação se desenrola entre comunidades distintas, e, o enquadramento prático feito com variados estudos de caso para que ao se interligar com a área do Marketing se entenda como a cultura afeta a disseminação de mensagens. Ademais, este artigo visa examinar como desafios no marketing transcultural podem ser contornados através do conhecimento e competências em culturas estrangeiras.

Palavras chave: Cultura, Adaptação Cultural, Estratégias de Marketing, Negócio.

Abstract:

Cultural factors are known to influence the success of communication between people of distinct cultural backgrounds, but they can also be crucial when it comes to the achievement of a business in external markets. Thus, when a company desires to enter other markets it should first consider the culture of the target market so it is feasible to analyze how it should behave cross-culturally. Cultural competence has become a major asset nowadays for multinational organizations. Relying on culturally competent people is significant since they are aware of the barriers that can occur during intercultural encounters and communications as they will know how to manage those to avoid possible conflicts. Culture plays an important role when marketing abroad. In the area of Marketing understanding cultural differences is a decisive factor to take advantage of as it might assist a company to perform effectively beyond borders to diminish competitiveness and conquer their market segmentation successfully.

This dissertation will focus on exactly how the organizations' choice of Marketing Strategies affects a business, through the analysis of diverse case studies which provide a vision of what should be done and what to avoid when marketing a service or product in a new market. The expectation is to acknowledge how the cultural adaptation of those strategies influences a business, and if organizations accomplish – or not – their ultimate goal. The theoretical framework of this study was developed through the analysis of the concept of culture and how communication unfolds itself amongst dissimilar societies, and the practical framework with varied case studies, so when connecting with the area of Marketing it is understood how culture affects the spread of messages. Furthermore, this paper aims to examine how cross-cultural marketing challenges can be circumvented through knowledge and skills in foreign cultures.

Key words: Culture, Cultural Adaptation, Marketing Strategies, Business.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter I – Recognizing Culture | 6 |
| 1 Culture as an iceberg | 8 |
| 1.1 Understanding Culture | 10 |
| 1.1.1 The Importance Of Culture..... | 13 |
| 1.2 Cultural Competence..... | 15 |
| 1.2.1 Contextualizing Cultural Competence..... | 16 |
| 1.2.2 The Ability of Cultural Competence | 18 |
| 1.2.2.1 Dimensions Of Cultural Competence | 21 |
| 1.3 Cultural Difficulties And Stress In Adaptation | 23 |
| 1.3.1 Culture Shock And Intercultural Competence..... | 24 |
| 1.3.2 Intercultural Competence Communication Theories | 26 |
| 1.3.3 Successful Performance In Intercultural Settings | 28 |
| 1.3.4 Cultural Context In Organizations | 30 |
| 1.3.5 Culture And Conflict | 32 |
| 1.3.6 Conflict Management | 34 |
| 1.3.7 Intercultural Competence Model | 36 |
| 1.3.8 Developing Cultural Competency | 39 |
| 1.4 Intercultural Communication | 45 |
| 1.4.1 Globalization’s Influence On Intercultural Communication | 46 |
| 1.4.2 Conceptualizing Intercultural Communication..... | 48 |
| 1.4.2.1 The Elements Of Intercultural Communication..... | 49 |
| Chapter II – An Approach To Marketing..... | 52 |
| 2 Marketing Defined..... | 54 |
| 2.1 Marketing Strategies Adopted In Different Cultures | 56 |
| 2.1.1 The Marketing Process | 58 |

| | | |
|---|--|------------|
| 2.1.2 | Marketing Strategies And The Cultural Environment..... | 60 |
| 2.1.2.1 | Standardization Or Adaptation Of Marketing Strategies?..... | 63 |
| 2.2 | The Usage of Marketing Strategies..... | 65 |
| 2.2.1 | Cases Of Ineffective Marketing Strategies | 66 |
| 2.2.2 | Cases Of Effective Marketing Strategies..... | 73 |
| 2.3 | Acquiring Consumer Value Through Business And Marketing..... | 79 |
| Chapter III – Cross-Cultural Communication In Marketing..... | | 83 |
| 3 | Culture’s Influence On Marketing Communication..... | 87 |
| 3.1 | Key Elements In Cross-Cultural Marketing Communication..... | 90 |
| 3.2 | Case Studies | 92 |
| 3.2.1 | Kellogg’s Company In India..... | 92 |
| 3.2.2 | Dolce & Gabbana In The Chinese Market..... | 98 |
| Conclusion..... | | 102 |
| References..... | | 106 |

List of Figures

- Figure 1 Burger King's Marketing Blunder in 2022. 68
- Figure 2 Burger King's Marketing Blunder in 2009..... 69
- Figure 3 H&M hoodie controversy 71
- Figure 4 Voice-over describing Chinese chopsticks 99

List of Abbreviations

- **GDP** – Gross Domestic Product
- **GPS** - Global Positioning System
- **NBA** - National Basketball Association's
- **NGOs** - Nongovernment Organizations
- **PR kits** – Press kits

Globalization plays a key role when it comes to interconnecting countries. Nations are currently more interdependent due to a series of factors that have made the world become 'smaller' in communications and trading. The interconnectedness of the world has positive effects, but it also has negative influences. One of its consequences that have been accentuated is the differences among societies which appear to have become increasingly more noticeable over the years. Therefore, culture turns out to be a primary and significant barrier that needs to be deconstructed when performing business globally, as well as the need to understand others of distinct cultural environments.

Cultural factors have been long known to affect the exchange of messages between people of distinctive cultures, hence first having an insight into what the concept of culture encompasses is essential to comprehend how an individual might become more effective when connecting with others but also how to avoid cultural tensions and misunderstandings. Communication is crucial and an essential part of the culture, and for that reason, knowing how to successfully communicate with others from diverse cultural environments might determine the success of a company and business in markets abroad. Nevertheless, as a result of the rapid development and spread of globalization, the need to understand how other cultures behave during intercultural encounters turned out to be a key asset in today's world when performing business with other countries with varied cultures. As companies started to be more interested in investing and doing business in international markets therefore the intention of operating in diverse geographical areas commenced. Unquestionably, globalization made interactions between individuals of different geographical locales develop into a common condition these days, and subsequently, cultural competence has turned into a day-to-day expression in the organizational world. Having culturally competent employees might indeed support firms to grow and expand their business beyond borders as a way to keep one's distance from intercultural uncomfortable situations that could have been circumvented in the first place. In contrast, when an organization is not concerned with investing in culturally competent personnel, it might endure a lack of competitiveness, meaning that it might not be as prosperous as desired and consequently have bad results. Thus, multinational organizations were compelled to evolve and to instruct their employees to be more culturally competent people to help them to develop mindfulness and how to communicate with others from different cultural environments from theirs. Hence, the final organization's purpose is accomplished and misinterpretations and failures when entering new markets and cultures are averted. Whereas corporations might find operating in different

geographical areas appealing and rather profitable it is firstly necessary to dive into investigative research on the culture where it is intended to do business. Nevertheless, entering new countries and cultures might bring up a lot of challenges for individuals as cultural differences might cause stress and other difficulties when trying to adjust. As a result, it is necessary to acknowledge what are the barriers that can cause tensions and how they can be avoided through the acquisition of skills, and at what level people are willing to learn from others and adapt their behavior for a better understanding. Further, global businesses are affected by a series of factors, nonetheless, the sociocultural ones are to be regarded to understand how a culture reacts in an intercultural setting in response to the implementation of a business, and how a business is affected by the local culture. Likewise, the better the implementation in other markets, the more successful it will be and the less competition it will have.

At present, companies are more eager to hire culturally competent people as they know how to behave and communicate effectively during intercultural meetings. Being culturally sensitive and aware of otherness might be crucial to comprehend how businesses are accomplished and how individuals behave in cross-cultural situations. Knowing how to communicate interculturally is as important as knowing how to behave and react in cross-cultural environments. Being aware of the differences and similarities between peoples can make a positive difference for organizations when in the process of implementing their business in international markets.

Marketing is an area of study that just as culture has evolved and had to be adapted to modern times since methodologies are continuously progressing owing to the rapid technological advances that are perceived in our day. The more contextual knowledge of the differences and similarities between cultures, the more an organization will profit from its further applied strategies. When firms decide to market their products or services in another country or region with a separate culture, they might not be aware of how the target market and its audience will respond to it and deals might be compromised. In effect, cultural differences might help the company to thrive in markets as diverse cultures have different needs and wants and they just need to be presented to their consumers accordingly. When marketing and culture go hand in hand, it can make corporations a lot more lucrative since culture shapes the behavior of consumers and how they may receive a product or service, and thus it will also affect the business sales statistics. Indeed, there are cases of successful

marketing strategies that were applied considering the culture of the target market, and when it was acknowledged the company was more efficient than the others that did not consider the primary obstacle to overcome and consequently failed miserably. It is vital to remember that what is acceptable for one target market might be disrespectful and even offensive towards another, and companies should contemplate whether to decide on a standardized approach or a more localized one to obtain value from consumers through the satisfaction of their needs and preferences.

The current dissertation was developed to prove that culture and cultural adaptation allied to the area of Marketing is essential and the best way to achieve success among the organization's preferred market segmentation. Nevertheless, to prove such a statement it is necessary to undergo a theoretical framework study that was developed throughout its three chapters and perceived through the evaluation of diverse case studies. Chapter I – *Recognizing Culture* – explains what can be understood by the broad concept of Culture through a more contemporary perspective, while also analyzing other topics of foremost importance inside this subject, for instance, Cultural Competence and Intercultural Communication. It is inside these topics that other issues unfold and are approached, like theories of communication, to comprehend what it might result if an organization relies on them giving them the basis to know how to avoid intercultural uncomfortable situations and how one can position themselves to solve and cope with such difficulties. This background knowledge is necessary for when a company decides to market a product or service in another marketplace they need to be aware and sensitive towards differences so potential blunders are avoided by considering its culture since everyone was born into one and was molded accordingly to its context.

Chapter II – *An Approach to Marketing* – focuses on what way different cultures influence the choice of marketing strategies used by companies. It provides a characterization of what this area of study is, a succinct explanation of how exactly the process of marketing is done, by what means the cultural environment affects the choice of marketing strategies, and, finally, examples of campaigns are addressed to understand what the reason behind their effectiveness or ineffectiveness was. Moreover, this chapter was intended to show how companies create value for consumers and how they get value from them through the choice and application of marketing strategies. The purpose was to understand when strategies are thoughtful in the adaptation to another country how

companies achieve success; how consumers receive that information – whether positively or negatively – and if companies achieve recognition through their culturally adapted campaigns, and how it is shown over the results.

Lastly, Chapter III – *Cross-cultural Communication in Marketing* – is a combination of both a theoretical and practical approach to the subject, through a literature review along with the research and analysis of case studies. Here, the importance of cross-cultural communication is addressed concerning Marketing and what difference it makes when one knows how to communicate cross-culturally by considering the importance it has to know how to exchange a message with another of a different culture, through the understanding that besides their disparities they also have similarities. Indeed, the main goal of companies should be to analyze target markets to appreciate what are their variations and resemblances, how they can enter a new market through the usage of their marketing strategies, and if they are suitable for the new one. Additionally, two case studies are approached in this chapter. The case studies analyzed the entering of two companies in distinct markets through the understanding of their acceptance – or not – by the consumers of the desired target market or if they ended up boycotted and with serious difficulties to deal with.

CHAPTER I – RECOGNIZING CULTURE

Today we are living in a deeply globalized world that highlights a variety of forms of understanding culture. Culture itself is the first obstacle people need to consider when deciding on doing business with different nations. Indeed, as the process of globalization took place and became particularly important in trading likewise did the need for understanding the “other” and the way they behave and react in response on certain circumstances. However, understanding the concept of culture alone is not enough to make business effectively. Beforehand, there is a series of steps people need to comprehend and dominate to fully recognize culture and what is embedded with it. For that purpose, the concept of culture is to be addressed so there is a perception of what it implies and why it is so important to talk about in this case.

Nevertheless, other topics are of immense importance when studying culture since they are a determining factor when connecting with others from a different environment from theirs. Those issues have to do with the way an individual develops cultural competence so that it is possible to interact with others positively and stay away from misunderstandings or avoid being offensive towards others. Besides, it is necessary to approach the difficulties that may arise and how one can manage and solve them so certain challenges that may occur can be, in a certain way, prevented when cooperating with diverse groups. Nonetheless, approaching intercultural communication highlights the importance of recognizing how other cultures convey their messages.

Culture is one topic of foremost importance since every other topic will revolve around this issue. Therefore, the concept of culture is going to be presented through its evolutionary classifications overtime since globalization has had such an influence on people’s way of life and way of perceiving others. Having a background on this question will help analyze and understand the effect culture has on the way businesses are done and the urgency for marketing strategies to be adapted to each target culture.

1 Culture as an iceberg

Nowadays, when asking a person what culture means to them the first thing, they will probably answer almost instinctively is that it has something to do with the food, music, sports, clothing, and so on, of a specific community (Moua, 2010). It is not a wrong definition though there is not a ‘right’ approach to defining it since it is in constant evolution, and it has a lot to do with people’s perspectives. However, this means that people most of the times ‘restrict’ themselves to looking for the tangible layer of culture. In these cases, there is a noticeable reliance on the definition of culture as being solely the ‘tip of the iceberg’.

Culture is like an iceberg, where the deeper layers are not seen as the upper ones. The *iceberg metaphor*¹ is often used to discuss this matter for it is a tool in demonstrating what are the different layers that construct the term ‘culture’. Though, what about the rest of the iceberg? The rest of it, the invisible layer, which amounts to the greater part of a culture that people do not always think about or see in the first place or view as meaningful, includes other aspects. Diving deeper into the question, in that layer are included characteristics such as the religion, beliefs, values, language, arts, and so on, of a certain group (Moua, 2010).

Along with the idea of not existing a ‘right’ definition for culture, Baldwin & Lindsley (1994) acknowledged that there is indeed also not a single definition for it because any definition would be too restrictive. Its restrictiveness might have to do with the fact that considering only one definition of culture there might be a lot of aspects of it that are forgotten or even put aside when they should be respected since they make perfect sense in modern society. It could also mean that contemplating only one definition for the term people’s perspectives would not be acknowledged and it would not be an evolutionary and active term as it is.

In 1961, the cultural theorist Raymond Williams² defined culture, from a social perspective, as being a “description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary

¹ The iceberg metaphor illustrates what is hidden under the concept of culture. It includes the world of assumptions of a culture that might not be obvious to another. Furthermore, not being able to understand cultural differences may cause serious tension between them leading to significant barriers and misunderstandings between the two.

² A British theorist of communication and culture.

behaviour”. However this definition accounts for several years of distance from nowadays, it still makes sense for it includes a very important aspect of culture which is the behaviour of their followers in the community. Williams does not separate culture as being an iceberg, which does not always account for the importance of behaviors and way of responding to something which can be molded by culture, instead, he considers people’s way of life from an explicit and implicit perspective and analyses culture as the clarification of meanings and values in every aspect of life (Storey, 1998).

Furthermore, according to Chamberlain (2005) culture includes how certain aspects influence the behavior of a community and how people see the world based on their assumptions: “(...) culture is defined as the values, norms, and traditions that affect how individuals of a particular group perceive, think, interact, behave, and make judgments about their world.” (Chamberlain, 2005). Chamberlain’s description ends up meeting William’s definition of culture since he also considers that culture shapes an individual’s behavior through implicit and explicit perceptions. Besides, for the author, the way we perceive the other is related to our cultural perception and our understanding that cultural differences do exist among communities. Although Chamberlain (2005) also considers the importance of recognizing that even inside a group there is also diversity and that without that knowledge people may start to consequently stereotype others. So, another aspect to bear in mind is how we envision our cultural ways of thinking and acting concerning the cultural ways of others from a different society (Chamberlain, 2005).

1.1 Understanding Culture

The concept of culture has been discussed over the years in many ways and by many theorists. There are several acceptable definitions of culture, however, Raymond Williams (1976) characterizes it as “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language”. Culture is indeed a challenging and wide-ranging concept and that is why it is such a difficult term to classify as it does not possess a single generical definition as many other concepts people deal with on their daily basis, as it is in constant evolution and adapting over time (Sarmiento, 2015). It has a lot to do with how one can see it and the environment they are placed in, and their standpoint influences the way they understand what culture means and how modern society functions. As noted by Sarmiento (2015), the notion of culture has been having different meanings ever since centuries ago to become what is considered acceptable for theorists these days. That does not mean that they have found a consensus on a single meaning to it but that they have considered that there is not a ‘right or wrong’ connotation for culture.

Fay (1996) argued that from a standardized point of view, culture is often defined as “a complex set of shared beliefs, values, and concepts which enables a group to make sense of its life, and which provides it with directions for how to live”. That set is generally designated as a basic belief system, which can include obvious characteristics and others that are not so evident (as previously mentioned in the iceberg metaphor) but they also might include matters such as feeling and behavior, as well as assumptions about the world and other cultures (Fay, 1996). This means that even though culture is a combination of both tangible and intangible characteristics, it is also the way one responds to otherness; their aspirations and the reason beyond them; how one feels about a certain subject, which might be a very sensitive topic on one culture and ordinary on another; how they recognize others of a different culture from theirs, for instance. In short, culture as a whole is one’s identity and what makes one so unique.

For Fay (1996), considering the standard definition, culture is perceived “as a text the vocabulary and grammar of which its members learn”. Indeed, from the moment an individual is born, they are instantly educated, both formally and informally, on how to behave according to the culture they were born in and according to their norms. When born,

one goes through a process of enculturation³, so they learn how to read their culture and make it their own, for culture will show them how to communicate and how to live in society. Therefore Hall (1977) has acknowledged that “there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture”. Culture has this ubiquitous power since it is everything and is everywhere even when it is not so obvious to peoples’ eyes (Samovar, L. et al. 2011). According to Fay (1996), adopting a certain belief system defines one’s identity mentally (in having a particular mindset), physically (through having certain bodily dispositions), and socially (so one relates to others through characteristic ways).

Even though Fay (1996) has formerly described culture as if it is a “coherent set of beliefs (a ‘text’)” he also agrees to disagree with his definition for it since he further acknowledges that “any culture [...] will consist of conflicting beliefs and rules which offer mixed, contested, and ambiguous messages to its followers”. He considers that cultural rules are dependent on interpretation, however, interpretation demands reflexive analysis and judgment by mediators (Fay, 1996). Moreover, he believes that cultural beliefs and ideals diverge among people depending on their social status and that it affects how one perceives culture throughout their life experiences.

(...) cultural beliefs and ideals apply to people in differential positions of power. The meaning of a rule for a powerful member of an elite often will not be the same for, nor will it have the same outcome on, a member of a group who is on the periphery. [...] Various members in a cultural group will have heterogeneous histories, divergent interests, and antagonistic interpretations. Far from being coherent unities uniformly distributed throughout society, cultures are rather tense loci of difference and opposition . . . (Fay, B., 1996).

Following this line of thought, Baldwin & Lindsley (1994) have also recognized that the connotation of culture similarly differs on one’s experience and the cultural group they are in and not just about a power and social status issue as mentioned by Fay (1996).

And yet some real differences exist between cultural groups. How we pursue these activities varies from culture to culture. Men and women often do not see the world

³ The gradual process of an individual or group learning and adapting to the norms and values of a culture in which they are immersed (Bell, K., 2020).

in the same way. Old and young have different goals and dreams. Muslims and Christians have different beliefs (...) (Martin, J., & Nakayama, T., 2009).

The cultural perspective will vary according to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, and other aspects even inside a specific community. This is, inside a country's large culture there are a lot of other different ones – in Portugal's case, there are a lot of cultural differences depending on the region one is placed in. Moreover, that happens in many cultures with women, for instance, that are limited and told how they should behave due to what is expected of them inside their culture. Consequently, that leads men and women to have completely different perspectives on it. The same happens with people of different generations, for example, as culture is always evolving so are the individuals' dreams and goals according to the current times.

Besides, with this, it is possible to validate what Chamberlain (2005) asserted on existing differences between cultural groups but also that the way we perceive the world has to do with our cultural backgrounds. Moreover, when people do not understand the “other” they start judging and categorizing them based on their cultural perceptions which leads to profound consequences and cause serious tension between cultures. Not being aware of those cultural differences, or even understanding that they exist might cause people to react differently. Some do recognize that there are cultural differences, and they try to understand them and establish a relationship with each other considering those differences, so tensions are circumvented. However, others refuse to consider one's culture thinking they have the right before the other and that leads to problems because of the feeling of superiority towards the other.

Furthermore, as the world became increasingly globalized over the years, it meant that every culture is now being simultaneously polished with others, which implies that cultures are also evolving and adapting through times. Along with this, it is possible to realize that culture is dynamic due to its power to not stagnate and remain the same since the beginning of time. Thus, as stated by Fay (1996) it is possible to conclude that cultures are essentially open, permeable, and suffer from influence from other cultures. Nevertheless, when a culture is influenced by another that does not mean it is a one-sided event since when an interaction is taking place so is exchange between groups.

1.1.1 The Importance Of Culture

Culture is essential for it allows individuals to comprehend and make sense of their surroundings. As noted by Haviland (2002) “in humans, it is the culture that sets the limits on behavior and guides it along predictable paths”. Culture is a basic need that helps people to predict how things might come about during an encounter considering how it makes people react and behave appropriately through their cultural background (Samovar, L. et al. 2011). Most importantly, culture is needed to serve several functions that are essential so an individual can survive and prosper in their environment. Those functions serve culture as *identity meaning, group inclusion, intergroup boundary regulation, ecological adaptation, and cultural communication* (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

In the *identity meaning function* culture provides a reference so one knows how to identify and classify themselves through cultural beliefs, values, and norms. These elements of culture are valuable for people who rely on them to give meaning and significance to their identities. Besides, everyday communication influences the way people acquire identity meanings. *Group inclusion function* serves culture, so it satisfies people’s need for belonging. It creates a comfort zone where individuals experience safety and inclusion, and where they feel accepted. Here people do not need to justify their actions like how it happens with people outside one’s cultural group where they need to explain and defend their actions, so conflicts are avoided. The culture’s *intergroup boundary regulation function* processes people’s attitudes when relating with individuals of different cultural groups. According to Ting-Toomey (1999), an *attitude* is learned thinking or feeling about someone that ends up shaping our behavior towards others. Culture helps people form evaluative attitudes (connote both positive and negative emotions) be they in in-group or in out-group situations. The *ecological adaptation function* of culture eases the adaptation processes “among the self, the cultural community, and the larger environment” (Ting-Toomey, 1999). As culture is dynamic and changes from time to time, so do people within a culture. However, as culture evolves it also rewards and punishes certain adaptive people’s behaviors and sanctions nonadaptive behaviors over time. It is said that when people need to adapt their needs and their particular way of living as a consequence of a changing habitat, culture will consequently also change and adapt. Finally, in the *cultural communication function* culture serves as the means by which culture and communication combine. According to Hall (1959), culture impacts communication the same way communication impacts culture. In

fact, it is through communication that culture is passed and adapted from generation to generation. Cushman and Cahn (1985) affirmed that cultural communication offers people a set of ideals of how social interactions can be achieved smoothly amongst people of a specific cultural group. This happens due to shared language codes, norms, and scripts. To sum up, culture can be perceived as being a safe place for its people since it helps them to understand and satisfy their needs for identity, inclusion, boundary regulation, adaptation, and communication. Besides, culture and communication are related for they facilitate one's process of adaptation to a specific community (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

1.2 Cultural Competence

Cultural competence as a concept evolved over the years and is now a common perception to consider in the business world. This happens because negotiating with people or organizations of distinct cultures from our own might bring up a few things that we cannot entirely comprehend. Some challenges may take place when people do not understand how individual acts and reacts to something we say or do based on cultural differences. Thus, it is essential to recognize how one can grow to be more culturally competent, so adversities are sidestepped, and dealings are prosperous.

Nevertheless, before understanding how others act in response there is a need to, first, introspect. When an individual sees themselves in an intercultural environment, they need to be able to compare cultures by primarily recognizing their own and only then recognizing the “other” culture’s aspects. Hence, this subject is significant when getting to know someone’s culture since it will reveal to us how we can become more culturally competent people and how we can keep developing that skill to communicate and cooperate in the best way possible in an intercultural setting.

It was due to globalization and technological improvements that this term began to make an appearance in international organizations. As globalization took place all over so did the need to be continuously interacting with others of distinct cultures, presently or virtually. As Matveev (2017) noted, individuals have now a tendency to spend an increasing amount of time communicating among people and/or organizations from diverse geographic locations. This need for intercultural communication has influenced the way people are dealing with change, how they are providing messages across borders, and how they perceive both space and time. Besides, this ever-increasing need for the trade of ideas across borders, and cultures, made a lot of businesses and companies in the world rely on intercultural communication. However, for that purpose, those organizations need their employees to be competent and knowledgeable on the cultural practices of their target culture – either within their own country or abroad – so deals are performed effectively (Matveev, 2017).

1.2.1 Contextualizing Cultural Competence

The term Cultural Competence, variably known as Intercultural Competence, is often defined as “an ability acquired on the basis of the certain knowledge and attitudes that enables individuals to work effectively in the context of different cultures” (Mažeikienė & Virgailaitė-Mečkauskaitė, 2007). Additionally, for Engseth (2018) cultural competency is considered a process meaning that it can grow with continuous work but also with action this is, as people start to develop their sense of cultural competency and put it into practice, they will become increasingly more skilled and proficient. This is the reality since there is no absolute knowledge as culture is dynamic and is incessantly adapting to the ever-changing times, so it will need continuous work from the individual to stay updated according to the times they find themselves in. Besides, people need to put their knowledge into practice because when exchanging knowledge people are also learning from others’ experiences and viewpoints. It works as a snowball which is constantly building upon itself becoming larger and larger. However, in this case, knowledge is not dangerous but valuable. From this perspective, the *snowball* is understood as a virtuous circle instead of a vicious one.

Although what does it mean to be a culturally competent individual? An interculturally competent individual is someone who is portrayed as being able to negotiate and respect the meanings of cultural symbols and norms that are changing during their interactions (Collier & Thomas, 1988; Kim, 1994), nevertheless, in common sense, a culturally competent being is somebody who comprehends other cultures and is able to easily connect with people of distinct cultures. Further, according to Chen & Starosta (1996) being interculturally competent demonstrates a recognition of different cultural experiences and/or achievements of those who are identified by their ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexual orientation, but also through the cultural history of various social groups within a society, the interrelations between dominant and non-dominant cultures, and the dynamics of difference. Besides, when a person is culturally competent, they will become more sympathetic towards others and will engage into communicating respectfully for they understand that cultural differences do exist without forgetting that also similarities do too.

However, as Matveev (2017) pointed out there are other researchers that understand intercultural competence as a capacity employees must demonstrate their knowledge, skills, behaviors, and values, consciously, which allows them to deal with possible challenging situations with people of different cultures and backgrounds. Alternatively, scholars

characterize intercultural competence in a slightly different way. For them, cultural competency is the management of interactions that go beyond people's differences, and that results in more appropriate and effective outcomes at diverse levels – individual, relational, group, and organizational (Engseth, 2018). For example, for Spitzberg (1983) intercultural competence is related to one's communication skills and he believed that context knowledge, motivation, or attitudes and skills are conceptually related and are indispensable to one's chances of presenting an impression that will be mutually perceived as competent. On the other hand, Byram (1997) similarly describes intercultural competence as involving knowledge, skills of interpretation, discovery, interaction, and cultural awareness, which indeed is of great importance to live in today's globalized world. However, there are another series of definitions for intercultural competence that understands it as being a combination of interpersonal skills, effectiveness, cultural uncertainty, and cultural empathy (Matveev, 2017).

1.2.2 The Ability of Cultural Competence

Nowadays, worldwide enterprises are looking at intercultural competence as one of the most important characteristics one employee can have. For that reason, it is important to understand what is behind this concept and how one can achieve it since globalization further advances the significance of intercultural competence as a mechanism to professionally connect with other cultures (Matveev, 2017). In effect, being knowledgeable on how to communicate and interact efficiently in intercultural settings has a lot to do with how one adjusts to other cultures. But also, on their capability of understanding the differences between the cultures at stake and how they respond to them. On account of that, nowadays there is a higher necessity for organizations to employ culturally competent people.

Effective functioning in culturally diverse and international business environments depends on the ability of people to adapt to the complexity of other cultures and to effectively understand, accept, and respond to cultural differences. These demands of the present time to accommodate and understand among different people require a high level of intercultural competence (Lustig & Koester, 2009).

On top of that, as Matveev (2017) pointed out, intercultural competent employees can reach superior outcomes for the companies through their proper communication and understanding of the “other” rather than those who are not as culturally competent. Nonetheless, when there is a lack of cultural competence in a business setting the biggest consequence is that the competitiveness reduces in the market an organization desires to enter, which for many may represent the domestic market but also the international market as they try to expand abroad (Briscoe, 2015).

This is an important matter today since many companies are organized in different locations in the world to take advantage of their local and regional prospects. This can mean that, for instance, a company is based in one country, however, has their production line – or even other organizational functions such as management, sales, marketing, and distribution – on another due to cheap labor, and consequently they need culturally competent people on both sides to fully communicate with each other without misinterpretations (Matveev, 2017) that could negatively impact the business.

Globalization has contributed to an interconnected network of “organizational functions, business processes, and international human linkages” that made intercultural

competence so important and a key element to a company when hiring (Matveev, 2017). Some of the best examples of companies that value intercultural competence are multinational companies such as, for instance, the so-known Nike, Coca-Cola, and Nokia. They do recognize and prioritize cultural diversity as a policy in their companies and demand both their managers and employees to become intercultural competent individuals (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). The employees and managers of these companies must have the capacity to communicate with others and to give an explanation of a diversity of concepts to people who have different backgrounds, be they cultural, educational, or ethnic (Lustig, 2005). As these international companies prioritize cultural competence and have great results in their sales, many other companies might feel compelled to follow the same policy and train their employees in intercultural competence with the determination of accomplishing better goals, which can consequently lead the companies toward better outcomes on the markets but also to an increasing requirement for cultural competence in several industries around the world. Although, there were several crucial triggers for this progress in the organizational world to start considering cultural competency an important characteristic for their personnel to have.

Globalization, the increased diversity of human capital, a high pace of migration, and the necessity for team-based management place intercultural competence at the top of the list of skills of modern managers. Modern managers need to be knowledgeable and skilled enough to behave effectively and appropriately in a specific culture (Matveev, A., 2017).

Factors such as globalization, the diversity of human capital nowadays, the flow of today's migration and the need for team-based management made cultural competency develop into such an important aspect in the organizational realm. Presently, not only managers but also employees are being educated on intercultural competency to develop knowledge on how to deal and behave with other cultures. Being a culturally competent person can be very valuable for both the enterprise itself and inside a multicultural organizational team, so people know how to respect each other's boundaries without crossing lines, to improve teamwork as well as the workplace environment. Similarly, it leads people in the direction of understanding, to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings, so the best work environment is maintained and preserved so that it is a safe space for all from a diversity of cultures.

Also, as a result of globalization and the increasing need to be continuously interconnected with others made multinational organizations realize that it could be a great opportunity to improve their productivity and efficiency through the formation of global teams (Hoerr, 1989). Global teams are formed by several individuals often with different cultural backgrounds that work collectively for the same company. Additionally, as observed by Matveev (2017), this restructuring of global businesses and the application of large-scale teams required investment from the organizations in different fields that were more noticeable in the changing of management methods, motivational approaches, incentive programs, and the encouragement to have a supervisor-subordinate relationship. However, there are a few challenges when forming multicultural teams that are raised by factors such as the pace of migration of workers, the ease of crossing the national and organizational boundaries, and an increased diversity of human capital (Johnston, 1991).

1.2.2.1 Dimensions Of Cultural Competence

According to the authors Chen and Starosta (1996), intercultural competence entails both effective and appropriate communication. For them, a competent intercultural communicator should be as multifaceted as a chameleon, meaning that he or she can change and adapt depending on the environment they find themselves in. It is through the individuals' flexibility and tolerance that they are eager to connect with different cultures (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Although, to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds individuals should have several dimensions of intercultural competence as a way of understanding the environment they are put in, so they know how to behave and communicate accordingly.

Intercultural competence emphasizes three dimensions that together comprise effective collaboration with the differences between cultures. The dimensions of intercultural competence are applied as a way of 'measuring' how culturally competent individuals are and in which way people can perceive their differences to communicate effectively with others. Those dimensions include knowledge (the *cognitive dimension* where people are self-aware of their culture and understand how other cultures vary), skills (the *behavioural dimensional skill* where one knows appropriate self-disclosure, shows behavioural flexibility, interaction management, and social skills, along with the ability to solve problems and empathy towards others) and attitudes (with the *affective dimension* where people acknowledge and respect cultural differences which are in part related to its curiosity and open-mindedness towards the other culture) (Engseth, 2018).

However, other further dimensions are of great importance when describing intercultural competence such as the dimension of *cultural sensitivity* that has to do with how one can experience and respond to cultural differences. A person who has cultural sensitivity is often associated with having a greater potential when applying intercultural competence. Cultural sensitivity is linked with the capacity to recognize, acknowledge, and respect cultural differences; and the *awareness* dimension, which is the reflection and introspection of people, which comprises greater cognitive, skills and attitudes about the self concerning other/s. By developing cultural awareness individuals will start questioning how it can be improved and how they can monitor it (Matveev, 2017).

Overall, the fundamental elements that are used to describe intercultural competence include awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and adopted skills (Matveev, 2017). Moreover, to manage these dimensions there are a set of essential skills people need to consider. Individuals should be open to listening and observing others and possible differences, reflecting, empathizing, and communicating (Engseth, 2018).

1.3 Cultural Difficulties And Stress In Adaptation

In a world where globalization along with other factors, such as the evolution and rapid spread of the Internet, social media, the opportunity of travelling, and the cultural diaspora have made the world 'become smaller', they also have been triggering a huge flow of migration and there is, consequently, the demand for adaptation to the environment one can find themselves in. Surely the world has not become a smaller place in size, but it has indeed become a smaller place considering interpersonal communication and intercultural relationships. This growing communication is evident for people nowadays have a greater facility to connect with others of different countries or cultures for personal or professional purposes. However, as a result of the discrepancies between people of distinctive cultures that can be noticeable at an early stage, there is a need for adaptation so further potential problematic situations are prevented.

At this point, many companies are getting bigger and require international assignments to fulfill their need to enter a foreign country. For that reason, employees of many international companies may be transferred to other facilities of the firm far from home. Furthermore, many of them like to anticipate their migration into a new country by trying to learn about it and by getting to know about its culture. What often begins with the enthusiasm of working and living in a new country may result in a challenging experience to deal with. This can occur as not everyone has the same ease to fully adapt into a new country possibly due to the expectations that may not correspond to what the individual anticipated but also to the cultural shock that can arouse a feeling of distress and anxiety in the person. Those feelings may cause the process of adaptation to be a lot harder on the individual although not impossible.

1.3.1 Culture Shock And Intercultural Competence

Psychologists and interculturalists explained that when a person works in a new country and culture for the first time they may go through several stages of cross-cultural learning and adaptation. That adaptation is often designated as being the process of *acculturation* or simply “culture shock” (Matveev, 2017).

However, this process is not a simple task to deal with, but it is necessary to undergo a transition so one can understand how to cope with their new life in a foreign country that can bring them as many opportunities as challenges. The truth is handling large cultural shifts can bring a lot of acculturation-related stress (Matveev, 2017). In short, acculturation is the act of adjusting to a different cultural setting from the original one to the host’s cultural environment. In short, it is a “modification of an individual [...] by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture” (Acculturation., n.d.).

According to Matveev (2017) culture shock can be defined as a set of reactions – emotional, psychological, and physiological – to the loss of or an inability to experience one’s culture. Besides, experiencing stress when adapting to a new culture can be the result of the inability to understand and react to the new cultural cues (Gaw, 2000) and the feeling of homesickness can arise due to the lack of “culturally familiar signs, symbols, and social interactions” (Mooradian, 2004). Culture shock may happen because when an individual lacks familiar signs such as “the surroundings, the people, the food, the sounds, and the climate” (Matveev, 2017) they may go through a particularly challenging time adjusting as a result of the loss of what they were comfortable with. It is not an effortless process since it depends a lot on the capacity an individual must understand the host’s culture and how they act in response to how they understand it. It is important to underline that every person is different and has their own time to adjust, and what may appear simple and easy for an individual might be incredibly challenging to another. Consequently, an adverse reaction to an unfamiliar environment may be categorized through a few stages.

Oberg (1960) has identified several symptoms of how culture shock may impact the life of a person. He references symptoms such as “unease with new situations, easy irritation, irrational fears, difficulty with sleeping, general anxiety, often depression, homesickness, and a general preoccupation with health and feeling sick” and, the list may continue to vary from person to person. Furthermore, culture shock has four stages: the honeymoon phase,

the crisis stage, followed by the recovery phase, and finally the desired adjustment stage to the new culture. The honeymoon phase occurs when the individual arrives in a new country – and/or culture – and is fascinated by everything about it; then, a crisis might occur when he or she begins to interact with the people of the host community and the feeling of homesickness arises leading the individual to start rejecting the new environment; then the individual will eventually recover and starts to become more familiarized with the new environment, this is the moment they are starting to acquire the new culture and their viewpoints are changing through new experiences; finally, the adjustment stage occurs when the individual is already accustomed and fully integrated into the new culture (Lai Yan, 2017).

1.3.2 Intercultural Competence Communication Theories

Communication theories are used to understand intercultural competence models but also what can lead to cultural shock or the process of acculturation, and how intercultural adjustment is made. There are two communication theories to be explored for their relevance. These two theories are important since they consider individuals in a business setting contemplating their eagerness to avoid any natural of conflict respecting the others' culture and personal space predicting how they can behave concerning previous gatherings.

The *Expectancy Violation Theory* explains the “problems that may arise with culture shock, reentry, and reverse culture shock” (Matveev, 2017). The author of this theory, Judee Burgoon (1994), found out that people would often associate distinct connotations with what they considered to be a violation of their physical, psychological, or emotional space. Also, this theory of expectancy helped people to anticipate what could happen in a particular situation and this is the reason why managers use it so they can predict and explain the behaviour of others. Burgoon and Walthers (1990) visualized managers as people who belong to a certain cultural origin and expect others to behave considering their culture's values and social norms. Besides, as Matveev (2017) mentioned, managers “measure the success of this behavior in terms of its conformity to the establisher norms”.

On the other hand, the *Uncertainty Reduction Theory* helps to clarify intercultural contacts amongst intercultural sojourners and when crossing cultural boundaries (Matveev, 2017). Berger & Bradac (1982) stated that people use to believe that the fact they get to know each other will help them to predict how the other will behave in upcoming events. Workers of international companies use to behave similarly during gatherings this is, they assemble information about others to understand them, to predict how they can behave, so they can reduce uncertainty about future interactions with their work colleagues. When there is a lack of knowledge on the other, the communicator seeks any kind of information to be able to interact on further occasions (Rubin, 1980). Therefore, acknowledging others in intercultural contexts is especially relevant for communicators since they compare their beliefs to the others' and fulfill their curiosity so they can try to predict and explain others' future behaviors when gathering (Christensen, 2007), which is one of the vital factors for effective functioning of global teams.

This communication theory is the best to explain how employees in multicultural organizations can understand and communicate with their business partners. Accordingly to Anderson (1996), this theory clarifies how individuals who enter a communicative relationship cooperate to reduce uncertainty about the other and develop a pattern of information exchange. This way it is easier to understand the other's way of behaving, what they like or dislike, what are their preferences, and how they go through the process of decision-making. Berger & Bradac (1982) explained that managers, in the context of international organizations, must understand and should be able to predict others' behavior during intercultural interaction. Doing this will help them to define "their professional relationship better, to exercise more control over their relationship, and to predict changes in the relationship" (Matveev, A., 2017). Along with Berger & Roloff (1982), the lack of ability to foresee changes can cause relational dissolution, the end of an international assignment, and uncomfortable social intercultural situations. In contrast, acknowledging changes in relational uncertainty can be beneficial for managers who work in international organizations (Matveev, 2017).

1.3.3 Successful Performance In Intercultural Settings

The better people are aware of the concepts of expectancy violation and uncertainty reduction the better their intercultural interactions will be. It will help them improve efficiency in communication and to motivate people who are working in intercultural and foreign cultural contexts. However, there are professional contexts where there is the need to apply those theories to understand how one employee deals with distinct cultural environments and what are the characteristics that make them competent enough to do the job efficiently. In particular, the application of the following theories is indispensable in the context of the overseas performance of an employee of a multicultural organization, to identify and analyze their intercultural adjustment to the new foreign work environment, and finally, to identify if their communication pattern is being effective among diverse intercultural situations and with people of different cultural backgrounds (Matveev, 2017).

The first practical context, as described by Matveev (2017), is the *overseas performance* where employees of international companies from a particular culture are working on international assignments in a different country/culture. Investigators have found that there are a set of characteristics of individual employees that result in a successful overseas performance. For instance, for investigators such as Cleveland, Mangone & Adams (1960), having technical skills, the belief in the mission, possessing cultural empathy, having a sense of politics, and dominating organizational skills were the main characteristics of the effective overseas performance. Later, Smith (1966) added some other characteristics which included self-confidence, commitment, energy, responsibility, autonomy, flexibility, and hopeful realism. Likewise, Ezekiel (1968) found out that individuals who detain a better overseas performance were in reality characterized by a wider range of interests, as people who value intellectual matters, who have higher aspirations, are cheerful, have verbal fluency, and the ability to express their ideas, are more talkative, value autonomy, and can create and exploit dependency in people (Matveev, 2017). It is possible to agree with every single one of these researchers on the characteristics that they have evidenced that make a person successful in overseas performance. This is the reason why all these characteristics are important and suitable for an overseas performance however not isolated but rather a combination of all. Today, this is what makes more sense considering that culture is dynamic, and so are the skills that are required of a person.

The second practical context is the *intercultural adjustment* of employees of international organizations to a foreign culture (Matveev, 2017). According to Spitzberg & Changnon (2009), this context describes the process when an individual becomes used to a specific cultural environment and does not demonstrate stress or culture shock anymore. Hammer, Gudykunst & Wiseman (1978) have found three factors that characterize intercultural adjustment. For them, having the ability to deal with psychological stress, communicating effectively, and having the ability to establish interpersonal relationships are the key factors in adjusting to an intercultural environment without going through the stressful acculturation process. Having these skills was believed to help individuals get around that process. However, for Brislin (1981) the right path for intercultural adjustment goes further than that since he has studied the attitudes, traits, and skills of employees that have led them to successfully adapt. The author considered that the most suitable attitudes were non-ethnocentrism and non-prejudicial judgments; for personality traits, Brislin (1981) identified six key characteristics: tolerance, strength, social relations, intelligence, task orientation, and motivation; and finally, for him knowing the matter, as well as language and communication skills, positive orientation to opportunities, and the ability to complete tasks, were the fundamental aspects so one can adjust to a foreign culture without going through the process of culture shock or without feeling it as much as other people (Matveev, 2017).

Lastly, accordingly to Dinges (1983), the third practical context is *effective intercultural interactions* (or *intercultural effectiveness*) between employees of different cultural backgrounds owing to a set of abilities and skills to generate an interpersonal relationship with a foreigner through successful communication – both verbal and nonverbal. In this approach, intercultural effectiveness is viewed as intercultural understanding where the accuracy and clarity of the message that is being conveyed are clear and perfectly understood by the receiver. However, having a good relationship with the other person one is communicating with also helps since not knowing someone may deceive or disturb the way people are trying to pass a message because of the cultural differences that may interfere if one is not aware of them (Matveev, 2017)

1.3.4 Cultural Context In Organizations

Being culturally competent and mindful of how communication unfolds in an intercultural environment is not enough if one does not understand that each culture has its way of communicating. Communication will vary in different places, and countries depending on the culture. For instance, a Japanese employee would have a much more challenging time adapting to the culture of a Western country such as Germany. Yet, that same employee would have a much easier intercultural adjustment if adapting to another country of the Asian culture, as China, for example. In the word of Matveev (2017), that happens of the specific cultural context, the cultural distance, and how different cultures influence overseas performance, the intercultural adjustment, and competence communication of an employee when crossing cultural boundaries.

Communication is vital when it comes to organizations and being able to communicate efficiently across borders can determine their success (Kittler, M., et al, 2011). The social studies author Edward Hall (1977) perceived cultures as being comparable on a scale from high to low-context. Hall (1977) believed that cultures differ depending on their use of context and information in the conception of meaning. Furthermore, he added that depending on the type of culture – low or high – the *communication patterns* vary according to which one belongs (Matveev, 2017).

Low-context cultures use low levels of programmed information to provide context; the explicit code or the words actually spoken, carry the message. High-context cultures, on the other hand, convey the message primarily through non-verbal contexts; the physical setting and the individual's internalized values, beliefs, and norms convey the message (Matveev, A., 2017).

In a high-context culture, the communication is based on presumed information about the communicator, the receiver, and the situation with only minimal information in the message. A high-context culture is also often perceived as their natives not being 'direct' enough on the message they are passing to the receiver. Also, individuals are seen as being 'soft' on what they are trying to say so the other will not be offended, for instance, depending on the context one is thinking about. Here, countries such as Japan, China, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, and Spain are included. On the other hand, in a low-context culture, the message carries a lot of information along with contextual meaning (Hall, 1977). In this kind of culture, natives are often understood as being particularly direct people. Moreover, when

communicating they do not fear if the other gets the message wrong or if they are concerned about it. Accordingly to Matveev (2017), low-context cultures include countries such as the United States of America, Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavia, for instance. These are all countries where natives are often perceived as being ‘cold’ when they are more direct to express the message without trying to convey it subtly. Without a doubt, it can be concluded that the communicative patterns are connected to cultural context (Matveev, 2017). Ultimately, according to Chen and Starosta (2008), the context model helps by giving a better understanding of how members of diverse cultures understand similar messages differently because of non-verbal communication behavior.

1.3.5 Culture And Conflict

When dealing with intercultural situations conflicts may arise due to the differences in cultures and because of the different ways of expressing and interpreting the same situation. According to Ting-Toomey (1985), there are some factors such as language barriers, the differences in both verbal and nonverbal communication, values, cultural differences, and intercultural misunderstandings that can very easily start an interpersonal conflict.

While culture defines and regulates the significance and meaning of a conflict situation, the conflict also influences culture and serves many roles within a culture. Since symbolic action is determined by a specific set of cultural norms, the normative movements of a culture define conflict (Matveev, A., 2017).

As affirmed by Matveev (2017) culture does have an impact on a conflict but so does conflict impact culture. This happens for every culture has its own set of cultural norms that might not be quite understood by others of a distinct culture. When a conflict arises, the different cultures have their way of dealing with it. In fact, many cultures are conflict-related avoiders while others might start a conflict for not understanding it, and vice versa.

When interpersonal conflicts enter the organizational environment, or even in social environments, it can harm the organizational performance. Conflicts are often seen as something damaging that destroys interpersonal relationships, however, they can also be helpful as they can bring change for individuals who will then try to work on the conflict to solve it and define strategies and techniques to help them deal with conflicted situations (Matveev, 2017). Ricard (1993) noted that effective intercultural communication is “the ability of an individual or a group to achieve understanding through verbal or non-verbal exchange and interaction between cultures”. To achieve the desired outcomes in intercultural situations people need to hold a set of skills that includes intercultural competence. Moreover, according to Ricard (1993), organizations that prefer their personnel to be culturally competent need them to develop intercultural communication skills in organization development programs. Those programs target the development of skills like:

Valuing: understanding the country’s values where one is working such as “attitudes toward independence, happiness, quickness, courtesy, and equality” (Ricard, 1993).

Observing: to have the ability to sense the changes in the environment.

Listening: being able to listen and recognize the own listening style but also the other's; frequency patterns of speech, and duration intervals.

Thinking: understanding the variation of thinking patterns; approaches to problem-solving; understanding the differences and similarities between communicators.

Speaking: primary verbal communication; the relationship between oral and written communication; planning of words; the relationship between the choice of words, voice, and sound patterns.

Gesturing: the use of nonverbal expressions when interacting; understanding of cultural patterns with both facial and body position and motions. (Ricard, 1993)

1.3.6 Conflict Management

Once communication differs from culture to culture, so do the dimensions of conflict, and how it impacts relationships may also be different depending on if they belong to a low or high-context culture (Matveev, 2017). For instance, in low-context cultures, according to Ting-Toomey (1985), people often can distance and separate the conflict aside from the person who is involved in the conflict. While in high-context cultures the conflict is easily attached to the person involved. By this, it is possible to notice that in high-context cultures people take things personally.

People in low-context cultures perceive conflicts as instrumental in nature, i.e., conflict against certain practices or goals. On the contrary, people in high-context cultures usually perceive conflict as expressive in nature and connected to personal feelings and tension (Ting-Toomey, 1985).

This is the reason why individuals that communicate with other cultures need to understand the different communication patterns that exist across cultures, so it is possible to unravel situations of conflict. Communication during conflict situations and the way people try to solve it depends on the values of a culture, but also on the perception of self and on the contextual social relations of that culture.

It was found by business professionals that what can work on one culture may cause problems on the other. As Matveev (2017) noted, the technique that is mostly used when trying to solve conflict is negotiation. Besides, the author added that the differences in conflict management across cultures have a significant role in the success of negotiation among business professionals (Matveev, 2017).

A traditional conflict management approach in North America includes confronting the disagreement and holding open discussions about the issue. In Asian cultures, people try to avoid conflicts, usually do not disagree, and express a very polite and soft behavior. In cultures where face saving is highly valued, such as Japan, Malaysia and Korea, conflict situations can damage personal and professional relationships. In these cultures, conflict has to be managed in a more indirect and tactful manner, while public and direct conflict resolution can cause shame and negative reactions (O'HaraDevereaux & Johansen, 1994).

North America and Asian countries are great examples when approaching conflict management since they have very distinct ways of handling conflict because of their distinct cultural contexts. While one solves conflict through confrontation, the other avoids it and tries to solve it by other (indirect) means. Additionally, while one confrontation includes discussing the issue, the other finds it very offensive and can even damage relationships and can negatively impact both personal and professional relations. Indeed, Broome et al. (1985) confirmed that the cultural background of an individual affects conflict negotiations because of the differences in the perception of situations (of conflict), personal constructs and interpretations of the context, and cultural rules that guide the strategies of negotiation.

1.3.7 Intercultural Competence Model

In the business world, there is the need to understand how communication and interactions are made, how they can be done successfully, and that is why understanding intercultural competence models play such an important role when working with or closing business deals with other cultures. There are a number of Intercultural Competence Models but for this case in particular, the focus will be on the *Collaborative Intercultural Competence Model* since it is the most appropriate for what this work is intended to.

This model outlines dimensions of intercultural competence that suit professional teams but also the multicultural organizations of today (Matveev, 2002). Moreover, the *Collaborative Intercultural Competence Model* appears to do better when helping scholars and practitioners in understanding how intercultural competence works in multicultural organizations. The model connects the dimensions of intercultural competence – *interpersonal skills, team effectiveness, intercultural uncertainty, and intercultural empathy* – with the traditional communication and the cultural aspects of when an employee cross cultural boundaries. Also, it underlines the relationship between intercultural competence and performance in multicultural teams (Matveev, 2017).

For Matveev (2017) this model is important for the “composition of team goals, roles and norms, constructive feedback, decision making, resource availability, and team structure and culture”. It can be also helpful when “doing business, managing people, but also to engage with people of diverse cultures”. Furthermore, it is also valuable for academics and researchers to perform two-country or multiple-country comparisons (Matveev, 2017).

Collaborative Intercultural Competence Model

The *Collaborative Intercultural Competence Model* was elaborated by Matveev (Matveev, 2002; Matveev & Nelson, 2004) on the framework of multicultural teams. With this model, the author has concluded that to become an interculturally effective person, an individual should be efficient in intercultural adjustment but also in job performance (Matveev, 2017). This model defines *Intercultural Competence* by relating it to the context of multicultural teams while also employing it as a moderator of communication and cultural

orientation in the professional context. For the author, the *Collaborative Intercultural Competence Model* recognizes four dimensions (Matveev, 2017):

Interpersonal Skills Dimension

In this dimension, a member of the team identifies the differences in both communication patterns and interactional styles of people from distinct cultures. Similarly, they demonstrate efficiency to solve misunderstandings and feel comfortable when communicating with foreigners. When positively functioning on this dimension the employee would have the ability to start meaningful conversations with others, would be able to decrease communication misinterpretations, would understand others' diverse communication systems and patterns, comprehend the different educational systems, cope with unpredicted problematic situations, would be able to connect with others and maintain relationships, but also to initiate communication with strangers, and speak the target language (Matveev, 2017).

Team Effectiveness Dimension

This dimension includes critical skills like the ability of an individual to comprehend and to communicate most clearly their team goals but also their roles and norms to other members of a multicultural team. In this dimension, an individual would reveal a higher motivation and problem-solving competencies, would strive to complete tasks, prove success in the home country, and improve and demonstrate creativity skills (Matveev, 2017).

The Intercultural Uncertainty Dimension

It reflects the ability of a team member to exhibit patience when in intercultural environments, and to demonstrate tolerance towards ambiguity and uncertainty due to cultural differences when cooperating with others on a multicultural team. Additionally, the professional would have need to be mindful of cultural disparities, to have a non-judgmental behavior, to cope with unfamiliar and stressful situations, and surpass changes in lifestyles (Matveev, 2017).

Intercultural Empathy Dimension

In this dimension, a member of the team behaves respectfully toward other cultures and can understand the world as team members from other cultures. The individual enjoys learning about unfamiliar cultures and their communication patterns, shows an appreciation for a variety of working styles, and appreciate how things are done in other cultures (Matveev, 2017).

1.3.8 Developing Cultural Competency

As a result of the current interdependency and the need to stay interconnected with other cultures, a diversity of fields considers that there is the need to communicate, and to cooperate effectively with those people work with, but also with those who they serve. Hence, there is an increasing number of initiatives that focus on the development of intercultural competence in the various fields of educational institutions, corporations, health care contexts, counselling settings, military, social services, government, NGOs. Notwithstanding all these areas that offer training on intercultural competence, the one that has been having the most important role in preparing learners for the 21st century is the educational field (Bennett, 2009). In line with Bennett (2009) educators have acknowledged their role of preparing learners not only for their future careers but also to be *global citizens*, meaning that they educate individuals to become competent and to develop a set of skills, knowledge, and values to engage with the world.

Furthermore, in the corporate area, the importance of culture goes both for an international setting but also for the domestic diversity. From the international perspective, as mentioned before, there has been the realization that having intercultural competent employees may be more lucrative for the company than having no intercultural competent employees due to the management of conflicts that may arise. It is known that global joint ventures might collapse because of intercultural conflicts where shared goals are proven to be elusive and cultural differences affect communication (Graf, 2004).

Bennett (2009) stated that corporations have been transferring employees over time for them to develop adjustment and effective performance overseas. Likewise, Mendenhall (2001) noted that “the expatriate adjustment process is one of human transformation [...] knowingly or unknowingly, for better or for worse [...] they return to their home country with new ways of seeing and thinking about the world around them”. Nowadays, organizations do this by focusing on global leadership to have the necessary competencies for managing over cultures – internationally or domestically, or both (Bennett, 2009).

On the other hand, the domestic perspective provides training that usually includes every employee and corporate location, and often focuses on topics such as culture, race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, and others. Over the years the perspective

on the diversity field has evolved from celebrating, appreciating, or managing diversity to inclusion and intercultural competence (Bennett, 2009).

Thus, accordingly to Bennett (2009), there has been a growing recognition that intercultural competence is advantageous in both global and domestic interaction. Admitting that both domestic and international perspectives are important when developing intercultural competence, it will be addressed based on attitudes, knowledge, and skills through the metaphor of an intercultural positioning system.

Intercultural Competence: Positioning Systems

Bennett (2009) believes that it is important to consider the metaphor of the GPS when thinking about the process of developing intercultural competence. People rely on this system to know where they are but also to find a way to where they are going. A GPS is used to determine not only the location but also other factors such as speed, direction, and time through several satellite signals at the same time. The interculturalist viewed intercultural competence as a process similar to triangulation and used the metaphor of a global positioning system to explain it (Bennett, 2009).

In this line of thought, Stoddard & Cornwell (2003) suggested that this can be “a model for the way one needs to collect perspectives from differently situated knowers and citizens around the world in order to be able to make informed judgments, to have a sufficient basis for knowledge”. This is, intercultural competence is like a GPS system for it needs several ‘signals’ and perspectives from others around the world so it is more accurate, just like a GPS that needs a series of signals through several satellites in order to be precise on the location, for instance. However, to identify our cultural position in the context of others it is necessary to consider the global positioning system using several cultural maps to evaluate how we view others’ cultures to understand what an intercultural positioning system is (Bennett, 2009). Bennett (2009) recognized that culture maps are used so topics such as *nonverbal behavior, communication styles, values, interaction rituals, conflict styles, cognitive and learning styles, and identity development* are analyzed so there is a foundation when recognizing others’ cultures. As these topics are delved into it will be possible to identify not just the differences between cultures but also the similarities and this is just the beginning of building intercultural competence. By previously evaluating our position

concerning others' cultural positions we are adjusting our interaction. For instance, sometimes when interacting with others we might need to look them directly in the eyes to expose our opinion while dialoguing, however, if necessary, there might be an adjustment to the other's culture since they can rely on silence as an opening to speak while also avoiding eye contact (Bennett, 2009).

The primary purpose of an intercultural positioning system is to assist us to locate ourselves to firstly understand our cultural patterns and develop cultural self-awareness. Only after this, we can begin to explore the gap between our values, beliefs, and behaviors and finally start to understand others. There will be some cultural differences that will be easily surpassed, though, others might need some mediation and negotiation. It is a joint venture to create a bridge between two intercultural positions that are willing to take the risks inevitably involved in their interests. Following Bennett (2009) adapting to other cultures might bring up the question of whether to adapt, how much should we adapt, or even whether we should give up on our culture to adapt to someone else's. Some people think of this as withdrawing our personhood but interculturalists see it as the other way around. They see it as being an additive process for people to remain intact and end up adding more skills to their repertory of behaviors (Bennett, 2009).

Thus, why do people need to adapt? Adaptation is necessary when we want to achieve a shared meaning, complete a business deal effectively, to teach about different cultures, or to succeed in anything that requires the involvement of different cultures. Although, the choice to adapt may experience changes if cultural values are significantly disregarded, when one's safety is involved, or even when the risk is higher than our tolerance. Now and then people interact with others who are also adjusting their cultural distance and that share the same desire for adjustment. It is also possible that when we begin to adapt, the other has already adapted to us, and instead of adapting to a third space they wind up adapting to each other (Bennett, 2009). Under Bennett (2009), four steps to becoming an intercultural competent person are mentioned comparing the adjustment to an intercultural positioning system. In fact, this comparison makes it easier for people to understand what will lead them to become intercultural competent individuals through knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Fostering Attitudes That Motivate Us

The first step the interculturalist mentions is fostering attitudes that motivate us. For Bennett (2009) the best way to develop intercultural competence is through motivation and considering what makes us want to learn about others. Besides, there are authors such as Mendenhall (2001) and Deardorff (2006) that recognize *curiosity* as the key element for developing intercultural competence. In fact, when interacting across cultures not everything is as it appears to be for sometimes some events or triggers have not been registered in our positioning systems yet. Those are the events that will make us see the world differently on account of our reaction to it. Furthermore, when achieving intercultural competence people need to let go of assumptions and judgements and stay open-minded to understand that there are multiple viewpoints. Guskin (1991) highlighted the importance to practice cultural humility by questioning what we see from a certain situation, what it can mean acknowledging that what we understand of that might not be the only meaning for it, and what others understand of that situation. However, there is another aspect to consider which is the need to increase our tolerance of ambiguity, which is another essential characteristic for working effectively across cultures. In short, these are the core elements of the *affective dimension* of intercultural competence according to Bennett (2009).

Discovering Knowledge that Informs Us

Motivation will help us react properly to unusual cultural situations, nevertheless, discovering knowledge that informs us about it should be the next step to take into consideration. In this case, the intercultural positioning system provides a tool that moves from the necessary cultural self-awareness to the important analysis of the cultures we are interacting with. In this case, the culture map to consider is the map of thinking styles, which is the “individual’s preferred patterns of interacting with the environment, through perception, gathering information, constructing meaning, and organizing and applying knowledge” (Bennett, 2009). For instance, people working on intercultural teams often approach a project in a very distinct way from others for they may have a different constructed meaning. For Bennett (2009), when using this culture map is it necessary to understand that the members of different cultures may apply several styles in their interactions. The benefits of using mapping styles are that it is a way of evaluating and

adapting so the interaction is possible. Bennett and Bennett (2004) acknowledged that people develop culture maps through learning theory, through research, and by putting their knowledge into practice. Through this, it is possible to realize a series of dimensions that will help us to explore our and others' cultures (Bennett, 2009).

When building thinking style maps, the constructs of field independence and field dependence (also known as field-sensitive) styles are also useful. For the author, field independence is related to task orientation along with analytical and objective thinking but also with being an autonomous individual. On the other hand, field sensitivity reflects relationship orientation, focusing on people instead of focusing on a determined group or things (Bennett, 2009).

Relying on this intercultural positioning system would help us compare our perspective to the perspective of those we are interacting with, to determine the distance between our pattern of thinking from theirs. Thinking styles culture maps give us only one dimension of where we are in comparison to others of distinct cultures. Nevertheless, the use of diverse culture maps increases the possibility to absorb important knowledge about the ones we are communicating with. As we have a more accurate definition of our cultural situation, it is necessary to evaluate the level of challenge we undergo while communicating with others (Bennett, 2009).

Evaluating the Challenge and Support Factors

Nevitt Sanford (1966) noted that the challenges an individual surpasses during intercultural situations and the level of support they have are necessary for an individual to adjust effectively to a certain environment. Depending on the person but also on multiple factors, there is the need to evaluate what aspects of intercultural competence can deliver support to the individual and what are the aspects that challenge them. This is if one is excessively supported, adjustment or any kind of progress is less likely to happen. However, if an individual is exceedingly challenged, they are likely to run away from the intercultural context – psychologically, physically, or both. A balance is necessary between both the support and challenge when adapting across cultures (Bennett, 2009).

Developing Skills

According to Bennett (2009), once we have developed our cultural self-awareness, have understood how we distance ourselves from others, and consider both the level of challenge and support necessary, we are ready for our succeeding level of the intercultural positioning system, which is the development of the necessary skills to adaptation – a never-ending mission. The essential intercultural skills also include some characteristics that people need to develop, like the ability to sympathize with others, gather proper information, to listen, to adapt, to be able to solve a conflict, and to manage social interactions and anxiety. Once, it was believed by many professionals that any cross-cultural contact was useful to reduce stereotypes and prejudice among cultures and that it would also allow the improvement of intercultural competence (Bennett, 2009).

However, intercultural competence is way more than just reducing stereotypes and prejudice. Pettigrew (2008) noted that empathy and anxiety management contribute to enhancing the impact of intercultural contact, sometimes even more than just the acquisition of knowledge about a culture. Additionally, the author examines three variables for skill-building in intercultural competence: how new knowledge about others influence attitudes and opinions, how anxiety reduction appears to ease interactions, and how empathy towards others impacts the way we understand them. From Bennett's (2009) perspective, empathy and anxiety reduction requires more than just being in the presence of cultural differences as it should also endorse the engagement with otherness.

Using the intercultural positioning system is one of many ways people can enhance their competence. However, if it is to achieve its potential, this positioning system must become a part of an individual's daily basis. Also, it is possible to recognize that even though contact is important, it is not the only way to become interculturally competent for there are other aspects that should be considered.

1.4 Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication is unquestionably interdisciplinary since it has been approached by a variety of study disciplines, such as, for instance, anthropology, education, sociology, psychology, human resources, and business. The study of intercultural communication emerged intending to understand how people would identify with each other even if having distinct cultural backgrounds (Bennett, 1998).

As times have evolved so much during the last decades, the need for communication – politically, economically, or socially – among countries has also deepened. The outcome of this interconnectedness between nations and people has instigated the need for individuals to communicate progressively more across borders (Brand, 2014), and due to globalization, it has become possible. Globalization and the integration and spread of people around the world have resulted in the ever-increasing requirement to understand and communicate positively with others of different cultures (Samovar, L. et al. 2011).

We are living in an era where knowing how to successfully communicate interculturally is not an asset any longer but instead a requirement. This has to do with the ease with which people of diverse nations and cultures have nowadays to meet and interact. Nevertheless, this has only become possible due to the technological advances that gave people the opportunity to move across vast distances easier and quicker. In addition to traveling, advancements in technology have also facilitated virtual interactions. Consequently, individuals from all over the world connect daily through telephones, social media, and the Internet in general, for example (Samovar, L. et al. 2011). This comes to prove that intercultural communication has become such an important part of people's daily lives even if they do not understand it as communicating across borders. Nowadays people are constantly in contact with other cultures and the majority do not even realize it but by consuming social media content, for instance, they are already communicating and are getting to know about other's cultures just by observation.

1.4.1 Globalization's Influence On Intercultural Communication

Globalization had other important effects on people's daily lives for if it was not for its huge influence on the commercial sector many companies would not have created huge empires that are now spread all over. Perhaps, so known brands like KFC, Pizza Hut, McDonald's, and Taco Bell, which are internationally recognized restaurant chains, would not be constantly opening new units around the world. Besides, the migration level has also escalated for globalization has helped industries to expand abroad and many companies need their employees to move across borders to work on another firm's facility, but it has also opened doors to emigration for people who desire a better quality of life that they did not have the chance to have in their home country. This movement across borders was also felt in education with students of higher education, for instance, participating in exchanging programs abroad (Samovar, L. et al. 2011). With these examples, it is possible to recognize the evident significance culture has now in modern society. It can be because as people are entering new societies with different cultures it has become necessary to understand the host's culture since communication patterns and styles are different and they need to be acquainted so the message one is trying to convey is successfully given.

On the other hand, it is possible to understand that even though globalization has had incredible results, it has also proved that not everything about it is quite positive. The economic interconnectedness between countries is a good thing because it has a lot of positive effects for consumers to have access to a wider variety of goods, it makes some companies lower their prices to consumers due to the higher demand, for instance. However, if we take a quick look back in time to the start of the 2007 financial crisis, which began in the United States, collapsing a lot of financial firms and international institutions it is evident that economic interconnectedness can have disastrous consequences for the rest of the world since almost every nation has been affected by this crisis. Those consequences are also observed nowadays with the war that broke out between Russia and Ukraine in February 2022, that has been having serious consequences in the rising in the prices of all goods, and the consequences it will have economically in the future are already starting to worry people. Furthermore, these days we see a lot of old icons, such as internationally known car brands "taking on new personas", for example, Volvo which was originally Swedish is now owned by a Chinese company (Samovar, L. et al. 2011). The same happened with Land Rover and Jaguar, which were British brands, and are currently owned by an Indian firm. This rising

interconnectedness will need a growing and greater cultural awareness in the future so it will be possible to continue working with people of different cultures and nations. Therefore, speaking different languages and being interculturally competent will turn out to be a common requirement to work for international companies. In short, globalization influenced intercultural communication with the “mixing of people from varied nationalities and ethnic groups, brought about by immigration, global business connections, the ease of international travel, Internet, social networking sites, and increased societal acceptance is also dramatically increasing the number of international interpersonal relationships [...]” (Pulsipher & Pulsipher, 2008).

1.4.2 Conceptualizing Intercultural Communication

Bennett (2013) explained intercultural communication to be “an approach to relations among members of [...] groups that focus on the recognition and respect of cultural differences, seek the goal of mutual adaptation leading to biculturalism [...], and supports the development of intercultural sensitivity on the part of individuals and organizations to enable empathic understanding and competent coordination of action across cultural differences”. Intercultural communication is more than just acknowledging the cultural differences between people who are involved in a conversation, it also means respecting those differences without making value judgments immediately. People need to be conscious that when in a conversation with someone of a different culture, communicative patterns, styles, but also cultural factors might be more evident, and even if one does not understand them, the best way to avoid conflicts and misinterpretations is by avoiding being offensive towards the other in any way. Intercultural Communication assists individuals in moving past preconceived ideas, values, and beliefs, and helps people to open to a world that we did not have acknowledged yet due to existing barriers to connecting with others.

The term “intercultural” is applied when there is a communication process between individuals of different cultures. In intercultural communication, the difference degree existent between the participants is primarily caused by their differences in beliefs, values, norms, and communicative patterns and styles. Intercultural communication occurs when our culture affects our communication process, to awareness or an unawareness degree. People may be aware that there are cultural differences between themselves and the other participants although that is not enough to manage intercultural communication successfully. Individuals need to learn and manage skills, so they can cope with such differences. Some individuals are unaware of the existing cultural differences and end up attributing those flaws in communication to other factors rather than the cultural ones, to their personality traits, for instance (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

1.4.2.1 The Elements Of Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication is the actual first thing people notice when in an intercultural meeting. When communicating intercultural, people use both verbal and nonverbal language to get their message across effectively. This is called *symbolic exchange*, which refers to the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols between people to achieve a shared meaning. This occurs when the receiver in the communication attaches a similar meaning to the message that the sender intended to convey. Verbal symbols (the process of putting thoughts into words, or sounds) are the digital aspects of the message exchange process, while nonverbal symbols (a smile, for instance) are considered the analogical aspects of the message exchange process (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

The second element of Intercultural Communication is the *process*. It refers to the interdependent nature of an intercultural encounter, meaning that as soon as two strangers engage in a conversation, they enter a mutually interdependent relationship. For instance, when in a business setting, a Japanese may be bowing to greet other people, while an American shakes hands. The two may rapidly adapt their nonverbal greetings to the other's behavior. However, this change in nonverbal behavior may cause some confusion and that moment to be awkward. This concept refers to two main ideas (Ting-Toomey, 1999):

The transactional nature of intercultural communication refers to the simultaneous encoding (i.e., the sender choosing the right words or nonverbal gestures to express his or her intentions) and decoding (i.e., the receiver translating the words or nonverbal cues into comprehensible meanings) of the exchanged messages. When the decoding process of the receiver matches the encoding process of the sender, the receiver and sender of the message have accomplished shared content meanings effectively (Ting-Toomey, S., 1999).

In other words, the message is properly transmitted and understood if both the sender and receiver find a middle ground and make an effort to express and understand themselves. However, this does not happen every time people enter intercultural encounters since there can be a lot of misunderstandings due to language problems and communication styles, for instance (Ting-Toomey, 1999). This is the main reason why becoming an intercultural competent person is so important nowadays and will become even more important in the days to come.

Intercultural communication sees it as being an “irreversible process because the receiver may form different impressions even regarding the same repeated message. Once a sender utters something to a receiver, he or she cannot repeat the same message exactly twice. The sender's tone of voice, interaction pace, or his or her facial expression will not stay precisely the same. It is also difficult for any sender to withdraw or cancel a message once the message has been decoded” (Barnlund, 1962). All in all, when having a conversation with someone, a person’s posture, facial expression, tone of voice, and how it is said accounts a lot for the receiver. Even if people try to repeat the message or redo it the first impression is already done and cannot be erased.

The third characteristic of intercultural communication is *different cultural communities*. As noted by Ting-Toomey (1999) a cultural community is a group where individuals interact with each other and share a set of traditions and have a similar way of life. They can also share a set of values and beliefs and their members see that unit as one even if physically dispersed, for instance, Jews see themselves as a united cultural community even though they are dispersed around the world. A cultural community can refer to “a national cultural group, an ethnic group, or a gender group” (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Negotiate shared meanings refers to the main goal of an intercultural encounter. When doing business interculturally, for instance, the main concern is to make sure our messages are successfully understood. Ting-Toomey (1999) affirmed that when the interpretation of the meaning of the message coincides with the intention of the message, there is a high level of shared meanings. Perhaps, if there are two communicators of different nationalities communicating through a common language both speak, they may ask each other to clarify a part of the message that was not so clear to them (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Content meaning refers to the information that is being conveyed to the receiver verbally or through any other channel of communication. Once the meaning of the message has been successfully decoded by the receiver, both communicators have “established a level of mutually shared content meanings”. Content meaning is often linked to business contracts where there is a display of a series of details however it also involves knowing what is appropriate in specific cultural interactions. An example of that is knowing that in Asian countries (high-context culture countries) there is a great difficulty in saying “no” directly and they often justify their answer instead (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Identity meaning entails matters such as the demonstration of respect or rejection and is more subtle than evident, unlike content meaning. The receiver deduces meanings through “the speaker’s tone of voice, nonverbal nuances, different facial expressions, and selective word choices”. For example, when the sender of the message says “Maria, come over here!” which is a very authoritarian sentence when it could easily be replaced by “Maria when you have the time can you please come here?”, the level of respect displayed is quite evident from one sentence to the other (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Relational meaning offers information on the state of the relationship between the sender and the receiver of the message. It can be perceived through nonverbal intonations, body movements, or gestures that are displayed while sending the message.

For example, the professor says, "I want to talk to you about your grade in this class", which can be inferred as either “You're in serious trouble-better shape up or ship out" or "I'm concerned about your grade in this class-let me know how I can help you (Ting-Toomey, S., 1999).

This characteristic shows both power distance meanings (the distance level in the relationship between authority-subordinate; equal-unequal) and relational distance (the distance in the relationship between leaders-employees personal-impersonal). Also, this characteristic can be easily mistaken with the one of *identity meaning*, although on this one the approach is more to a superior-subordinate level (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Finally, the last characteristic of intercultural communication is an *interactive situation*, and it refers to the panorama where an interaction takes place. An interactive situation includes concrete (the furniture of where the communication happens) and psychological (if it was on a formal or informal dimension) features and as Ting-Toomey (1999) noted, “every communication episode occurs in an interactive situation”. The way a person interprets an interactive situation is often connected with a series of components and the way we perceive it. An individual’s understanding of the meaning of a situational component is also linked to one’s culture. For example, the way people distinguish rooms as private or public, as spaces reserved for family members or guests; and how interactions should be carried out, by asking a guest if they want something to drink when they arrive. In fact, having situational sensitivity can avoid intercultural inconveniences and frustrations.

CHAPTER II – AN APPROACH TO MARKETING

“Marketing is all around us” became a popular statement to portray marketing. Before defining this area of study, it is necessary to understand that we all have been influenced by marketing ever since a very young age even without noticing it. Back in the days when social media was not one of the most important ways of disseminating marketing, children, for instance, would often find themselves learning to read from logos that were placed on the side of the road or the television. If we think about a billboard of a new amusement park or toy, they will significantly influence the child. This has such a great impact on them that they will end up spending their time and money – by persuading their parents – in response to what the marketers have designed for people to see (Godin, 2018).

Godin (2018) affirmed that “marketing, more than a lake or a forest, is the landscape of our modern lives” which can be perceived as marketing not being just a predefined field but instead something that surrounds us even if imperceptible to our eyes. However, what is its purpose? The marketing aim is to deal with customers by keeping appealing new ones employing promising superior value and to keep and increase their customer’s portfolio through satisfaction. (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017).

At the moment, marketing is perceivable through products we buy or use every day but also in the advertisements people watch on their television, on magazines – on paper or online –, or even on newsletters individuals receive via e-mail. Nevertheless, marketing, just as culture, has evolved and adapted according to the times and resources, and for that reason, marketers have developed new approaches that go from websites and phone apps to online advertising videos, and the most popular today, that is taking advantage of social media. Strategies that were once enough to share a message are now old-fashioned and do not work anymore in the current markets along with the changing needs. These new methods are not used to just spread-out messages to the masses, instead they want to reach people “directly, personally, and interactively”. Marketers currently want to be a part of people’s lives enhancing their experiences with their brands by helping individuals to live their brands and not just buy them and utilize them (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017).

2 Marketing Defined

Marketing is many times misinterpreted as selling and advertising. That occurs as today people are bombarded with commercials that are constantly popping up on television, catalogs, and online pitches from salespeople. However, that is just a small part of what marketing is (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017). The truth is that marketing can be compared to culture when it comes to the *iceberg metaphor*, with selling and advertising being only the tip of it which is the part that is perceivable to individuals.

Currently, marketing ought to be perceived in the sense of satisfying customer needs instead of the old sense of just selling a product or service – “telling and selling” (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017). Along with Kotler (2003), selling is only possible when there is already a product, nonetheless, marketing starts even before it exists. For marketing to occur properly, there is an imminent need for preparation on the part of a company to understand the situation of the market, what are the society's needs, what should be offered to individuals, and on what terms. Depending on the results, marketing will be decisive to realize if something – a product or service – remains or leaves the market.

Marketing is the homework your company does to figure out what people need and what your company should offer. Marketing determines how to launch, price, distribute, and promote your product/service offerings to the marketplace. Marketing then monitors the results and improves the offering over time. Marketing also decides if and when to end an offering (Kotler, P., 2003).

Furthermore, there is a misconception among companies as many believe that marketing exists to support manufacturing in getting rid of the products, but it occurs just the opposite – manufacturing supports marketing. A company can resort to outsourcing but what makes it thrive in the market is how marketing idealizes and presents it to consumers (Kotler, 2003). Engaging properly with customers, through the understanding of their needs, developing products that provide the customer superior value, as well as pricing, distribution, and promotion of those products will make them sell easily. Selling and advertising are just some of the marketing tools that are employed to satisfy customer needs as well as build customer relationships (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017).

According to Armstrong et al (2017) marketing is generally defined as “a social and managerial process by which individuals and organizations obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging value with others”. Nevertheless, in a business context, it involves “building profitable, value-laden exchange relationships with customers” (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017).

Additionally, marketing by Philip Kotler (2003), widely known as “the father of modern marketing”, is defined as being “the business function that identifies unfulfilled needs and wants, defines and measures their magnitude and potential profitability, determines which target markets the organization can best serve, decides on appropriate products, services, and programs to serve these chosen markets, and calls upon everyone in the organization to think and serve the customer”. In short, marketing seeks to convert an individual’s ever-changing needs into opportunities that wind up being profitable. Its purpose is to create value by offering superior solutions, saving the customer’s time and effort trying to find them (Kotler, 2003).

2.1 Marketing Strategies Adopted In Different Cultures

Globalization, the advancements in technology, and all that it entails made it possible for organizations to seek and expand overseas in search of new markets for their services or products. Nevertheless, entering new countries with distinct cultures and markets is not a straightforward procedure as it seems if its culture is not regarded. Indeed, culture can be the most difficult obstacle to overcome when doing business within new geographical areas. Therefore, marketing strategies have such a huge dimension when it comes to business for there is the need to understand how people of different cultures act in response to certain services or products. For that reason, when marketing cross borders it is required to research and analyze the marketplace, so it is feasible to understand what are those people's wants and desires meeting their tastes and preferences.

The better the understanding of the target culture, the better the implementation will be. Considering this will lead to a greater acceptance of both organizations and their brands, which subsequently may support them in obtaining global recognition. People's behavior, purchasing habits, tastes, and preferences are influenced by culture's social norms, so when deciding about the implementation of a business in a new culture it is crucial to acknowledge some cultural behaviors, so after be more prepared when designing marketing strategies. This way it is possible to steer clear of serious issues related to cultural differences and not insult or offend consumers in any way. Having consumer-related problems due to cultural differences can damage the organization itself but can also lead to the loss of a target market and even to problems with future achievements.

Hence, the organization's primary effort should be on being accepted into a community through respecting the local culture and everything that is embedded with it and by customizing marketing strategies considering a particular *locale*. Campaigns are crucial in this case for when conceived and adapted to the local culture they can reach a larger number of audiences, to appeal to the consumer but also to achieve their trust. This is the reason why the service of *localization* is so important within marketing since through this means of translation marketers take the original message into a proper and suitable one to the target culture without altering its meaning and primary idea.

Localization involves taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country region and language) where it will be used and sold (Esselink, 2000).

Currently, multinational organizations are more aware of the benefits of localization as they desire to enter new and foreign markets for they will always encounter cultural obstacles that need to be topped. Today most companies have acknowledged the difference between the *translation* of a product or service into a new culture and localizing it. In fact, many renowned companies have learned from their experiences that the culture of the target market matters, as individuals will behave and purchase accordingly, and for that reason, diverse marketing blunders and successes are to be approached to prove the importance that localizing into the target culture plays in marketing. The main intention is to understand how brands are accepted by consumers when they consider the local culture and adapt their marketing strategies as well as their products or services to the needs and preferences of a specific *locale*.

Likewise, Patrick Geddes⁴ (1915) uttered the famous “think global, act local” statement in which the idea of standardization of marketing strategies was still very present. However, nowadays that statement can be adjusted to “think local, act global” contemplating a *glocal*⁵ perspective encouraging businesses to adjust their services or products to conform to their localized audiences. In short, the priority of unravelling cultural challenges and meeting the culture’s preferences is the organizations’ main goal along with the customers’ satisfaction. Also, the success of a company will depend on the understanding of the culture, the insight of people’s preferences, and on how the message is passed on to them.

⁴ Patrick Geddes was a Scottish town planner; however, he has also been described as a sociologist, educationist, biologist, and ecologist (National Library of Scotland, n.d.).

⁵ Glocalization: “(...) a product or service that is developed and distributed globally but is also adjusted to accommodate the user or consumer in a local market” (Hayes, A., 2020).

2.1.1 The Marketing Process

When thinking of placing a service or product on the market there are a few things that must be considered so it can be a success. That is the reason why acknowledging how marketing is administered is so valuable. Having an insight into how the process of marketing unfolds itself is essential for companies to recognize their target consumers but also how they can create customer value and build a strong relationship with their customers. Similarly, by creating value *for* consumers, companies will subsequently obtain value *from* them, meaning that when companies consider the consumer's habits it will get them to have a greater number in sales, more profit, and long-term customer equity (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017), meaning that the more loyal the customer is to a brand, the more is their customer equity.

As per Armstrong et al (2017), marketers' first move should be to investigate and understand what are the consumers' needs and wants and the marketplace in which they desire to integrate a service or product. Nonetheless, recognizing what are the customer's demands alongside existing market offerings – in terms of products, services, information, or experiences – is decisive for there is always room for improvement. This way it will be possible to create value for consumers through their levels of satisfaction. This implies that a consumer will choose a product or service according to their expectations about the value and satisfaction that various market offerings deliver, and it has an impact when buying. Although how does that affect the decision of buying certain products or services? Armstrong et al (2017) argued that when customers are satisfied they will not only buy again but will tell others about their positive experience, nevertheless, that also happens the other way around, with unsatisfied customers not repeating a purchase, switching to competitors and belittle the product to other people. So, the companies' main goal is to build a strong relationship with their customers by delivering superior customer value hence later it will be feasible to get value from them (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017).

Once marketers understand consumers and the marketplace it is necessary to start designing a customer-driven marketing strategy. This is called marketing management, which supports marketers in choosing target markets but also how to build profitable relationships with their customers. The main goal of marketing management is to “find, attract, keep, and grow target customers by creating, delivering, and communicating superior customer value” (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017) and that is only possible when the marketing

manager knows their target market but also how they will serve those customers best by defining their *value proposition* – which are the values the brand promises to their consumers intending to satisfy their needs. However, the company must first decide whom they desire to serve by dividing the market into segments – *market segmentation* – and decide on which segments it will go after. Additionally, the company must also specify how it will serve its target customers by defining how the company’s product or service will differentiate and position itself within the market. After that process, it is time for the consumer to decide why to buy from a specific brand and not from another (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017).

Having the marketing strategy defined, the company should be able to construct an integrated marketing program that consists of the four marketing elements known as “the four Ps” – product, price, place, and promotion. Armstrong et al (2017) claim that the purpose of the integrated marketing program is to transform the marketing strategy into real value for customers. This can be seen through the product offers placed by companies and the strong brand identities that are assembled for them; those offers have to be priced so real customer value is created and ultimately distributed so the offers are available to the real target consumers; finally, promotion programs are designed to communicate the value proposition to target customers by persuading them not only to buy it but also to act according to market offerings (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017).

Following these steps of the marketing process that exist to create value *for* customers, the last step is to build strong relationships with the target consumers to get value *from* them. Value from customers involves capturing value in form of sales, market share, and profits, nonetheless, that only occurs when the company invests in creating superior customer value. When a company considers their customers and offers them superior value, they will have highly satisfied consumers which will translate into loyalty to the brand and therefore they will buy more but also influence others to do so (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017).

2.1.2 Marketing Strategies And The Cultural Environment

Companies around the world have been learning throughout the years of the importance that culture has, not just during intercultural encounters but also when marketing overseas. It is certain that every country has its unique culture and thus, taking it into account, marketing strategies should be designed for each one of them since when that does not happen a lot can go wrong for firms. When deciding on what type of marketing strategies are to be employed companies must understand how culture influences not just the consumer's behavior in each market but also how their strategies impact local cultures.

Nevertheless, before starting to develop a marketing strategy, marketers should study and analyze some indicators of market potential, so their strategies are applied effectively regarding the desired market segmentation. There are five indicators of market potential as specified by Armstrong et al (2017) which include: *demographic* and *geographic* characteristics, as well as *economic* factors, *political and legal* factors, and *sociocultural* factors. In fact, those that are going to be considered in this case are the sociocultural factors – consumer lifestyles, beliefs, and values, business norms and approaches, cultural and social norms, and language – given that culture is the main focal point.

In a preliminary state, sellers ought to understand how consumers in different countries think about and utilize certain products even before planning a marketing strategy to integrate a product or service in that market. This is necessary because many times there are surprises when it comes to consumer behavior. For example, in cultural terms people instinctively connect spaghetti to Italians, nevertheless, Germans and French eat more packaged branded spaghetti than the Italians themselves (Kotler et al., 2019). Another example relays on most North American women letting their hair down and removing their makeup when it is bedtime while 15% of Chinese women do the exact opposite, meaning that they style their hair at bedtime, and even 11% of them put on makeup for the day after (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017). These are great examples to prove that surprises can happen when companies do not consider both cultural norms and differences, and that can lead to serious and expensive problems for the company followed by a damaged status. To avoid those challenges marketers must understand the preferred market, so they do not get influenced by cultural classifications and stereotypes.

Additionally, business norms and behavior of each country differ and can say a lot about its people and how to not cross boundaries. For instance, North American businesspeople are more straightforward when doing business and can easily engage in face-to-face bargaining. On the other hand, the Japanese and other Asian businesspeople can find this direct way of negotiating very offensive since they prefer to engage in a polite conversation and rarely can decline when in face-to-face discussions (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017). In this case, the difference between high and low-context cultures is quite apparent. When conducting business with other cultures it is also essential to consider their cultural background as people will act and react according to the values and norms that were established during their lives. Culture is learned and passed from generation to generation although suffering some influences from the present effect of globalization. Understanding and respecting a different culture may not only support companies to steer clear of moments of tension and mistakes but it will also help them to attain more business prospects by knowing how to negotiate with them. In the case of marketing strategies, considering both behaviors it is possible to observe that one culture can be more tolerant towards a more explicit message while others might prefer something more diffused and understated.

As culture impacts the choice of marketing strategies, marketing strategies also do influence local cultures. That is perceivable through many global brands such as McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Starbucks, Google, and Facebook, all American multinationals, that globalized their brands and are affecting many cultures around the world by Americanizing them (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017). In McDonald's case, although there is a localization of menus in all the target markets there is a standardized system that is the same everywhere in the world that includes their basic menu and operating procedures. In India, for instance, around 80%⁶ of its people are Hindu, which means that they do not eat cow meat, therefore McDonald's had to replace the traditional hamburger with a non-beef substitute – lamb – but the rest is the same as in other countries around the world with Coca-Cola as the preferred drink complemented with the traditional French fries.

Likewise, this Americanization of the world is also seen through the fascination with elements of the American culture, as Armstrong et al (2017) viewed it, for instance, with the music, the glamour of Hollywood, Google, Facebook, and games, amongst others. Although there is in fact globalization of marketing strategies that favor Americanization as they do

⁶ According to <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/hindu-countries> (Hindu Countries 2022., n.d.).

affect some aspects of local culture with people adopting another lifestyle of a different culture, they also show a more heterogeneous world of cultures instead of a homogeneous one by showing that there are a lot of differences among them more than resemblances. So, cultures are not losing their identity by adopting another's lifestyle, instead, they are evolving and adapting as the world changes (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017) meaning that even though there is an intelligible dominance of the North American culture in the world, they also receive and are influenced by other cultures in exchange.

Nevertheless, how does culture influence consumer behavior? Its influences are perceived on the buying behavior of consumers through the living and consumption patterns, and the decision-making process of the consumer as culture plays an important role in a community's values and norms of living (Karkhanis, 2019). Multinationals nowadays must consider whether to select a more standardized marketing strategy or if they should opt for customization for localizing the brand into the target's market culture. The role of marketing is to create value for consumers in each market, both domestic and abroad, and marketers must consider that what may work in the domestic market might not work internationally (Sheth, 2020).

Indeed, there are cases of brands that when entering a new market did not take their culture into account and ended up losing a lot of what could be their potential audience. It is known that cultural factors do influence both communication and the success of an international business and that is why it is of great importance to become a more culturally competent person. Organizations that employ culturally competent people to be a part of their teams are more effective when executing their businesses. Marketing and culture, go hand in hand, and understanding the cultural differences from one market to another and localizing the brand, even if it is more expensive than just implementing a standardized marketing strategy, can become more profitable once the target audience is effectively reached.

2.1.2.1 Standardization Or Adaptation Of Marketing Strategies?

After understanding how culture influences the consumer's behavior and how a company's marketing strategy will impact the local culture there should be an evaluation on whether to decide on a standardized marketing strategy or on a more localized one. Companies that decide on *standardized global marketing* use the same strategy approach worldwide while on the other hand, those who decide for an *adapted global marketing* strategy adjust their approach to every target market (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017). In fact, selecting a customized marketing strategy can be a lot more costly however it can also produce a lot more profit if the preferred market segmentation is reached. This happens when the preferred market audience is successfully approached, they will buy more as it is of their real interest.

On the other hand, some global marketers believe that as globalization is increasing due to technology the world is becoming smaller and the consumers' needs are becoming more and more similar around the world so there is no need to adapt strategies to each market. Indeed, selecting a standardized marketing strategy involves reduced costs since both resources and expenses to be used are less (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017). However, along with Schütte & Ciarlante (1998), the fact that companies decide on the application and usage of global marketing strategies might be a very risky decision as globalization itself was not able of making cultural differences vanish and standardize the behavior of consumers around the world. Rather, in line with Sharma et al (2006), consumer behavior might become even more heterogeneous because of cultural differences. Thereupon, strategies that work very well on a specific market and culture might be poorly received and inadequate for another community as culture, values, and lifestyle change and shape the consumer's behavior.

Even though implementing a standardized marketing strategy can be more cost-effective, it can also damage the image of the brand if the culture of the target market is not respected. For this kind of strategy to work out globally, there is the need to balance both standardization and adaptation, as the previously mentioned example of McDonald's in India where the brand uses the same procedures everywhere as well as the basic menu, however, needs to adapt to the market it is entering so it can go according to their consumers' needs and preferences.

In accordance with Armstrong et al (2017) the marketing concept is believed to be more efficient if designed and adapted to the needs of every targeted customer group. This is true given that as every country has its culture their consumers will still have distinct needs and wants according to their cultural background but also based on their spending power, product preferences, and shopping patterns, hence the need for adaptation. As globalization was not able to standardize the consumers' behavior there is nowadays a greater need to adapt the products, as well as prices, the means by which the product is sold – channels –, and promotions so the consumers' desires are respected in each country (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017).

2.2 The Usage of Marketing Strategies

More and more companies are eager to function in international markets and consequently international communications have increased significantly since the beginning of globalization. Nonetheless, companies while designing marketing strategies must be aware about how they can be received by people in each target market, as they differ depending on the environment. Not considering cultural differences between markets may trigger severe complications and difficulties and at this point it is already understood that as every culture has its own norms and values individuals will behave and respond accordingly.

Some companies have managed to be very successful when advertising their brands as they have transcended cultural obstacles, which may include aspects such as language barriers or religious beliefs, for instance. Nevertheless, companies that disregard cultural norms and differences may go through humiliating processes that can result in brand boycotts as well as a decline in the process of getting value from consumers. For companies to be profitable it is important for them to research the cultural market for understanding the local cultural context of the target audience might determine between accomplishment or failure.

It is necessary to evaluate the market and culture before marketing a brand as sometimes they can be offensive even without realizing it. It is imperative to always remember that what a country/culture may find proper for them may cause trouble to the brand in another. In this manner, some cases are to be investigated to identify where they went wrong and why that has happened. In the same way, positive cases are also to be evaluated to figure out what were the differences in the approach that guided them to accomplishment.

2.2.1 Cases Of Ineffective Marketing Strategies

Nike X LeBron James Campaign⁷ In China

In 2004, Nike produced a television commercial featuring the North American NBA basketball star, LeBron James. However, despite being a renowned multinational and savvy brand it was not their best year in the Chinese market due to this particular advertisement. In fact, this campaign had as its main intention to present their new shoes to the market and ended up offending the Chinese culture and was later removed and banned from Chinese television broadcasts thus showing discontent on the part of the audience.

The “Chamber of Fear” campaign, as it was named, shows the basketball player overcoming a series of obstacles. LeBron James’ challengers include a master of kung-fu, tempting Chinese ghost-figured women dressed in traditional attire, followed by several outlaws dressed in robes of martial arts, and finally, dragons. According to the company, and as it was possible to read in the news that came out years ago in *The Guardian*, this commercial was intended to “encourage teenagers to overcome temptation, envy, complacency and self-doubt” (Watts, 2004), though it was poorly received by the Chinese community.

Why did this advertisement that appeared to be suitable for the Chinese market, in the company’s perception, end up prohibited? This campaign is an example of a localized commercial however without having into consideration important sociocultural factors, that in my perspective, include the beliefs, values, and norms of the target market. For Chinese people, it was a disrespectful commercial since it went against their national practices and culture. The campaign shows LeBron James as superior in relation to his adversaries that were represented by China’s cultural symbols. For instance, for the Chinese, both kung-fu and dragons are sacred symbols of national pride, but they also did not enjoy the fact that the idea of temptation was linked to the Chinese women in traditional attire as American dollars flew around, which shows a complete disrespect not only for their culture and

⁷ Promotional video of the campaign here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mFzwl6V86o0&feature=youtu.be> (Caballero, P., 2007).

symbols but also for Chinese women. For them, it was like the American culture was humiliating the Chinese by easily defeating their challengers.

The Chinese were hurt by the representation of their culture in the campaign as for them it meant that they were incapable against the Americans. Finally, as the campaign was banned by the Chinese government the brand released an announcement to apologize for what happened, but they were not able to avoid losing business in that market which had doubled in the previous year of the event (Watts, 2004; Al Jazeera, 2004; Fowler, 2004; Tharp, 2004).

The Burger King Spain Marketing Blunders

In April 2022, the fast-food giant Burger King was involved in a controversy after a new marketing campaign during the Catholic Holy Week in Spain. The controversy emerged after the brand promoted its new vegetarian burger by using Jesus' words of the Last Supper "Tomad y comed todos de él. Que no lleva carne. 100% vegetariano. 100% sabor." which translated means "Take all of you and eat it. It does not have meat in it. 100% vegetarian. 100% flavour". Nevertheless, the campaign did not stop here having another advertisement stating "Carne de mi carne" ("Flesh of my flesh") that was turned into "Vegetal de mi vegetal" ("Vegetable of my vegetable") by crossing the word "carne" or "flesh".

Figure 1 Burger King's Marketing Blunder in 2022.

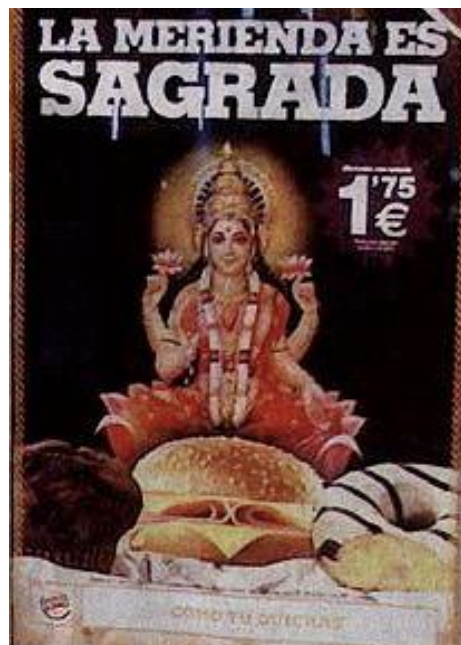


Source: Available at (Ramos, 2022).

This advertising was not well received by Spanish people for over 60% of the Spanish community is catholic and they believed that the fast-food chain was mocking the religion but also the death of Christ during a sacred time for Christians that precedes easter (Miller, 2022). People were upset since the brand did not take the consumers' lifestyles, beliefs and values into account but instead took advantage of it to promote their new burger, as Christians are not allowed to eat meat on Good Fridays, appealing to the consumption of their vegetarian burger. For this reason, there was a boycott of the brand via an online petition where individuals wanted the company to fire Jorge Carvalho – the general manager of

Burger King in Spain and Portugal. The company claimed that its intention was never to offend anyone (Miller, 2022; RTTNews., 2022) however this is not the first time that they are involved in controversies and advertised its products through polemical religious means. Another example that links Burger King Spain with religious controversy backs up to the year 2009. This year, the company advertised and brought together their Whopper hamburger with Lakshmi, a Hindu goddess. The argument started as the Indian goddess associated with wealth and fortune was placed above the burger with the description of “La merienda es sagrada” which translated means “The meal is sacred” (Downie, 2009; Glover, 2009).

Figure 2 Burger King's Marketing Blunder in 2009.



Source: Available at (Shea, 2009).

In the first place, the religion was disrespected for the company decided to advertise and promote their hamburger with a Hindu goddess. Additionally, and apart from that, the Hindus are not allowed to eat beef meat as cows are sacred in India. Besides, the Whopper hamburger also includes other ingredients that are forbidden by stricter Hindus such as onions and may even contain milk and eggs, which for some are part of the list of ingredients one cannot consume, as they derive directly from animals. And finally, the usage of the description defining their burger as sacred considering all the reasons already mentioned was also impertinent. Marketers when designing campaigns must consider that using religious

and sacred symbols for commercial purposes might be quite offensive to their followers. These kinds of polemics may cause serious trouble to the company's image and sales as people feel disrespected and offended.

The H&M Controversy In The United Kingdom

In 2018, the popular clothing retailer H&M has suffered a backlash after advertising a new hoodie on its United Kingdom website. The problem with the publicity was due to the fact that the hoodie had “The Coolest Monkey in the Jungle” written on the front of it and the company has chosen a black child to model and make the campaign for that hoodie. Meanwhile, H&M chose a white child to model the other version of the same hoodie, but it featured the phrase “Mangrove Jungle Survival Expert” (Duarte, 2018; Staff Writer., 2018; Byrne, 2020).

Figure 3 H&M hoodie controversy



Source: Available at (Gomes, 2018).

This campaign for this hoodie was seen as being exceedingly racially prejudiced since the term “monkey” is often used as a racist insult against the black community. Furthermore, the fact that there is a dichotomy between the black child as being a “monkey” and the white one as the “survival expert” can show racial superiority with the white one being favored. Nowadays, the existence of this kind of promotions that are offensive to a community still existing is worrying. There should be a lot more awareness and cultural sensitivity from companies about how they decide to market their products as marketing strategies and campaigns affect their audience, be it in a bad or in a good way. This is an example of how cultural awareness and inclusion are important for a company’s success and that is why culturally competent employees have become such an important requirement for companies these days.

After this controversy exploded and went viral on social media, people felt both offended and shocked by it. This marketing blunder caused H&M to lose some of its partnerships with famous musicians, for instance, The Weeknd and G-Eazy, that responded to this advertising through social media claiming that they were cancelling their partnerships with the brand as they felt embarrassed by it. However, this was not the only reaction from people as there were also protests that happened to boycott the fashion brand. With protests and broken partnerships, the company has lost a lot more than just an audience in one target market, it also lost a lot of money as they were forced to get rid of an entire production line for that hoodie. This has taken such a big proportion that stores in South Africa had to be temporarily closed as a result of protests, which left many people that worked for the brand jobless and caused the brand to lose millions from the damage to several target markets (Duarte, 2018; Staff Writer., 2018; Byrne, 2020).

2.2.2 Cases Of Effective Marketing Strategies

*Fenty's Beauty Campaign Beauty For All*⁸

In 2019, the famous beauty brand, owned by the singer Rihanna, released a campaign named “Beauty for All” and has been immensely successful ever since. The brand uses a global marketing strategy instead of a localized one, however, it reaches every market and culture through its inclusive marketing strategy. The promotional video to this campaign shows not only women but diverse women of a range of skin tones and ethnic backgrounds appearing as the products are put in display during the video, showing that beauty comes in all shapes and skin colors, and that it is now available to all with Fenty’s Beauty products.

In fact, the campaign was made to promote the range of forty shades of foundation – that are currently fifty – that the brand produced thinking of women of every skin tone and undertone, from the lightest to the darkest. But what distinguishes this brand and marketing strategy from the others? The reason is simple, the others do not offer as many shades as this one. Some brands claim to have dark tones of foundation, for instance, but not as dark as some women need and Fenty Beauty thought about them when started distributing its products (The Marketing Society., n.d.; Harker, 2020; Saputo, 2020). Fulfilling an existing gap in the market of beauty brands was their main focus and the reason why the brand is a success everywhere.

Furthermore, this marketing campaign was a success as Rihanna wanted her brand to be available to women around the world at the same time. There were more than five hundred global leaders making efforts to synchronize the brand’s different departments and sales everywhere, so it had a flawless implementation. Rihanna’s plan with this campaign was to celebrate all women of all cultures regardless of their skin color. The brand was created to meet the needs of a mass audience – women but also people who wear makeup – although never forgetting women who once felt unrepresented by other beauty brands. That is the reason why the owner of the brand likes to represent minority women as once they felt left behind, they are now included and finally signified (The Marketing Society., n.d.; Harker, 2020; Saputo, 2020).

⁸ Promotional video of the campaign here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubHt-vmIqhg> (Think With Google., 2019).

This is the perfect example of a global marketing strategy that has gone very well. One single strategy made all the difference for the brand to win a large target audience: inclusion and representation. Nevertheless, the brand did not depend exclusively on marketing to win the heart of women all over the world once it was designed to fulfill its consumer's desires. By advertising with women of different skin tones and different cultural upbringings, individuals have felt cherished and represented as this brand develops its products targeting a global consumer and not just a market at a time. When that happens, it can make a beauty brand suffer disastrous consequences as nowadays as a result of globalization and the historical backgrounds of many countries, it is not correct to presume that there is not a variety of skin tones inside a country due to stereotypical judgments. Offering a variety of tones that can be used by every person all around the world whatever their skin tone is makes the brand earn more value from their consumers as the more options they have, the more they will sell and defeat their competition that only has a shorter number of options to global markets.

Nivea For Men's Tough Men Choose Sensitive Campaign In The Middle East⁹

The year 2012 was the year that Nivea for Men has been effectively recognized in the Middle Eastern region. In effect, the brand has won an Effie Award in the Fragrances and Cosmetics category for its marketing communications after the campaign that was designed to halt the cultural taboo that exists in the region associated with men choosing personal grooming products for sensitive skin. When Nivea for Men was investigating the Middle Eastern market found out that 51% of men (almost 113 million males) have sensitive skin but that number was not reflected in their sales, and the company later discovered that the men audience in that region was uncomfortable and even embarrassed to buy and use products assigned for sensitive skin as they were afraid of being labelled as sensitive (delicate). The campaign for the product is a twenty-second television advertisement that has cost the brand one million pounds in the United Kingdom (today worth about one million and two hundred thousand euros) and features different men experiencing pain after shaving. Nevertheless, the one who uses the brand's grooming product does not feel discomfort and is hence silent. This is when the brand incorporates the phrase "Silence the irritation" to attract the consumer to buy their sensitive skin product (Nivea for Men wins marketing award., 2013; Nivea Win Marketing Award., 2012; OMD Dubai., 2016).

Therefore, in order to get around that sexist and macho cultural prejudice and increase their sales in the region, the brand decided to engage in a campaign to target men in every way and place possible calling it "Tough Men Choose Sensitive" – the line and foundation of the campaign. The name of the campaign itself was the beginning of its success since it was already appealing to the consumer to put prejudice behind when making the pun. Moreover, the campaign was available on television, on sports with the brand sponsoring and having its name everywhere, print and outdoor advertising, PR kits, and promotions instore, but as this was not enough the brand decided to engage in other means (Nivea for Men wins marketing award., 2013; Nivea Win Marketing Award., 2012; OMD Dubai., 2016).

As the macho culture praises competition, the brand decided to advertise it with a ten-day activation booth in malls where macho men could celebrate and even showcase their toughness while getting their pictures taken holding a barbell. All the pictures were posted

⁹ Promotional video of the campaign here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PUT4vLha8U> (NIVEA MEN UK., 2012).

on the Nivea for Men Facebook page but to retrieve them men had to *like* the page, which not only resulted in a large number of *likes* but also more success in marketing. Besides, once men visited the page, they were challenged to answer a “What your Man Quotient is” test to determine their level of toughness and profiling them in a range of options that could then be shared in their profiles appealing to others to do the same, which has resulted in the promotion and dissemination of the brand. This new marketing strategy in the Middle East region was so successful that the brand had an increase in sales of 66% across all markets in the region consequently ending up making the brand much more acceptable there these days becoming the number one men’s choice (Nivea for Men wins marketing award., 2013; Nivea Win Marketing Award., 2012; OMD Dubai., 2016).

This campaign is an example of an adapted marketing strategy although having standardized television advertising. This has been such a successful campaign for the brand was wise enough when dealing with the consumer’s beliefs and values taking into consideration their cultural and social norms but also the culture’s buying habits. Nivea decided to deconstruct the taboo of buying grooming products for sensitive skin and connecting with the target consumer’s way of viewing manhood by employing a combined marketing strategy. This is, by allying the conventional marketing means through advertising on television, outdoors, in supermarkets, and so on, with an unconventional one by testing those men's toughness and profit from it through the promotion they were making to the brand but also through the increase in sales making the value from consumers grow due to their customer-driven strategy.

Gillette's I Don't Roll On Shabbos Campaign In Israel¹⁰

Gillette's deodorant *I Don't Roll on Shabbos* campaign has been the most awarded of 2018. This campaign was created to move toward the Orthodox Jewish community in Israel (around 30% of Israel's population) and has successfully managed to do it. The brand decided to launch a 48-hour deodorant to the community, who traditionally do not shave and are forbidden to do anything which is considered work, even the small task of applying deodorant and showering, for instance, during the 24-hour Sabbath – also called *Shabbos* (Gillette [MediaComGlobal]., 2018; Williams, 2020; *Gillette, I Don't Roll on Shabbos.*, 2022).

But why would a deodorant make such a difference in this target audience? As this community has its typical attire for praying and due to high temperatures, makes men very uncomfortable inside their temple which can be very unpleasant because of the smell. In fact, this community did not know about the brand and its products, so the company decided to accept the challenge of marketing its product to help men pray in synagogues comfortably during all those hours. The brand has been quite intelligent to market their product with biblical text such as “Thou shalt not pray in a place of foul odor” (Rambam, Halacha – Chapter 3) and states that their deodorant will protect them for 48 hours which would help reducing the odors inside synagogues (Gillette [MediaComGlobal]., 2018; Williams, 2020; *Gillette, I Don't Roll on Shabbos.*, 2022).

The campaign for this deodorant was designed and marketed six weeks before the 24-hour Sabbath. It consisted of partnering with synagogues to distribute sample products among its members, publicizing the advertising in the popular print publications of the community – synagogue notice boards –, but also through sponsorship to the popular candle lightning schedules that appear and are read by the Gillette's preferred target market. This community follows a strict religious lifestyle and that is why the brand did not advertise in other means since they do not consume nowadays' most popular means of mass media, like social media and the internet, for instance, due to restrictions. Besides, the brand chose to advertise the product on the radio minutes before the Sabbath began and on street sirens that

¹⁰ Illustrative video of the campaign here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB4LOyIFpEs> (Gillette [MediaComGlobal]., 2018).

mark the start of the holy 24-hour period (Gillette [MediaComGlobal]., 2018; Williams, 2020; *Gillette, I Don't Roll on Shabbos.*, 2022).

This campaign has been so successful inside that community that its share rose from 3% up to 15% in just two months, at that time, which not only proves a rise in sales but also in brand awareness making this brand popular among other top brands in Israel (Gillette [MediaComGlobal]., 2018; Williams, 2020; *Gillette, I Don't Roll on Shabbos.*, 2022). Moreover, this campaign was localized into a culture, nonetheless, dedicated to a restrictive target market that applies to only 30% of the country's population. The brand was effective in this niche target market for it took cultural sensitivity to another level and was able to get value from that smaller social group of consumers by taking their culture, religious and social norms into consideration and by advertising through proper means.

2.3 Acquiring Consumer Value Through Business And Marketing

Culture performs an important job when employing a product or service in a market through marketing campaigns. Nevertheless, for it to be successful, there are a series of aspects marketers should consider first so they can capture value from their target consumers. For that to happen there is the need to adapt the message they want to convey to each market after researching and understanding the consumers' needs and wants as well as trying to fill a market gap with their product or service.

When advertising marketers should bear in mind that every culture will receive a message differently. Meaning that depending on the cultural context of the country or region, campaigns must be adapted to either a more explicit or implicit kind of message, for instance. Marketers must be considerate and careful when designing a campaign and when advertising it with cultural symbols for individuals may consider it exceptionally insulting varying on how they are represented by the brand. Marketers must understand that campaigns containing religious anecdotes, or symbols of a country, as well as ethnic matters, might be very dangerous and cause a lot of damage to the company and trades. They should consider previous campaigns that went wrong and not repeat the same as the others, instead, they should be concerned about designing campaigns after proper cultural research of the market to understand if they would be acceptable to the target market in general. Companies and their brands ought to acknowledge a country's culture but also its background when deciding on entering new markets. The truth is, they will only be efficiently established in a market if they are culturally sensitive and competent, and when their marketing strategies are designed intentionally considering a specific target audience. There are cases of companies and brands that were so efficient as well as aware of a culture that when penetrating a new market touched the hearts of their consumers through their campaigns and advertisements.

The IKEA cultural implementation in the Chinese market, for instance, has been so careful and accurate that individuals are treating showrooms like their own homes. IKEA is a multinational Swedish company that when entering the Chinese market was considerate towards its target audience and decided to also localize its name for a superior implementation. There, the company is known as Yi Jia, which means "comfortable home", a concept understood literally by Chinese consumers. After IKEA's market research, it was confirmed that Chinese citizens wanted more from it than just affordable Scandinavian furniture. Further, for many Chinese individuals going to an IKEA store is like visiting a

theme park since they consider it a family outing, but also, they like to try it before buying. In fact, they try out beds, and sofas and even nap on them, but they also enjoy hanging out for hours taking advantage of the air conditioning and free soda refills in store. This kind of behavior is encouraged by the Chinese IKEA managers for with this they are creating familiarity with the brand and store, which will consequently lead to later purchasing. IKEA's strategy of creating a feeling of familiarity with its consumers and smartly localizing its name and concept, as well as understanding the Chinese cultural traditions, but also behaviors, and needs, helped the company to take advantage of more cross-cultural opportunities. Lastly, IKEA's sales increased by 20% back in 2014 due to the encouragement of "try it before you buy it" but in 2021 was accounted for a total of 26% of sales (Armstrong, G. et al, 2017; DaxueConsulting., 2022). Furthermore, according to DaxueConsulting (2022), although the pandemic of covid-19 has caused shutdowns, the company increased its (online) sales in 2021 by 73% and received over 5 billion visits to its Chinese website during that same year. IKEA accounts nowadays 35 stores in China, which has been growing ever since the year of its implementation in the Chinese market (1998); the number of stores in China has been growing slowly but steadily over the years as in 2012 the company had only 9 stores, three years later – in 2015 – reported 18 stores, and then in 2019, the company accounted 28 stores opened in that market (DaxueConsulting., 2022; How, 2017; Pierson, 2019; USCBC., 2004).

Moreover, regarding culture when marketing a product or service, be it on the domestic or foreign market, it is necessary to understand if adapting it to the local culture will be feasible as adaptation is much more costly than employing a standardized strategy. Although, adapting marketing strategies to each culture will always be more viable since when the target audience has been successfully reached the feedback is always better. When adapting marketing strategies accordingly to the market's sociocultural factors, as it was apparent with those effective and ineffective examples mentioned before, there are situations where even if they localize a strategy and or campaign it is not accurately done for there is a lack of knowledge on the target market. If a brand fails to achieve its target audience, it can be very damaging to the company as there are numerous aspects to consider when entering a new market or even when designing new campaigns in an already established market. It is necessary to adjust to the market's culture, to localize it to its language, but also to have background knowledge – through researching and studying the market to understand how the consumer will receive that information and how it will be dealt with – on the

purchasing habits, needs and wants of the consumers, as well as if there is a gap in the market that they can satisfy. Through the precise adaptation of a product or brand into a culture, it is expected to be highly accepted by the consumers, which will then translate into getting more value from them by the increase in sales, the growth of profit, but also by consumer's loyalty to the brand.

Localization is a very important characteristic when marketing in external markets especially when brands want to adapt not only the message they want to convey but also the brand's name. An example of a brand that decided to localize its name into a foreign market is Mercedes, however, at first, it did not go as planned. China, as previously mentioned is a difficult market to enter, because of the existing economic barriers for foreigners but also due to its culture which is significantly different from other countries. For Mercedes, it was no exception since its brand name got lost in translation. The brand decided to change its name for the Chinese market to "Bensi", but the citizens were not happy since it meant "Rush to Die" in Chinese. For them, it suggested that the brand was introducing and advertising their cars as fatal. After this failed localization attempt Mercedes understood the mistake and rebranded the name again to "Benchi" which means "Run as Quickly as Flying" but as the Chinese people are known to be superstitious in a way, it is understandable that the brand did not sell as much as they wanted before getting the rebrand (Capati, 2022; Carter, 2021). This, and other brand marketing blunders in the Chinese market might have cost the brand the loss of favoritism as other brands in the country. Mercedes was at the 10th position on a rate of best-selling car brands in 2020 in China, with only 645 449 units sold, way below the favorite one, Volkswagen, with more than 2 000 000 units sold that same year (*Top 10 Best-Selling Car Brands in China in 2020.*, 2021).

Also, companies that are aware of their consumers' lifestyles background and when they consider cultural adaptation to the markets, the numbers and the volume of business will increase. That is the confirmation that cultural adaptation and sensitivity is the best way not only to satisfy the consumer's needs but also to get value from them. For example, in 2013, Coca Cola designed a campaign¹¹ to increase their sales in Pakistan since it already had a strong market in India. Their campaign was thought to try to get these two cultures/countries, divided by recurring conflicts – India and Pakistan – together through an emotive campaign for their products. This campaign was evidence that when contemplating

¹¹ Promotional video of the campaign here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ts_4vOUDIImE (Coca-Cola., 2013).

two different cultures despite their conflicts and trying to get them closer can be and do much more than a regular campaign. The campaign was called “Small World Machines” and consisted of two machines, one installed in Lahore (Pakistan) and the other in New Delhi (India) and provided live communication for people from those separated countries. This campaign intended to promote cultural understanding by decreasing their differences and uniting the people of two countries that are divided not only by borders altogether. Through this campaign, Coca Cola had an increase in its market share since its Twitter followers have risen from 759 236 (on the 19th of May) to 793 609 (in June). That rise was also felt on their Facebook page *likes*, gaining more 1 676 689 likes. Nevertheless, their post regarding the campaign had about 26 000 likes and was shared 6 608 times. Besides, the campaign was viewed by 1 354 659 people on YouTube (Samosa, 2013; Rudenko, 2013; Coca-Cola., 2013). Finally, it is possible to conclude that an increase in market share usually means an increase in sales but also the brand getting recognition by the consumers which makes competition harder for others in the same industry. In fact, when having such factors into concern companies can become remarkably successful, profitable, and obtain their consumers’ respect and reliability.

CHAPTER III – CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN MARKETING

According to Omori (2017), Cross-cultural Communication is a process by which there is an exchanging of shared meanings among people of distinct cultures and backgrounds through a diversity of means. Indeed, Cross-cultural Communication and Intercultural Communication are sometimes used interchangeably, nevertheless, there is a feature between them that distinguishes and separates the two terms. Their main difference is highlighted by what their area of study is. While Cross-cultural Communication focuses on the comparison of distinct cultures all through their differences and similarities, Intercultural Communication, on the other hand, concentrates on the interaction between people of distinct cultures (Omori, 2017). Overall, Cross-cultural Communication compares the variations between two, or more, cultures finding similarities through which they can communicate efficiently by creating space to weaken what sets them apart over different communication styles and patterns. While Intercultural Communication refers to the interaction and exchange between people of distinct cultural backgrounds.

Gnyria & Svobodova (2013) affirmed that cultural factors have been demonstrated to affect marketing communications as well as the success of marketing campaigns launched in several markets. Certainly, culture should be the first characteristic to consider when a marketer plans to develop new marketing communications internationally. Similarly, Tian & Borges (2011) claimed that communication is one of the most valuable abilities to do business efficiently nowadays considering the ever-increasing competitiveness in markets, particularly for those corporations that perform business in foreign markets. It is such an important function that a company's profit can be determined as a result of its marketing communication¹² strategies. As formerly stated, culture plays an important role in marketing and when it is not considered in international communications and business, cultural barriers begin to emerge and create considerable obstacles in communications. As globalization was not able to standardize cultures, it is increasingly necessary to consider diversity and adapt strategies to avoid challenges, and companies must realize that markets are now international and cross-cultural, especially considering marketing and the strategies applied in each market. Thus, being culturally sensitive and knowledgeable may determine the accomplishment of firms in markets overseas. Therefore, disregarding a country's culture

¹² According to *Marketing Communications - Introduction*. (n.d.), marketing communications are "techniques that the company (...) uses to convey promotional messages about their products and services. Experts of marketing communication design different types of persuasive communication and send it to the target audience." Besides, they are used to persuade and attract the target audience.

when designing and implementing marketing strategies as well as its cross-cultural context may lead a business to crisis (Tian & Borges, 2011).

In marketing, knowing how to communicate both cross-culturally and interculturally is as important as knowing how to segment markets and utilize mechanisms to search the market and spread a strategy. Indeed, communication lets marketers know what type of marketing strategy is more appropriate to implement in a specific cultural environment, and how it will be received by their target audience.

Cross-cultural marketing demands marketers to be aware of various dimensions of culture and sensitive to the cultural differences; respect the right to culture by the consumers in global marketplaces, and marketers need to understand that the global Consumers deserve their cultural rights. If the marketers want to be the winners in the cross-cultural markets, they must design the marketing mix that meets the cultural expectations of consumers. It involves recognizing that people all over the world have different needs, given their cultural backdrop (Vaddadi, K., & Thandava, S., 2019).

However, it does not mean that they will always be successful for cultural differences might dominate similarities and intercultural communication might be poorly done taking away the original meaning of the message and making it offensive to the other culture.

Furthermore, when it is necessary to communicate with external markets, companies should be aware and knowledgeable about the differences between nations and their cultures, as well as the existence of different ethnic groups, since discrepancies will be more noticeable as there is an exchange of messages. Afterward, there is the need to understand them and undergo a cross-cultural process as a way of managing those variations and diminishing them along with challenges to win over markets. Every so often, communication amongst individuals from the same culture is challenging, hence, communication with people of diverse cultural groups, who possess other languages, values, traditions, or lifestyles, will be significantly difficult for miscommunication may occur very often (Ferraro, 2006).

Cross-cultural communication problems in marketing arise regularly because one of a distinct culture, in this case, the marketer, was not able to understand the other's cultural context and how they possibly would identify the desired significance of the message. That is the reason why considering one culture's characteristics when marketing a product or

service in its market is so important, the better the target audience understands the message, the better it will be accepted in that market avoiding misinterpretations and possible upcoming failures.

3 Culture's Influence On Marketing Communication

The phenomena of globalization and the intensification of world trades made it essential for marketers to understand how business is done across the world and among distinct cultures. As the world became gradually globalized over the years the ability to communicate cross-culturally effectively became as important given that both marketers and consumers ought to understand each other thus both sides are clear as well as their demands, and the ultimate purpose is attained. Nevertheless, the effect of globalization did not occur as anticipated since cultural differences amongst diverse cultures and ethnicities, instead of merging into a 'standardized' culture, became even stronger. From this perspective, it is possible to reflect that marketing communication is only attainable if marketers recognize their audience's needs but also what is behind them, and what leads them to behave in such manners, otherwise cultural barriers create miscommunication and misreading that affects how the message is acknowledged.

As per Tian & Borges (2011), "Marketers deliver information to the market they gather, collecting, interpreting, and putting this information to use.". Indeed, to have a positive impact through marketing communication and strategies it is necessary to assemble and investigate the information from the target audience. Furthermore, when releasing information without exploring the market and its culture in general, as well as their preferred segmentation, marketers can fail to accomplish success in business, or it might even lead to the loss of future opportunities.

The following example is confirmation that the absence of knowledge of a market along with its cultural practices affected what could have been an excellent opportunity of performing business in a distinct market. The truth is that making research based only on economic factors might be an erroneous means to approach a new market. Tian & Borges (2011) contended a situation that happened during the decades of 1980s and 1990s when Japanese-made color television sets were dominant in the imported television market in China. Nevertheless, in the early 1980s, both Japanese and European television manufacturers decided on proceeding to study the Chinese market. After the research and analysis of that market, European marketers decided not to advertise their products in that market because of the low GDP per capita of Chinese individuals. For them, it was unlikely that the Chinese would be able to buy such extravagances as a colored television set.

On the other hand, the Japanese television set marketers decided on basing their market research on a Chinese tradition, which ended up being more profitable and advantageous for them as Chinese people have a cultural tradition of saving money that is passed from generation to generation. Neglecting the Chinese market due to their economic factors and not understanding their cultural practices linked with the lack of knowledge of that market made the European television manufacturers fail to spot an opportunity to do business there. The Japanese producers became the Chinese's favorites as they did understand a facet of their culture that the Europeans did not. The Chinese, despite their low GDP per capita at that time, were and are a society that is traditionally based, so they are used to save money for future consumption, and to buy their dream television, for instance, unlike the Western culture where people spend in the present and do not contemplate their future needs or wants (Tian & Borges, 2011).

Hence, acquiring expertise on culture, and knowing how to portray it, is so important to reach the goal or even exceed it when it comes to presenting a product or service to a market. In line with Tian & Borges (2011) even though sociocultural factors affect marketing, they can be reduced since marketers are culturally competent and sensitive enough to cultural differences. Being able to communicate cross-culturally is currently one of the most important components an employee can have for marketing in external markets. Cross-cultural marketing communication, as presented by Tian & Borges (2011) is marketing communication among consumers of a different culture from the marketers' that want to implement a strategy in their market and that differs "in at least one fundamental aspect of culture such as language, religion, social norms and values, education, and lifestyle". For marketers to be effective in outside markets they need to respect the consumer's cultural dynamics and values as culture is important when it comes to the response of consumers.

In sum, marketers should not only research the needs and wants of their market segmentation but also, they need to understand that a market's cultural variables will make consumers react accordingly to what is offered to them. When acknowledging and having expertise in these aspects of a specific culture might lead firms to not only get value from their consumers but also to expand into other markets professionally, and with background knowledge on what should be done to be profitable when deciding on exploring other

markets. Cultural adaptation and sensitivity are the key elements to make a difference in marketing communications and for it to be a positive experience.

3.1 Key Elements In Cross-Cultural Marketing Communication

To do effective cross-cultural marketing communication, companies must determine if the market in which they desire to do business in is worthwhile to include in their business and marketing planning, as well as the research and analysis of the preferred market. The study of the intended market's culture includes the investigation of sociocultural factors that can be employed to support marketing communications. Nevertheless, some marketing communications that can be applied in some cultures might not result in others as sociocultural factors differ depending on the country and region (Tian & Borges, 2011). For instance, concerning the cases of effective and ineffective marketing strategies, formerly revealed, most campaigns were announced through means such as television, websites, and social media, but there are other cultures where those means do not work due to certain community's restrictions, hence there is the need to adapt those strategies so they can be successful.

Furthermore, even with the rapid spread of globalization worldwide, cultures do not change as quickly, and consequently, products or services might find a prolonged resistance to them in some markets. The main goal of organizations should be to find similarities between diverse markets to make it easy to enter other cross-cultural markets, and then consider localizing their strategies to fully adapt it. According to Tian & Borges (2011), in cross-cultural communication, marketers should always adjust marketing strategies to conform to their target markets, therefore the need for the service of localization is so significant. Still, having a good experience in a target market through localized strategies does not mean that using the same strategies the company will be successful in other markets as they might fail as markets and cultures vary, there is the need to study them and adapt strategies to the different cultures as individual's needs are considerably divergent (Tian & Borges, 2011).

When implementing a product in a market there are a series of aspects that need to be considered that go alongside the culture of a market. For instance, according to Serrie (1986), an anthropologist and international business educator, besides researching the market there is the need to have some anthropological understanding of some patterns of the target market's culture. Serrie (1986) exemplified this with a company that wanted to implement a solar cooker in southern Mexico. Nevertheless, it was designed to reduce the usage of firewood and to encourage the use of solar energy by producing levels of heat

compared to a wood fire with the assistance of a four-foot parabolic reflector. Although at first people seemed interested in the product, there were a lot of cultural obstacles against this new product: most Mexican people cook typically early in the morning and early in the evening, subsequently it was determined that the solar radiation at these times was not strong enough to produce the temperature needed; the solar stove was successful at boiling beans and soup, however, it was not satisfactory for cooking tortillas, which is primary in the local diet. Thus, although people were initially interested in the new product, there were major cultural motives for it to go wrong and means of this initial study performed by the company, it has prevented it from losing a lot of money within this area and their product (Serrie, 1986).

Overall, as markets are now increasingly internationalized and competitive there is a need for cross-cultural marketing communications for companies to be successful. A company's marketing communication strategy will determine if the business will be lucrative or not in some markets, but for that, organizations also need to consider culture as the main focus when designing and implementing marketing strategies as it influences the behavior of consumers. When a company does not overcome cross-cultural differences, it may lead not to just serious impacts on the image of the company in that market but also to the loss of new business opportunities abroad if those issues persist. Culturally competent employees make a huge difference when in international business, nonetheless, these days, it also applies to marketers worldwide.

3.2 Case Studies

As culture motivates the accomplishment or failure of businesses, organizations should be concerned about how they will publicize and implement their brands and products in new markets. It is necessary to recognize precisely how the audience might accept and perceive the product and what outcomes that might bring to the company. The evaluation of the case studies shows what cultural aspects were overlooked when doing business and how companies circumvented the situation. Through these cases, it is possible to comprehend how culture has impacted those businesses and what measures were taken to solve the position the organizations found themselves in. The first example portrays a company's success where cultural aspects were respected after a failed first approach, and the second depicts the failure of another that is still battling years after the event due to the lack of respect for the target culture.

3.2.1 Kellogg's Company In India

The Kellogg Company is a leading North American multinational organization, established in Battle Creek, Michigan. The renowned company is one of the major producers of cereal and other convenience foods in the world. Presently, the company is produced in 20 countries and marketed in over 180 (Encyclopaedia Britannica., n.d.; Jha, 2016). According to the registers, back in the year 2021, the brand totaled \$14.181 billion of revenue, being this the bigger amount until the present day (*Kellogg Revenue 2010–2022.*, n.d.; Kellogg Company., n.d.).

Nevertheless, despite being one of the leading cereal brand names in global markets – which accounts for the Pan-American, European, Middle Eastern, African, Asian, and Oceanian markets –, the brand had some problems adapting to the Indian market. That happened due to the lack of knowledge of one of the most important factors when doing business in diverse countries and marketplaces: its culture. In effect, the brand entered the Indian market in September 1994, introducing its typical “crispy breakfast food” as its marketing strategy, however, that did not properly suit the Indian breakfast culture and eating habits (Jha, 2016; Ghosh, M. et al, 2016).

Indian people favor hot served and heavy breakfasts and disregarding that aspect in their culture has caused the company to have a problematic execution as they were not aware of the low consumption of cereals in India, compared to

previously established markets, where the majority prefers lighter breakfasts such as cold milk with cereals. Besides, the modest amount of Indians who consumed Kellogg's breakfast cereals started to have it with hot milk, doing the opposite to what was advertised by the brand – “crispy” cereals –and making the flakes soggy. In addition to that, most consumers remained hungry after their cornflakes breakfast, since they were used to their heavier and richer in nutrients, which made it even harder for the consumer to accept the brand into their market (Jha, 2016; Ghosh, M. et al, 2016).

Owing to the failure when entering a new and culturally diverse market such as India, Kellogg's sales had a sharp drop, which made the company have further attention to cultural aspects when implementing their business in other countries. In fact, according to Kellogg's Indian Experience (2001) since their product has been made available in the market, in March 1995, one year after its implementation, there has been a decline of 25% countrywide in sales, which proves that the product was not very well acknowledged by Indian consumers. In line with Jha (2016), this has had such an impact on the brand that the company decided to reposition the brand again in the Indian market by launching products that would fit the cultural preferences of consumers.

Kellogg's Entering The Indian Market

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Indian economy was under significant changes regarding economic reforms for its economy to equate to other developed nations. Along with these changes, the Indian market opened its doors for international trade, and consequently many organizations found it quite appealing and lucrative to make business in this market due to the number of its population during that time, according to The World Bank (n.d.) was of around 873 million people, while in the United States of America was of around 250 million people, on the same year. For the brand, if they conquered a country of 873 million people to consume their products as Americans then that market would represent only 2% of their domestic market, turning out to be very profitable for the company (Jha, 2016; Mehrotra, 2021).

However, the company decided to launch its products – cornflakes, basmati rice, and wheat flakes (that were the most ‘ready-to-eat’ sought after by Indians) – after a US\$65 billion investment, although with a poor acknowledgment of its eating cultural habits that lead them to failure. By April 1995, the company had only been able to capture only 0.1% of its target market, which means only around 90 000 customers (Jha, 2016; Mehrotra, 2021). This investment turned out to be very risky as they did not conquer their target market leaving them just two options: to leave the market or to readjust their positioning and build new strategies.

What Went Wrong With Kellogg’s In The Indian Market

The initial problem was that Kellogg’s product was not available in many cities, but it was also too expensive compared to its competition. Moreover, according to Vignali (2001), the company did not implement the right process of integrated marketing elements for that region. Meaning that the company’s four P’s (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) were poorly developed, along with the positioning, lack of product localization into the desired market, and finally, the inability to understand their consumer’s needs and preferences.

Now, investigating the four P’s of the company’s strategy, the reason behind the *product’s* failure in the Indian market was mainly due to the flavor of the products that did not match the cultural preferences and preferred tastes of Indian consumers along with their eating habits that vary from region to region, though, they still give preference to hot served breakfasts. Furthermore, Kellogg’s implemented a strategy in India that was being used in countries such as the United States of America, but also among other European countries, disregarding the customization and localization of the product to that specific market. Comparing India to other Western nations, Westerners consume warm milk whereas Indians like to boil it, add sugar, and make the flakes soggy for cold milk with those cereals was not sweet enough (Vignali, 2001; Jha, 2016).

Another issue with the product was its *price* which was nearly double the price of its domestic competitor, Mohan Meakin’s Mohun. For instance, according to Jha (2016), in 1994, 450 grams of Kellogg’s package cost ₹¹³63 while, on the other

¹³ The currency symbol for Indian Rupees.

hand, 500 grams of Mohun's flakes was only ₹33, which indicated more grams for less money. For a culture that is cost savvy, they turned out to be resilient to spend so much when the domestic competitor offered a better opportunity than the foreign one.

Likewise, during the brand's implementation in the market, its distribution strategy – *place* – was also unsuccessful. The brand decided to only market it in metropolitan areas making the product available only to people in high-end stores, which meant that only a few percent of the population was able to buy their products. Finally, the brand's *promotion* of the product was inadequate since it was alleged to be "healthy" indicating that the Indian traditional breakfast was not, and consumers were not happy with that. This was the brand's biggest mistake as they positioned themselves as a substitute for the traditional Indian breakfast, which depending on the region includes poori, idli, dosas, or paranthas, for instance. Comparing these breakfasts to the one the Kellogg's brand wanted to implement in that market, it is obvious that the brand's consumers would not feel as satisfied and full, and most consumers favored something hot to cold to start the day, and most of them would feel hungry after eating cornflakes with milk. (Jha, 2016; Mehrotra, 2021).

Kellogg's company by ignoring cultural aspects of that region and comparing their eating habits to other European countries and the United States of America made a big and risky mistake that could have led the organization to leave that market. Nonetheless, they decided to reposition themselves by changing their four Ps for a reimplementation in the market. The journey of the brand could have been a total disaster but after reviewing its strategies Kellogg's ended up making a remarkable comeback.

Repositioning The Kellogg's Company In The Indian Market

According to Jha (2016), repositioning a brand in a market is much more than simply changing the design, logo, or name of the brand. It consists of changing the status of the brand in a way that will appeal to more consumers according to their actual needs. If it is correctly done, it can lead to an improvement and the organization's success. For Kellogg's return to the Indian market, after spending one year studying its marketplace and the consumer behavior pattern, the company

launched two more brands in other Indian regions that were nicely received by consumers (Jha, 2016; Mehrotra, 2021).

The brand included new strategies in *products* such as Kellogg's Chocos (in September 1996), which were "wheat scoops with a coating of chocolate"; and Kellogg's Frosties (in April 1997) that "had sugar frosting on each flake" (Jha, 2016). As these products were specially designed for the Indian market, sales ended up increasing significantly and rapidly became two of the Indian's favorites products of the brand (Vignali, 2001; Jha, 2016; Mehrotra, V., 2021). After the success of those two products, the brand also launched Mazza (in August 1998) which consisted in a "crunchy, almond-shaped corn breakfast cereal" which was distributed in three local preferred flavours: Rose, Mango Elaichi, and Coconut Kesar (Jha, 2016). Ever since the brand has been launching products suitable for the Indian market and has successfully conquered its market segmentation. Additionally, the brand worked on its *pricing* strategy by reducing the cost of its products. By embracing other materials for the packaging and adopting a wider range of package sizes and prices suitable for diverse economic classes in the Indian market, Kellogg's company also attracted consumers who are not premium customers. The brand introduced single-serve packs costing ₹10, resulting in the expansion of up to 30% of sales between the years 2010 to 2016. Nowadays, the brand gained 70% of the market share in India (Mehrotra, V., 2021). In terms of distribution strategies – *place* – the brand, which was concentrating on metropolitan areas, decided to expand nationally. From the year of its implementation to 1998, the company opened around 40 000 outlets in India. This expansion made the product available to other types of consumers also increasing their sales. Moreover, the new *promotion* strategy adopted instead of passing the wrong message to Indian consumers as it did in the beginning, changed to rebranding it as "fun" instead of "healthy", and localized its advertising to appeal to the local consumer considering their culture and habits, passing a stronger message to the consumer. The Kellogg's company promoted its brand in television commercials that were specifically localized for the Indian market, integrating family relationships, which is one of the core Indian cultural values, instead of using their international advertisements (Jha, 2016; Mehrotra, 2021; Bhana, 2022; Shri, 2021; *Kellogg's Indian Experience.*, n.d.; *Kellogg's Indian Experience.*, n.d.-b).

Conclusion

The reason behind the initial failure of Kellogg's company in the Indian market had to do with the lack of knowledge of their market's segmentation preferences and eating habits. It was proven that ignoring those cultural factors led the company to fail in its implementation and leaving it on the verge to decide on whether to continue to sell in that market or if it should leave it. In this specific case, the cultural factors had a major impact on the business. The company, besides disregarding the eating habits and comparing them to their Western customers, introduced its products to the market as being premium, only sold in metropolitan areas, and most individuals could not afford to buy them since the domestic competitor was way cheaper and brought more product in their packaging. The brand introduced itself to this market to change its breakfast habits instead of making its products thinking specifically about the culture. Indians were not used to cold served breakfasts and when starting to consume it, did it the way they would normally do it, consuming it boiled, which was the opposite of what the brand advertised. Coming up with a restructuring of their marketing strategies, and localizing their products to the market's preferences, has made them successful and, in line with Mehrotra (2021), earned 70% of the market share in 2021. The point is, culture and other sociocultural factors should always be first considered when doing business with other countries of distinct cultures, otherwise, it can go wrong.

3.2.2 Dolce & Gabbana In The Chinese Market

One of the most desired markets by brands, that aspire to capitalize and be successful in the Asian sector, is the Chinese market (Huang & Janssens, 2019). Although, to do business in this market it is required for companies and brands to be very careful and to formally study and engage with their target audience to know how to approach it later. Doing business in the Asian market can be very risky but doing business in the Chinese market can be even stricter due to the differences in culture and consumer behavior, but also because many Western companies have tried and failed miserably to implement their business in the Chinese market. The luxury fashion brand worldwide known is the perfect example of what might go right for a few moments and can change if companies fail to connect with the Chinese market and the future consequences that might continue to come to pass.

Dolce & Gabbana, an Italian luxury and a sophisticated brand was established in 1985, in Milan, by two fashion designers, Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana (Amarnani, 2021). The legendary brand had its period of enormous growth ever since it was founded, nonetheless, despite other brands opening their first store in their domestic market, the two fashion creators decided to go against the norm and opened their very first store in the Asian market, located in Japan. Additionally, the brand started to export its products to the United States of America at the beginning of the 1990s and started to acquire notoriety ever since (Fashion Luxury, 2019).

Dolce & Gabbana Entering The Chinese Market And Subsequent Downfall

In 2006, along with the brand's previous and continuous growth, the stylists agreed to expand to the Chinese market. By 2010, the brand had already conquered its target consumer perfectly and eight years later the brand had already opened 58 boutiques across mainland China (Williams, 2022). Nevertheless, a brand that could have been continuously flourishing had its downfall in 2018, after a controversial advertisement for its fashion show.

According to Huang & Janssens (2019), in November 2018, the luxury Dolce & Gabbana brand dictated almost its end in the Chinese market after releasing a series of advertisements for its fashion show that would take place in Shanghai. Those advertisements were released on social media for the brand's 'The Great

Show’ to pay a tribute to the Chinese consumer who was accounting for 30% of the brand’s revenues at that time (Nast, 2018). Nevertheless, the scandal arrived after its online marketing campaign accounting for three promotional videos, that were later deleted, went online¹⁴.

The problem with these videos was that they were embodied by a Chinese female model wearing Dolce & Gabbana garments and jewels while attempting and struggling to eat Italian food with chopsticks – pizza, cannoli, and pasta. Furthermore, while the woman makes her attempts to eat, there is a Chinese male voice-over introducing each episode while commenting on what is happening during the model’s difficult task. In line with Huang & Janssens (2019), the hostile response from the Chinese audience was due to the voice-over describing the traditional Chinese chopsticks as ‘stick-shaped cutlery’ while referring to the Italian food as ‘great’. This dichotomy and contrast between cultures alongside the strong accent and forced facial expressions from the model resulted in criticism from individuals but also from the Chinese and international press.

Figure 4 Voice-over describing Chinese chopsticks



Source: Retrieved from the promotional video ([Rhea Li], 2018).

¹⁴ All three deleted and translated videos of the campaign here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzoxIb2Fa74> ([Rhea Li], 2018).

Consequences In The Chinese Market

These videos resulted in a brand's boycott and cancellation of the show in Shanghai, models quitting 'The Great Show', celebrities, such as the actress Li Bingbing and the singer Wang Junkai (Staff, 2018) terminating partnerships, and the event's cancellation, allegedly, on the request of the Chinese and Tourism Department (Huang & Janssens, 2019). Although the brand designers have apologized through a video published on the brand's YouTube channel about what has happened, claiming that the brand respects all cultures in the world, expressing regret for misunderstanding the Chinese one ([Dolce & Gabbana], 2018), that did not stop the company to stay with its image denigrated.

Moreover, it had such an impact on their business in the Asian sector that the brand's total revenue went from 25% in that market to 22% in March 2019, in only a matter of nearly four months for the brand to start declining (Cristoferi, 2019). Due to this event and the loss of trust by the Chinese market, the two fashion designers also shrank by 30% which led them to step outside the list of world billionaires (DaxueConsulting, 2021). Furthermore, the brand that was already reporting 58 boutiques in China, in 2018, before the incident, totals nowadays 48 (Dolce & Gabbana Stores and Boutiques in China, n.d.), which also proves the impact of not understanding the cultural background of a country and what is acceptable for them or not. Currently, the brand is still struggling to win the Chinese market once more.

Conclusion

Once again, not understanding the culture of a country can have terrible consequences when doing business overseas. For Chinese people, these advertisements were seen as racist, stereotypical, and disrespectful towards Chinese women. They found it unacceptable that the brand portrayed the Chinese population as being inferior to the Italians. For them, they were being described as undereducated, for not having the same eating habits and manners when at the table, the individuals felt inferior for the Italian food was characterized as 'great' by the Chinese voice-over, but also because of the noticeable discomfort shown by the model when not knowing how to eat properly that kind of food with chopsticks. The Chinese felt like they were being called less capable than their Italian counterparts

and that the brand was having a sense of superiority over them. Indeed, a campaign that was supposed to promote a fashion show that would take place in Shanghai caused an uproar due to the lack of cultural knowledge and massive cultural ignorance.

These days present us with a variety of cultures that due to factors such as globalization, the pace of migration, and the rapid development of technology around the world made people need to be in permanent interaction, either in person or virtually. Notwithstanding this global movement has its positive impacts, the negative ones cannot be unnoticed. Culture is the first matter one observes when in touch with another of a different environment from theirs, and so it also should be the preliminary obstacle to take into consideration to stay away from possible conflicting situations ever since the very first interaction. Besides, culture is one of the key elements that determine success when trading with others of a different geographic region since it shapes the behavior of people from the time when they were born. Concerning culture as an important aspect when doing business might affect the execution and accomplishment, or the absence of it, of a company, but knowing what culture is might not be enough.

For the sake of this study, other subjects were considered when touching on the broad topic of culture to understand how it influences organizational life. Such matters included Cultural Competence and Intercultural Communication. These subjects served as the foundation for the research on how Marketing Strategies are adopted in distinct countries and how they vary in their culture. In this case, considering these topics was significant for it assisted the understanding of how one can achieve those sorts of competencies to make a business thrive but also to identify others' way of behaving interculturally. That was observed through a theoretical framework on the perception of how communication unfolds, through theories and a model, to identify how they affect one's performance in the organizational context to sidestep and manage tense situations. In addition, developing cultural competence is important for an individual that aspires to work in a multinational organization or global team. Thinking of it as a positioning system was the picture-perfect example of how individuals should position and locate themselves on the road to comprehend others' cultural patterns and acquire intercultural competence. Furthermore, the exploration of the concept of intercultural communication and its elements was crucial to realize how important it is to know how to interact with people of distinct cultures, nevertheless, it also attended as a connection to the last topic – *Cross-cultural Communication in Marketing* – to comprehend how it affects the exchange of messages cross-culturally in a Marketing context through knowledge on similarities and disparities between cultures.

Marketing communications are currently increasingly more influenced by cultural differences and diversity for it is a field that is becoming even more competitive. Moreover, knowing how to correctly employ Marketing Strategies can determine the profitability of companies as they should first be concerned with how to create value for their consumers through the offering of superior solutions, so then they can get value from them. For that purpose, the study of the culture of the target market is so important as it is a determinant feature that supports the decision on whether a company should select a standardized or a more adapted marketing strategy, although, in my viewpoint, adaptation can always be more effective when its target audience is effectively reached, despite its additional costs. However, it does not mean that it should be mandatory for every business since it was possible to understand through the analysis of the presented case studies that even if a brand decides on a standardized approach it can be very profitable, but it will depend on how they market it to their segmentation.

Moreover, as a result of the analysis of the several examples and case studies, it was possible to comprehend that cultural sensitivity and awareness towards the expressions of a culture is the first step to conducting marketing campaigns cross-culturally. Nowadays, marketers who hold knowledge of the target culture and on its communication patterns are already winning with their cross-cultural competence and skills that help to avoid any form of conflict. When a company fails to communicate in external markets it is typically due to the inability to understand and adapt to cultural differences since every culture has a distinct set of symbols, values, and beliefs that affect the implementation of marketing strategies in distinct markets, and when marketing does not go along with those features it is most likely to be prone to failure. This demonstrates the importance of having culturally competent employees, in this case, marketers because a marketing campaign and its strategies should be developed considering the mingling cultural and communication aspects. To be lucrative, companies should avoid campaigns that exhibit some kind of disrespect for any religious practice, for a country's cultural symbols, or even appeal to ethnic dominance for individuals to respond together with emotion to the campaigns. People are quick to judge and make assumptions about what is right or wrong for them based on their emotions and how something made them feel at that moment, and consequently, a business can be impacted by those, with more or fewer sales, for instance.

The most successful marketing campaigns gathered inclusion and a sense of equality, as well as the deconstruction of taboos, for example – all critical issues that should influence today's world. When companies made campaigns that were offensive to the local values in any sense or that did not suit the culture of the target market, they would go through challenging times with boycotts that could lead a company to collapse or even make it harder to re-entry that market, as the examples of the two final case studies. Finally, through this study, it was perceived that when there is cultural adaptation when marketing a product or service, a company would have a higher number in sales, and market share, since its strategies were designed to favor the consumer. That means that a company gets the desired recognition from their target audience, by creating value for them, resulting also in a greater acceptance of the brand.

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