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BRAND MANAGEMENT: A DECISION TOOL FOR CULTURAL BRAND POSITIONING

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to develop decision tools for brands in cross cultural environment. Different constructs of culture are reported and their interface with marketing, especially branding is analysed. An interaction matrix of sub elements of culture like beliefs ethics and values and symbols and customs, with sub elements of brand positioning like brand identity, brand personality and brand communication is generated. From this iterated matrix, AEEP (Assess, Enact, Engage, and Position) framework is generated. Subsequently case studies of brands in a cross cultural environment are analysed and adaptation strategies are suggested. This paper will help academicians, and industry practioners in developing brands in cross cultural environment.

Key words: Brand, Brand culture fit, Brand positioning.

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation usually promotes international growth opportunities but it also intensifies international competitiveness. As a result, at the time of entering in a new country, it is important for marketers to find out how consumers in different countries may respond to their new initiatives of brand introduction or new communication. It helps marketers to gain competitive advantage by enjoying growing consumer acceptance of new initiatives. At the outset, one should remember that consumer behaviour is an outcome of interplay between inner self and outer stimuli. Consumption is a social and cultural process involving cultural signs and symbols, not simply as an economic, utilitarian process. According to past research, national culture has considerable influence on consumer behaviour. National culture of any country, as outer stimuli, influence on the diffusion of products across countries. To ensure success in global market, interpreting host country-culture and addressing it in a right manner is important.

A brand marketer may face a tough and challenging time by ignoring culture of the country of operation because consumers behave according to the cultural norms of their country. A right marketing strategy for any country requires a deep analysis of the set of values, beliefs and behaviour patterns of the people of that country. Management of cultural diversity could be seen as a threat, a challenge or an opportunity. Country culture can provide a strong support or it might be a powerful obstacle for organisational success. Therefore, with globalisation, managing country specific culture becomes an increasingly strategic issue for global players. A close match between country-culture and brand-culture adds significant value behind successful branding strategy execution.

Each culture perceives the world from a very different point of view. These cultural differences make is necessary, now more than ever, that business people consider these cultural attitudes and cultural differences in this new era of globalization. Due to this phenomenon of the globalization of markets and businesses, and a large increase in the cultural conflicts faced by marketing managers in medium and large companies around the world, it has become imperative to know what impact culture has on branding the new product in the new country.

The problem becomes more evident when marketing managers must work in a global setting, due to the internationalization of companies and the global economy. Marketing managers need to work with many customers from different places around the world; each country can be very similar in some dimensions and very different in other dimensions when compared with the country of the marketing manager. This comparison demonstrates the importance of understanding the role of culture.

THE ROLE OF CULTURE

Understanding the culture of one's country is not easy, because culture includes: value systems, attitudes, symbols, rituals, and related behaviours. Most of the characteristics representing a culture are very abstract and may affect the work place. Christie, Kwon, Stoeberl & Baumhart (2003) state that "culture is an abstraction and not an entity to be measured; one can never fully understand a culture". "Different cultural backgrounds lead to different ways of perceiving the world" (Thorne & Sanders, 2002 cited in MacDonald, 2000). "Culture not only influences learning, but also impacts what is perceived as right/wrong, acceptable/unacceptable, and ethical/unethical" (Lu, Rose & Blodgett, 1999). Not only that, cultural factors can also influence business professionals' perceptions as to their responsibilities toward various stakeholders, such as fellow employees or customers (Lu, Rose & Blodgett, 1999). There may sometimes be a dilemma of how the multinationals perceive and react to that kind of situation. What is good for our company in our country is not necessarily good for a foreign country, and those dissimilarities can have an impact in the organization. One of the impacts of those changes in culture has serious implications for the marketing department of the company; in today's world the marketers need to understand the culture and adapt to them. To adjust and adapt a marketing program to foreign markets, markets must be able to interpret effectively the influences and impact of each of the foreign market in which they hope to do business (Czinkota, Ronkainen & Moffett, 1999).

DEMYSTIFYING CULTURE FOR BRANDS AND MARKETING

Culture is a system of shared beliefs, values, customs and symbols that the members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another. Culture can be defined as the "collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from those of another" (Hofstede, 2001). The programming manifests itself in the values and beliefs of a society. Values are the tendency of an individual to prefer certain states of affairs over others. For any number of social behaviours, societies put different weights on different outcomes. Hofstede believes that the levels at which preferences find their balance is culturally determined. But culture also involves itself in learned behavior, as individuals grow up and gradually come to understand what their culture demands of them. Culture is not just an abstraction, but also a physical reality (Johansson, 2000). According to Johansson (2000), culture is usually defined as the underlying value framework that guides an individual's behaviour. It is reflected in an individual's perceptions of observed events and personal interactions, and the selection of appropriate responses in social situations. Trompenaars (1994) stated culture operates within a group, is learned (often through generations), influences the basic thinking process of groups of people, and describes common behaviours and values that groups of people may exhibit under certain conditions. Taylor (1871) more than a century defined culture as "a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by individuals as members of society". With the growing opportunities for intercultural interaction since the fifties, the world has seen a proliferation of modern studies on culture. The consensus on what constitutes the core of culture is still not uniquely understood by even the most prominent researchers in the field. In line with the social science theories of the 1950s, Hofstede (2001), for example, considers ideas and especially their attached values to be the core of culture. He cites the definition by Kluckhohn (1951), who says that "Culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values" (Hofstede, 2001).

Other researchers in the field of international management offer their own definitions of culture. For example, culture is the way a group of people lives (Romani, 2004) and makes decisions (Leo, Bennett, and Härtel 2005). It is a combination of interdependent, gradually changing elements (including assumptions, beliefs, values, practices, and institutions) and links between these elements, which are distinctive to a particular society (Brannen *et al.*, 2004). It is a group level phenomenon, but influences an individual's perceptions, values and behaviours, especially in a social setting (Maznevski *et al.*, 2002). It is learned and shared; it links individuals to groups, but allows individual variability (Brannen *et al.*, 2004).

Regardless of the definition, several common aspects are the key defining concepts of a culture. Firstly, culture is not innate, but rather learned; learning takes place in institutions starting from the family (usually being the first institution a (lucky) individual encounters) and later on spreading to institutions like church, school, clubs and similar; learning happens informally and often also subconsciously; and finally, it is a shared property of a group of people (Frith and Mueller, 2007).

Some research (Pankhania, Lee and Hooley, 2007) suggests that marketers should take into account cultural diversity within countries as well as between them, because culture has many boundaries. There may be regional, ethnic, religious, generational, industry, occupational and corporate culture, to name but a few (Brannen *et al.*, 2004). Nevertheless, nationality remains the most viable proxy for culture because the members of a nation share an understanding of its institutional systems, a bond of identity, and an experiential understanding of the world (Hofstedem 2001; Brannen *et al.*, 2004). Prevalent value systems are a key component of national culture and explain the differences between preferences for one state of affairs over others (Hofstede, 1985; Broderick, 2007).

A culture acts out its way of living in the context of social institutions, including family, educational, religious, governmental and business institutions. Culture includes conscious and unconscious values, ideas, attitudes, and symbols that shape human behaviour, and that are transmitted from one generation to the next. In this sense, culture does not include onetime solutions to unique problems, or passing fads and styles (Keegan & Green, 1997).That is why culture is not easy to understand and measure, because the culture has so many implications and factors that influence them. It is very clear that understanding culture is not an easy task, because culture is a concept that the individuals have inside; the culture is not an entity to be measured.

POSITIONING FOR CULTURAL FIT: A DECISION TOOL

Due to the same phenomenon of the globalization and integration of the markets around the world, day after day more multinational corporations are moving to other countries. Those multinational corporations understand that in order to continue and succeed in this new global economy, the corporations need to move as fast as they can in order to get economics benefits in the international market. This process of internationalization of those companies brings good opportunities in terms of economics, but also brings big challenges for the multinational, especially in terms of culture and ethic. In light of above the authors propose a decision tool (Fig. 1) for marketers and brand managers which will serve as a guiding principle when a brand operates in a country or community.

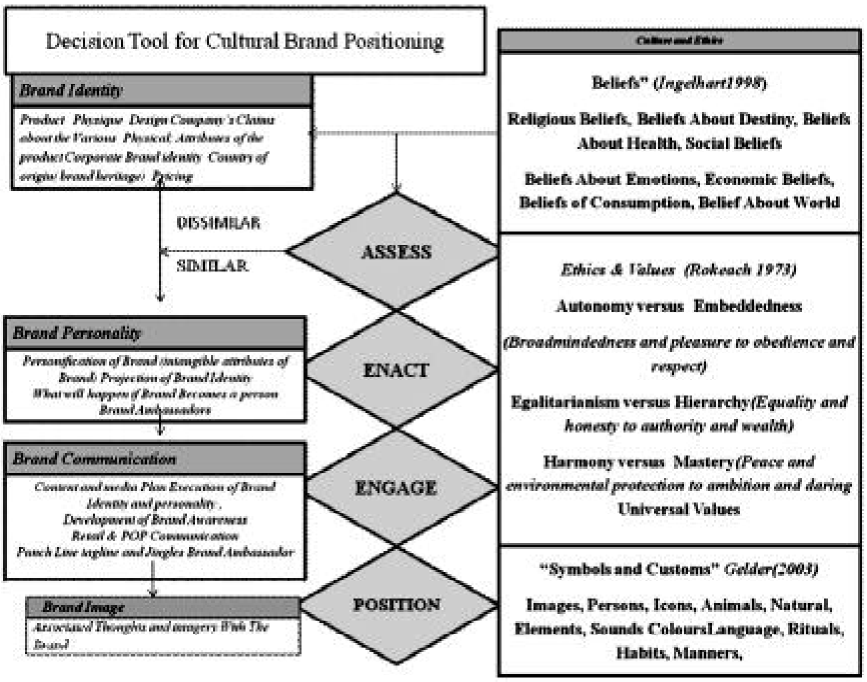

Figure 1: Decision Tool for Cultural Brand Positioning

Assess the Brand Identity

The creation or evolution of a brand starts with the identity of the brand itself. A brand identity of a company is reflected by its logos, symbols, slogans, mascots, signs, icons, product range, organisational mission, usages, etc. According to this element, a brand can be seen as a person, product, an organisation and as a symbol perspective. According to Aaker, brand identity is the central concept to building a strong brand. It provides direction, purpose and meaning for the brand and is consequently vital to the brand's strategic vision. For a brand the brand identity is not different. It is the way the company wants to project itself to the consumers. As stated by Aaker , "Brand identity is a unique set of associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to consumers from the organisation members." For example, Dove wants to create and identity purity. It calls itself a pure soap. If you notice, Dove soap and face wash are white in colour. The sign of the dove is a white bird which itself is a symbol of peace and purity. Adidas is known to be one such company. The brand strongly perceives itself to be a sporty, daring, smart and enduring brand. If we look at the slogan, it says "Impossible is nothing" which shows what the brand means to itself. The brand identity itself must not be in conflict with the cultural norms of a country. For e.g. Kellogs corn flakes came into India and identified themselves as 'cold milk cereals'. This lead to non acceptance of the kellog brand in India because mothers prefer hot milk for their children in the morning. Thus it is imperative that the brand identity itself be according to the culture of the community. Brand managers must first assess the brand identity of the brand. If it is in conflict with the cultural norms of the country then brand managers should make appropriate modifications in the brand identity itself.

Enact the Brand Personality

Once the cultural dissonance with brand identity is resolved, the personality of the brand comes into play. It is the time when brand managers must associate a personality to the brand which is in accordance to the culture of the country. Brand personality is the personification of brand identity. The personification of identity requires the blending of human psychological attributes into brand related attributes. The outcome is in the form of a symbol or metaphor or a sound which "connects and develops" a relationship with customers. Personification of identity requires identification of persons, animals, visual images and colours which are in resonance with the company's identifies brief. Similarly, Brand Ambassador is another tool for projection of brand personality. According to J. Aaker (1997), brand personality defined as "set os human characteristics associated with a brand." It is argued that the symbolic use of brands is possible because consumers often imbue brands with human personality traits (Gilmore, 1919). Consumers can easily think of a brand if they were celebrities or historical figures (Rook, 1985).

Perceptions of human personality traits are inferred on the basis of an individual behaviour, physical characteristics, attitudes and beliefs, and demographic characteristics (Park, 1986). In contrast, perceptions of brand personality traits can be formed with any direct or indirect contact the person has had with the brand (Plummer, 1985). For example, In India Amul has used the girl as a symbol for cheerfulness, friendliness and naughty humour. Reliance has used "growth is life" as a very strong metaphor for success while Tata has used subtle elements like honesty for development of the personality of its corporate brand identity.

Engage Through Brand Communication and Create Awareness

Brand communication is a process by which a company projects not only product features and attributes but also the emotional aspect of the product or services to the consumer. Effectiveness of brand communication is based on identification of the right communication mix, media planning, and the right impact on the customer. Brand communication starts from product packaging and ends at the point of purchase at the retail counter. Brand personality and brand identity are communicated to the customer through brand communication.

Brand communication includes all means of media and communication through which a company communicates to the customers. These include advertising, sponsorships, campaigns, direct marketing, trade fairs, word of mouth campaigns, radio advertisements, print media, etc.

Brand awareness is the measure of the effectiveness of brand communication. Brand awareness put simply is, how aware is the consumer about the brand? For a consumer to buy a brand they must first be made aware of it. Brand attitude cannot be formed, and intention to buy cannot occur unless brand awareness has occurred (Rossiter and Percy, 1987, Rossiter *et al.*, 1991). If a brand is not in the awareness of the consumer then it cannot be chosen (Baker *et al.*, 1986). There are three factors determining overall awareness of a brand: brand recognition, top of the mind awareness and brand recall. Brand recognition, when we can recognize the brand by their logos, jingles, symbols, slogans, mascots, ambassadors, taglines, etc. Brand recognition is the primary requirements at the point of purchase and is even more important than brand positioning which is only secondary to brand recognition. That is the reason most of the advertisements try to add humour or music or even sex appeal to advertisements so that people remember them and hence the brands. For example, Nokia tune or Airtel jingle. If one is asked to name a list of soaps or deodorants, etc, you will start naming them in the order of your ability to recall. Your ability of recalling is a function of how often you use or see the brand.

Brand recall has two types. First, unaided brand recall, if the customer simply asked to name a brand in a product category. Like recalling name of refrigerator or television brand. Second, aided recall, when the customer given some aid in recalling the brand. For example, name the purest soaps. Here dove as a brand would like have a high recall. This recall is aided by what consumers feel comfortable with according to cultural conventions. For e.g. the Airtel jingle appeals to the patriotic nature of its consumers. They have also used A.R. Rehman as composer because he is well-known icon in India.

Position in the Consumers Mind

Positioning is what you do to the mind of the buyer, the consumer. Brand positioning defined as “the distinct space a brand creates in the consumer’s mind” (Ries and Trout, 1960). Ries and Trout concluded that, “ positioning starts with the product...a piece of merchandise, a service, a company, an institution, or even a person...”. They also state that positioning is not what is done to the product/service, but rather what is done to the mind of the prospect. Basically, the essence is to position the service or product in the mind of the consumer, that, “...positioning shifts the emphasis of marketing from the product to the battle for your mind...” Kotler (1997) defines positioning as: “the process of designing the company’s product/services and imge based on consumer’s perceptions relative to that of competitors”. Positioning necessarily has to occur in the consumer’s mind and hence should affect his top-of-mind recall in a purchasing decision.

Aaker defines a brand’s position as a part of its identity and value proposition, which is actively communicated to target markets, and which demonstrates an advantage in relation to competing brands. Aaker view is that positioning can also be used to reflect how a company wants to be perceived by consumers. Brand positioning can be best visualized as little ladders in the consumer’s mind, with each step having a brand name and each ladder representing a different product category, a solution to a different problem. The consumer often goes to the top brand of each ladder for purchasing decisions. Positioning occupies a distinct space in the consumer's mind. A distinct hidden desire, a distinct solution to a problem, a distinct answer to some doubt, etc... For example in India if a consumer sees Close Up as freshener but Colgate as gum strengtheners and health brand, he might make a purchasing decision depending on what he likes, a health brand or a brand that freshens. This is once again related to what beliefs about health do consumers hold in that country.

APPLICATION OF THE DECISION TOOL: SOME EMPIRICAL CASES

The case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings. Case studies can involve either single or multiple cases, and numerous levels of analysis (Yin, 1984). For example, Harris and Sutton (1986) studied 8 dying organisations, Bettenhausan and Murghan (1986) focused on the emergence of norms in 19 laboratory groups, and Leonard-barton (1988) tracked the progress of 10 innovation projects. Moreover, case studies can employ an embedded design, that is, multiple levels of analysis within a single study (Yin, 1984).

Case studies typically combine data collection methods such as archives, interview, questionnaires, and observations. The evidence maybe qualitative (e.g., words), quantitative (e.g., numbers), or both. Finally, case studies can be used to accomplish various aims: to provide description (Kider, 1982), test theory (Pinfield, 1986; Anderson, 1983), or generate theory (e.g., Gersick, 1988; Harris & Sutton, 1986). The interest here is in this last aim, theory generation from case study evidence. Case studies are real life scenarios and qualitative research. In a normal life we can see several cases about different brand with various categories of products. Four case studies have been chosen. Two of them show the failure of brands and two of them show the success of the brand as explained by the decision tool.

Case 1: Kellogg's in India

Kellogg's is, of course, a mighty brand. Its cereals have been consumed around the globe more than any of its rivals. Sub-brands such as Corn Flakes, Frosties and Rice Krispies are the breakfast favourites of millions. In the late 1980s, the company had reached an all-time peak, commanding a staggering 40 per cent of the US ready-to-eat market from its cereal products alone. By that time, Kellogg's had over 20 plants in 18 countries worldwide, with yearly sales reaching above US $6 billion. However, in the 1990s Kellogg's began to struggle. Competition was getting tougher as its nearest rivals General Mills increased the pressure with its Cheerio's brand. Kellogg's management team was accused of being 'unimaginative', and of 'spoiling some of the world's top brands' in a 1997 article in Fortune magazine.

In core markets such as the United States and the UK, the cereal industry has been stagnant for over a decade, as there has been little room for growth. Therefore, from the beginning of the 1990s Kellogg's looked beyond its traditional markets in Europe and the

United States in search of more cereal eating consumers. It didn't take the company too long to decide that India was a suitable target for Kellogg's products. After all, here was a country with over 950 million inhabitants, 250 million of whom were middle class and a completely untapped market potential.

In 1994, three years after the barriers to international trade had opened in India. Kellogg's decided to invest US $65 million into launching its number one brand, Corn Flakes. The news was greeted optimistically by Indian economic experts such as Bhagirat B Merchant, who in 1994 was the director 156 Brand failures of the Bombay Stock Exchange. 'Even if Kellogg's has only a two percent market share, at 18 million consumers they will have a larger market than in the US itself,' he said at the time.

However, the Indian sub-continent found the whole concept of eating breakfast cereal a new one. Indeed, the most common way to start the day in India was with a bowl of hot vegetables. While this meant that Kellogg's had few direct competitors it also meant that the company had to promote not only its product, but also the very idea of eating breakfast cereal in the first place.

The first sales figures were encouraging, and indicated that breakfast cereal consumption was on the rise. However, it soon became apparent that many people had bought Corn Flakes as a one-off, novelty purchase. Even if they liked the taste, the product was too expensive. A 500-gram box of Corn Flakes cost a third more than its nearest competitor. However, Kellogg's remained unwilling to bow to price pressure and decided to launch other products in India, without doing any further research of the market. Over the next few years Indian cereal buyers were introduced to Kellogg's Wheat Flakes, Frosties, Rice Flakes, Honey Crunch, All Bran, Special K and Chocos Chocolate Puffs – none of which have managed to replicate the success they have encountered in the West. Various lessons can be drawn out from such a scenario (Fig. 2).

1. Kellog's marketers underestimated the local competitors in India, because local products are according to Indian culture and consumers are loyal to them.

2. When Kellogg's first launched Corn Flakes in India it was essentially launching a Western product attempting to appeal to Indian tastes. Globalization may be an increasing trend, but regional identities, customs and tastes are as distinct as ever. It may be easy for brand managers of global brands to view the world as homogenous, where consumer demands are all the same, but the reality is rather different.

3. Kellogg's appeared in Indian market without having any idea about Indian culture. They did not try to introduce the new products close to Indian culture and taste. Wahid Berenjian says, 'You can alienate me a bit from my culture, but you cannot make me a stranger to my culture. The society is much stronger than any company or product.' Brands which want to succeed in India and other culturally distinct markets need to remember this.

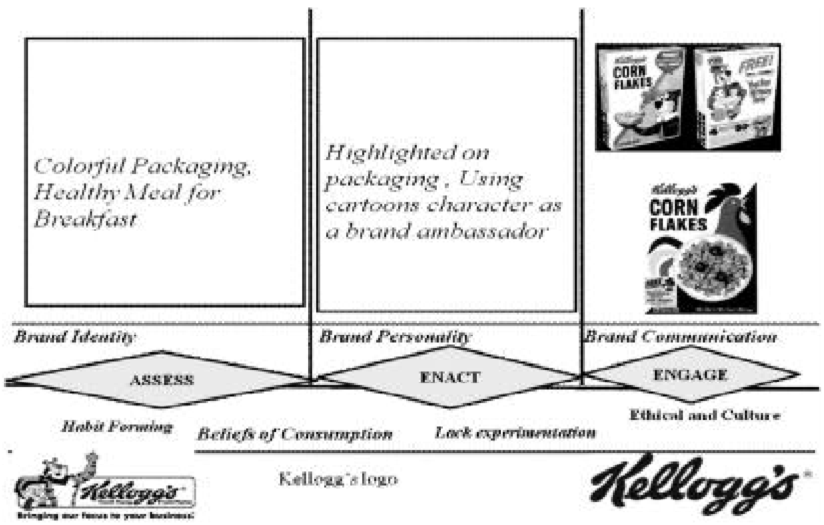

Figure 2: Kellogg's cultural brand positioning

According to above framework we can see the brand identity is not same as Indian culture that's why Kellogg's failed in the Indian market. After this Kellogg's tried to change their image in Indian market through new communication that people can consume it with hot milk, but still it's not successful because hot milk will spoil the shape of Corn Flake. Also Kellog's has positioned itself as an expensive product which goes against Indian values of thriftiness.

Case 2: Hallmark in France

Hallmark Cards, Inc. is the world's largest greeting card company, creating 21,000 different designs each year in more than 20 languages, and distributing them in more than 100 countries. In addition to the Hallmark flagship, the company also markets cards under the Ambassador and Expressions brand names. Over the years, Hallmark has branched out into other areas of the stationery business, including writing paper, party goods, gift wrap, and photo albums, as well as into such giftware as plush toys, mugs, jigsaw puzzles and Christmas ornaments.

Hallmark greeting cards have proven immensely popular in both the UK and the United States. Catering for every special occasion – from birthdays to weddings and from Mother's Day to passing your driving test – the cards are sent by thousands of people every single day of the year. The signature (or 'hallmark') of Hallmark cards is the 'special message'. The advantage of buying from Hallmark is that you don't have to think about what to write – it is usually all written for you. 'Thank you for being such a special daughter.' 'These birthday wishes are especially for you,' and so on, normally followed by a rather sentimental poem inside. While this formula may be successful in many countries, it has not proved universal.

Hallmark was successful almost in each country that enters as a new brand with new product. For instance, when Hallmark tried to introduce their cards in France, no-one bought them as people preferred to write in the cards themselves. Furthermore, the syrupy sentiment inherent within the pre-printed messages did not appeal to the Gallic taste. After a few months Hallmark admitted defeat and withdrew its brand. The reason behind of this failure is that brand marketers were not aware of French Culture. Marketers for entering in any new country should have a broad idea about the host country's culture so that he can make an adjustment with brand and culture of the new country. A brand can be successful, if marketer changes the formula in the new culture. The lesson from hallmark is that brand needs to acknowledge cultural differences (Fig. 3).

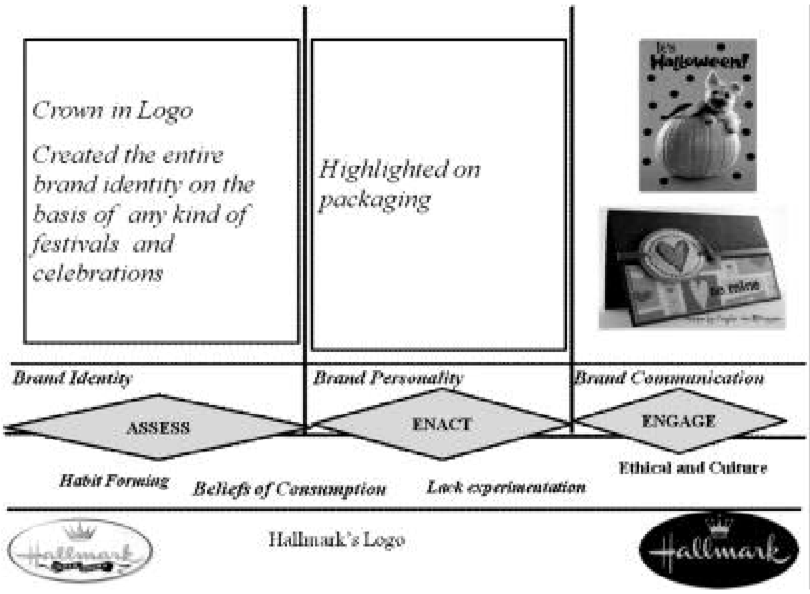

Figure 3: Brand positioning of Hallmark cards

According to above framework we can see Hallmark's identity was acceptable almost in all countries that they enter. Marketer in different countries is able to assess their product with the host country culture, but in the case of France lack of knowledge about French culture caused failure. At last, international and globalized brands should change their original formula, so that they are accepted by new consumers belonging to new culture.

Case 3: McDonald's in India

McDonald's is the world's leading food service organization. Since its incorporation in 1955, McDonald's Corporation has not only become the world's largest quick-service restaurant organization, but has literally changed Americans' eating habits—and increasingly the habits of non-Americans as well. On an average day, more than 46 million people eat at one of the company's more than 31,000 restaurants, which are located in 119 countries on six continents. About 9,000 of the restaurants are company owned and operated; the remainder are run either by franchisees or through joint ventures with local business people. System wide sales (which encompass total revenues from all three types of restaurants) totalled more than $46 billion in 2003. Nine major markets—Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States—account for 80 percent of the restaurants and 75 percent of overall sales. The vast majority of the company's restaurants are of the flagship McDonald's hamburger joint variety. Two other wholly owned chains, Boston Market (rotisserie chicken) and Chipotle Mexican Grill (Mexican fast casual), along with Pret A Manger (upscale prepared sandwiches), in which McDonald's owns a 33 percent stake, account for about 1,000 units.

McDonald's is a successful brand in India; in the beginning when they entered Indian market they found some differences between Indian culture and American culture. Thus marketers tried to adjust to the Indian eating habits with what they intended to serve.

McDonald's is non-vegetarian fast food, but India is vegetarian country. McDonald's usually serves beef in all their branches across the world. When they became cognizant of the culture in India culture, they learnt that selling beef in India is illegal, so they started to change their menu according to local eating habits. Beef Burger was changed to Chicken Burger and new vegetarian food like McVeggie, McAloo Tikki, were added to appeal to Indian sensitivities. The new menu was successful which led to increased sales (Fig. 4).

Also McDonald's reduced the price of its offerings and the ambience of restaurants was setup in way to attract families, an important unit in Indian culture.

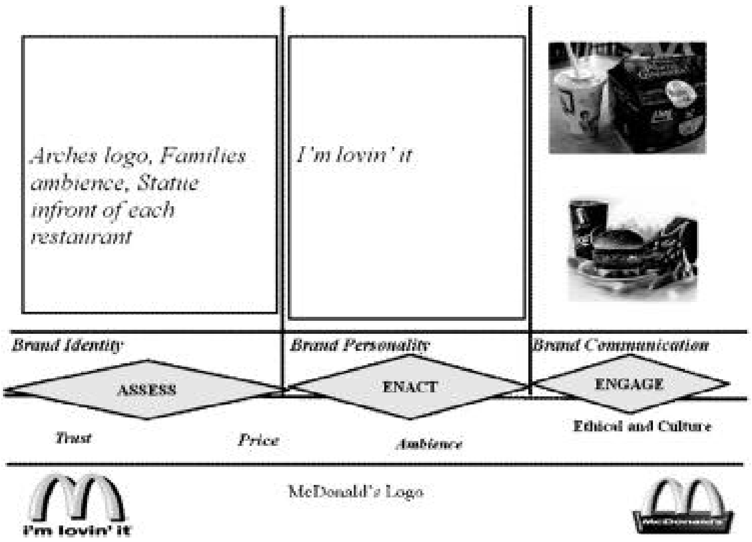

Figure 4: Brand positioning of McDonald's in India

Case 4: Nokia in India

Nokia is a leading international communications company, focused on the key growth areas of wired line and wireless telecommunications. Nokia is a pioneer in digital technology and wireless data communications, continuously bringing innovations to the highly competitive and growing telecommunications markets. Nokia is also actively involved in international R & D cooperation, including the development of the standards for third generation mobile telephony. About two-thirds of the company's net sales are generated by the Nokia Mobile Phones business group. Originally a manufacturer of pulp and paper, Nokia was founded as Nokia Company in 1865 in a small town of the same name in central Finland. Nokia was a pioneer in the industry and introduced many new production methods to a country with only one major natural resource, its vast forests.

Nokia in India has been really successful. What is unique about Nokia's campaigns is that they rarely focus on a model, but promote Nokia as a concept. In India the concept that was most successful was the establishment of an Indian identity of the company. Nokia's localization strategy was visible in its made for India campaign. The models were made more palatable for the Indian consumer. One such facility was the 'Saral mobile Sandesh' which was instrumental in sending SMS in Hindi. In a 43 per cent Hindi speaking nation, the scheme was a hit. To establish an 'Indian' brand identity, Nokia launched the 'Made for India' campaign for Nokia 1100. Nokia 1100 came to the Indian market with affordable prices. Another major localization of the product was a small torch in the mobile phone unit, because there is no electricity in some villages in India and the torch could be used as a handy tool for seeing at night. The phone had made by anti-dust material, because small cities and villages in India still had the problem of dust dispersal in the surroundings.

These efforts had started in 1998 when it launched the first Indian ringtone 'Saare jahan se achcha' in Nokia 5110. Then in 2003 it launched Nokia 1100, the dust resistant, anti-slip phone with torch light customized for the Indian consumer. Nokia 2112 comes with a longer battery-life and faster charger. Thus, Nokia becomes an excellent example of a brand identity establishment where the product was emphasized as much as the promotion in line with the culture of the host country. In 2005, Nokia launched the 2600 series which provided 4k colour range cellophanes to Indian customers at an affordable price. Its campaign focussed on the colours and Nokia's philosophy of adding colour to life, whereas, the same phone in China talked about the spreadsheet feature of the phone, and did not focus on colours and affordability (Fig. 5).

DETERMINATION IS THE KEY FOR ACHIEVING ANYTHING

The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a person's determination.

- Tommy Lasorda

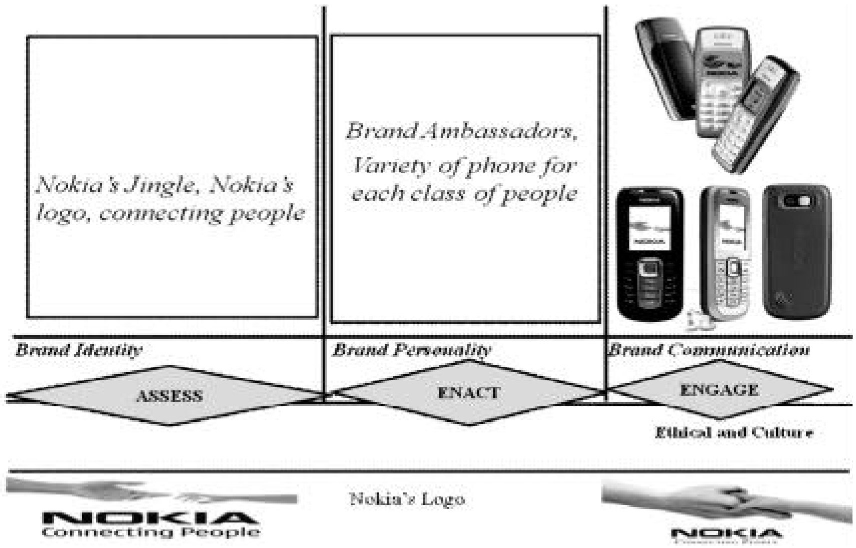

Figure 5: Nokia's localization strategy in India

CONCLUSION: CULTURE AS TOOL FOR BRAND POSITIONING

The behaviour of brand marketers is affected by general societal trends. These trends include shifts in values, culture, or ideology. This ideological position is changing the way marketers craft brand and product strategy, from product features to advertising messages. Brands are among the most valuable assets that a company possesses. In fact, much of the goodwill companies receive is a direct result of positive attitudes and association's consumers have toward their leading brands. Any negative controversy surrounding a brand's image can adversely affect its brand equity; and thus, overall company performance. A right synergy between brand and the culture of a country will go a long way in ensuring brand success. This can be achieved by utilization of the proposed decision tool (Fig. 1). The decision tool is a handy instrument for marketers at every stage of a brand including developing brand identity, forging it with a personality, communicating the brand which will lead to a final positioning in the consumers mind. For already existing brands it can be used as a tool to measure the 'status quo' of the brand, while for new and emerging brands it will be a strategic guide.

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Flexibility-Based Lives

LAKSHMI NIWAS MITTAL: STEEL LEGEND

A Life Guided by Extra ordinary Vision, Determination and Flexibility

Mr. Lakshmi Niwas Mittal, Rajasthan born Indian passport carrying global citizen, and world’s largest steel maker, in 2005 was ranked as the third richest man on the Planet Earth as adjudged in Forbe’s top three giants (2005) though in later he slipped in this ranking. He resides at 18/19 Kensington Palace Gardens in London; and in India he is known to have residences at two places (i) 24, Alipore Road, South Kolkata, and (ii) 22, Aurangzeb Road, New Delhi. June 25, 2006 has been a great day in his enterprising life when Arcelor, the world’s second largest steel company (46.7 million tonne capacity), agreed to merge with Mittal Steel (63 million tonne capacity) company following long drawn strategic negotiations, fulfilling his long cherished dream of merging two giants, complimenting each other’s strength in which both the entities stood to gain substantially.

All this happened in course of thirty years starting from scratch since 1976 when Mr. L.N. Mittal left India, at a time when he had no substantive base in India or abroad, but only a dream and vision in his eyes to become steel legend one day. It began with his setting up a steel rolling mill in Indonesia in 1978. In 1989 he took over a plant in Trinidad and Tobago. In 1992 he acquired Sibalsa in Mexico and in 1994 he acquired Sidbec-Dosco plant. In 1995, he acquired Kazakhstan’s national steel plant, Karmet, which he very successfully turned around. In next ten years he acquired series of plants in Algeria, South Africa, and East and Central Europe at large.

Initially, the company’s focus was to produce low cost, low-quality steel and sell it through a global network of traders. It was only in the late 1990s when the company following acquisition of US-based Inland Steel that the focus shifted to high quality products. It was followed by acquisition of several plants including Irish Steel, Unimetal Group, Alfasid, Sidex, Nova Hut, Iscor, and US based International Steel Group (2004). In 2004, the Company acquired a record eleven companies. In 2005 it acquired companies in China, Romania and Ukraine. In 2006 the Company first acquired Norambar in Canada and then on June 25, 2006 it brought into its fold the Arcelor, Arcelor, world's No. 2 steelmaker after Mittal Steel, Arcelor, world's No. 2 steelmaker after Mittal Steel by merging with it in a landmark deal.

He kept on achieving his goals one by one, raising the bar a bit each time. Mr. Mittal's career graph presents a case study for Indian entrepreneurs achieving phenomenally in thirty years, which was all along inspired by a great ***vision, human values, flexibility*** and ***determination*** which can be easily discerned if one goes by some of his popular quotes he made in recent past. With the acquisition of French steel company Arcelor, Arcelor-Mittal represents 10 per cent share of the global steel market (Batra, Pramod, *Management Planner*, E-62, 2013).

Mr. Mittal, in an interview to *The Economic Times* (March 17, 2005) observed: "***My vision is dynamic. It evolves every day as situations change and new opportunities come up. To be successful globally you have to think globally***. ***Don't let cultural boundaries hold you back, always think outside the box and embrace opportunities that appear,*** whatever they might be. ***Be flexible to different cultures*** and ways of thinking and ***be open to learning new skills and techniques from any different market***."

Mr. Mittal has always been very focused in life and always aimed high, even when he was managing only the Indonesian unit in late seventies. For an unparalleled achiever like Mr. Mittal, harbouring a vision is very important. He said (*The Economic Times*, June 26, 2006), "Our vision for Mittal Steel is for it to become the world's (most) admired institution. In order to achieve this, we need to continue to lead the way in shaping the future of the steel industry towards becoming a more ***global, consolidated*** and ***sustainable industry***."

The way to future lies in renouncing the past and moving from one orbit to another without any looking back. Arcelor-Mittal deal is his life's landmark achievement of this flexible strategic vision. It has been in Mr. Mittal's grain to take risks which kept him growing from strength to strength with each acquisition. His over all strategy in past has been to acquire units requiring capital, replace some of their staff with his crack team, provide capital, streamline integration, improve levels of performance and productivity, reduce costs, introduce high value products, and divest non-core assets. Cost reduction and running the consolidated company on professional lines has been company's *modus operandi* at each stage. In trading in the global market, the company leadership exploited the giant size of its plants to get the best deals in logistics and for sourcing raw materials. He is the vice-chairman of the World Steel Association and a board member of the Indian Prime Minister's Global Advisory Council of Overseas Indians (Batra, Pramod, *Management Planner*, E-62, 2013). Today, India born, Mr. L.N. Mittal enjoys undisputed dominance in global steel industry.

- Editor-in-Chief

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