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Marketing Across Different Cultures. Whirlpool Washing Machines in the UK, USA and India

A Case Study

Research paper



## Marketing Across Different Cultures. Whirlpool Washing Machines in the UK, USA and India

A Case Study

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## 1. Introduction

Culture has a significant effect on businesses operations; particularly the marketing mix of many Multinational Corporations (Schmidt, 2010).The aim of our report is to investigate the definition of culture, its source and its effect on the marketing mix of a company. Our study will centre on Whirlpool (a home appliance company coming out of the US) and three of the markets in which it operates in; India, UK and the home country USA (Whirlpool

Corporation, 2012).

As the company produces many products, our focus will be on washing machines. Theories around understanding culture and product analyses such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the seven P's of marketing will be used to conclude what aspects of culture need to be studied carefully to successfully enter a new market.

## 2. Culture

Culture is a group of taught responses of different peoples to variable stimulus, resulting from a group of behaviours, beliefs, ways of organization and the dominant ideology (Bardu, 2011). Many interpretations of what culture means exist today, however it was Geert Hofstede that first brought forward five dimensions, which could help companies analyse the distance/ difference that exists between its home country operations and the market it operates (Schmidt, 2010).

Figure 2.1 represents the cultural distances that exist in India, UK and USA using Hofstede's dimension of high and low power-distance, individualism versus collectivism, strong and weak uncertainty-avoidance, masculinity versus femininity and long- and short-term orientation (Kang and Mastin, 2007).

### Figure 2.2 Analyses of USA, UK and India

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(Source: <http://geert-hofstede.com/united-states.html>)

It is certain from the above results that US and UK are quite similar in their culture, however India differs slightly, especially in terms of power distance (where it is very high), Long-term Orientation (high) and low in individualism (translating that Indians are more collective in their way of living) than the USA (Geert Hofstede, 2012a).

(See Appendix A for more information)

## 3. Sources of Culture for India, US and UK

Another aspect into understanding culture and how it could affect business decisions is looking at what makes up the culture of a particular country. While many theories exist, Terpstra & Sarathy (2000)'s source of culture diagram demonstrates the numerous elements that exist in forming a culture (Goodshall, 2012).

### Figure 2.1 Sources of Culture

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Source: (Goodshall, 2012), Adapted from Terpstra & Sarathy (2000)

The UK and USA share many similar cultural aspects such as sharing the same language and religion. Whilst in India, shared attitudes around following a strict caste system exist (Foreign and Commonwealth office, 2012). A corporation should consider the effect each source might have on their marketing campaign, particularly in terms of packaging, advertising campaign and even at the simple level of having to reconsider their product design

(See Appendix B for more information)

## 4. Whirlpool Corporation

Whirlpool Corporation is one of the world's leading manufacturers and marketer of major home appliances, with annual sales exceeding \$19 billion in 2011. The company employs approximately 68,000 employees, with 66

manufacturing and technology research centres in the world. Major brands marketed around the world by the company include Whirlpool, Maytag, KitchenAid, Jenn-Air, Armana, Brastemp, Consul and Bauknet (whirlpoolcorp.org). The company's main objective is innovation which is deeply embedded throughout the company. In 2010, Whirlpool was named one of the ten most innovative companies in consumer products (Fast Magazine, 2010), with reported revenue of \$3.6 billion in 2010 just from innovation (Muller and Hutchins, 2012).

## 5. Operational Analysis

Whirlpool operations are spread all over the world, with thousands of home appliances products marketed in different regions according to local demand, culture and history of that region. Whirlpool is a mass player in India with wide products portfolio and adopts aggressive marketing strategy and promotional activities (IBEF, 2011). On the other hand, it enjoys role of a premier player in UK and USA. The washing machines in United Kingdom, USA and India are tailored according to the living habits of their local peoples demand. The products sold in UK and USA is comparatively high in quality and price to the ones sold in India. Countries like USA and UK, where the awareness of energy saving and eco-friendly products are higher, Whirlpool markets its front loader washing machines which uses less power and water. These products are better in design, technology and carry a much higher price tag than products marketed in Asia. On the other hand, the company is still marketing traditional top loader washing machines which consumes way more power and water, but are available at a low price to consumer. India is one of the fastest growing countries but there is not much awareness regarding eco-friendly products. People in India prefers low price and durable products as buying power is very low. Having a wide range of products in market helps Whirlpool to maintain its high market share (IBEF, 2011a)

## 6. Implementation of marketing mix in the UK and the USA

The marketing mix was traditionally known as the four P's; Product, Price, Promotion and Place. Recently, the growing evidence to deliver a high quality service to satisfy customer's need has been understood by marketers. Consequently, marketing mix has been evolving by adding three more P's: People, Process and Physical evidence (CIM report, 2009).

### 6.1 Product

Whirlpool is marketing washing machines in the British market with a standardised technology but with products' design adapted to British taste. Thus, the front panel, colors, user interfaces and the size differ from the American products (Appliance magazine, 2003). In the United States, the demand of 8-9 kilogram washers is high. Indeed, the US promotion campaign the company promotes the "duet" whirlpool washer offering the largest capacity available on the market.

### 6.2 Price

The UK market is highly competitive (Appliance magazine, 2003). Consequently, Whirlpool has adapted its price range and proposes washing machines at a cheaper price.

### 6.3 Promotion

The media communication tools used is similar in USA and UK. However, the promotion in the United Kingdom emphasises on eco-friendly aspect of products, whereas the promotion in the USA delivers detailed features of the products.

### 6.4 Place

Whirlpool first entered the European market in 1989, thanks to a joint venture with Philips. It became a wholly owned subsidiary two years later (The New York Times, 1991). The product supply in the USA involves many retailers, both convenience stores and superstores. In the UK, which is a smaller country, products are available in well-known home appliances retailers. Whirlpool also sells through their website; however the US website redirects consumers to other avenues for purchase.

## 6.5 People, Process and Physical Evidence

Whirlpool constantly develops and improves its service delivery in order to retain customers (Avaya report, 2010). Customer complaints resolution is a top priority in both countries (Glagowski, 2009). In 2012, Whirlpool reached the 1st rank in the annual American customer satisfaction index (Harbor, 2012).

(See Appendix C for more information)

## 7. Implementation of marketing mix India

Giving the significant differences in culture between India and Whirlpool's home country, the USA; it is important to analyse the marketing mix in India independently in order to fully understand the level of adaption that took place within the Whirlpool India operations.

### 7.1 Product

Whirlpool comes up with a range of washing machines which satisfies the needs of Indian market. It offers semi-automatic machines which are cheaper and can be afforded by people who cannot buy high priced automatic washing machines.

### 7.2 Price

Each washing machine introduced in India offers benefits according to the price. Semi-automatic are the cheapest ones and front loader fully automatic machines are most expensive ones (Whirlpool, 2012b).

### 7.3 Promotion

Whirlpool has got an attractive website; it comes up with TV advertisements, print advertisements and press releases (Whirlpool, 2012b). Moreover, the company often advertises using Bollywood and sporting celebrities.

### 7.4 Place

Whirlpool India sells through different mechanisms, such as franchisers, retailers and sole traders. The locations of the retailers and franchisers are located online.

### 7.5 Process, Physical Evidence and People

Whirlpool's washing machines come with two years warranty with standard cardboard packaging (Whirlpool, 2012b). Moreover, the company provides washing machines to retailers in the country. Large network of retailers and distributors make Whirlpool differentiate from its competitors.

Whirlpool India recruitment is limited to head office and after sale support as most of the business is done through

## 8. Standardisation and Adaptation of the marketing mix

### 8.1 US to UK

In terms of product, Whirlpool's washing machine in the UK is very much same to the washing machines in the United States. In both countries, Whirlpool markets two types of washing machines; high efficiency front load washers and high efficiency top load washers (Whirlpool, 2012). The minimum price for the washing machine in the USA is \$US 749 and £299 in the UK (Whirlpool, 2012).

Recently, Whirlpool marketed the 6th sense product range in the UK which focuses on resource efficiency and product care; there are significant advertisements about this new technology (Whirlpool, 2012a).

The marketing mix between the two countries is overall similar. Nevertheless, these findings are not surprising. Indeed, they are both developed countries and the British culture has been largely influenced by the American culture. Whirlpool has made some product adaptations but their changes remain moderate compared to the Indian market.

### 8.2 US to India

Whirlpool has developed products and marketing strategies according to the local market and customers of India. Whirlpool offers semi-automatic machine in India, which is affordable for everyone, priced at Rs 10,000 (£70) (Whirlpool, 2012b). There are some other categories; front loader and top loader, which are very much similar to the washing machines in the United States.

Coming on the marketing strategy, Whirlpool continuously publishes press releases and other forms of advertisements whenever it releases new product, often using celebrities (Whirlpool, 2012b).

## 9. Conclusion

It is evident that culture can affect all aspects of a corporation's marketing mix. The research demonstrates Whirlpool used different degrees of adaptation in the UK and in India. Where their operations lie in a similar country to theirs i.e. USA to UK, higher level of standardization of all marketing activities were evident. On the contrary, the distance in cultural between India and the US, meant Whirlpool changed many aspects of their processes in order to successfully operate in the Indian market. It is the author's opinion that Whirlpool's success in these three markets lies on their understanding that sources such as language, religion, values, technology markets and attitudes played a significant role in the way customers demanded.

## 10. Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Table 2.1 Hofstede's five dimensions

illustration not visible in this excerpt

Source: A table formulated using the below references:

(Geert Hofstede, 2012a)

(Geert Hofstede, 2012b)

(Geert Hofstede, 2012c)

## Appendix B

### Table 3.1 Source of Culture in the USA, UK and India

illustration not visible in this excerpt

Source: A table formulated using the below references:

(BBC, 2012a)

(BBC, 2012b)

(BBC, 2012c)

(Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2012)

## Appendix C

illustration not visible in this excerpt

### Figure 6.1: The marketing mix of Whirlpool from the US to the UK market

Source: Model adapted from

(Appliance magazine, 2003),

(Avaya report (2010),

(Glagowsky, (2009),

(Harbor, B., 2012),

(The New York Times, 1991)

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