Opportunities vs. Challenges: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Internet Marketing

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The Internet together with many other factors fastens the process of the globalization. If the globalization is an inevitable process, then the cross-culturalization will also be inevitable. To be aware of and sensitive to the cultural differences is a major premise for the success in the world marketplace. This would apply to both traditional marketing and the new electronic based Internet marketing. This paper is an examination of "borderless" on line markets where national boundaries are no longer the only relevant criteria in making international business decisions. It will discuss and analyze several key cross-cultural issues in the Internet marketing imperative from an anthropological perspective and make it be aware of the impact of right for culture on marketing. By examining the social-cultural functions in the interactive marketing process the author tends to construct a cross-cultural approach to Internet marketing.

Introduction

It is undeniable that any types of advancement of technology have generated certain effects on marketing; they provide great potential benefits to the marketers while create series problems. The communication superhighway or the Internet, apart from reshaping the business environment, is providing opportunities and challenges to marketers. The Internet not only makes it easier to obtain quality secondary and primary marketing information as well as providing value to existing products or services; also it helps developing marketing channels and strategies. In fact, the Internet today is considered an increasingly important factor of the marketing mix. It was claimed that the advent of the Internet is the most exciting marketing innovation in history. Accordingly a new marketing area, the Internet Marketing, becomes a hot topic for professionals both in academics and in practices (Paajanen & Allington 1999).

The Internet together with many factors, such as the advanced transportations, fastens the process of the globalization.   However, it is notable that in recent years as the world becomes globalized many national states have claimed "a right to culture" in international businesses. It is further predicted that national culture will be one critical factor that affects economic development, demographic behaviour, and general business policies around the world. Such claimants could be important criteria for trade policy making, intellectual property rights protection, and the resource for

national benefits. The last summit of francophone nations in the 20th century called for a "cultural exception" in GATT/WTO rules governing trade of goods. The claims will not only affect public policy in these nations but international trade rules. It might initiate a worldwide cultural protectionism for trans-national trading while we are approaching the globalization economically. From a marketing point of view it is very important for marketers to realize that as the globalization the cultural imperative is upon us; markets today are world and yet cross-cultural markets. To be aware of and sensitive to the cultural differences is a major premise for the success in the world marketplace. Failure at implementation marketing strategy in the cross-cultural context can ignite a backfire that consumes existing brands and business relationships (Tian 2000a). This would apply to both traditional marketing and the new electronic based Internet marketing.

If the globalization is an inevitable process, then the cross-culturalization will also be inevitable. On the one hand, the world is becoming more homogeneous, and distinctions between national markets are not only fading but, for some products, will disappear altogether. This means that marketing is now a world-encompassing discipline. However, on the other hand, the differences among nations, regions, and ethnic groups in terms of cultures are far from distinguishing but become more obvious. This means that global/international marketing is a cross-cultural process which requires marketers must be well informed with cultural differences nationally, locally, and ethnically to be the winner in the global markets.

With no exceptions that the Internet marketing is bound to face the cross-cultural issues even though it is a relatively new concepts for the marketers. Previous research on the Internet marketing issues has focused on the techniques and the homogeneous features of the phenomenon, few studies have shed lights on the significance of cultural differences in the internet marketing (Abramson & Hollingshead, Paajanen & Allington 1998). On the other hand, there is a larger body of literature on cross-cultural issues but not many take the theme of Internet marketing into consideration (Giovannini & Rosansky 1990; Harris & Moran 1987). Jin et. al. (1998) realize the cultural differences between US and China in their discussion of using Internet and groupware technologies to bridge these differences, but they failed at answering how to overcome the problems generated from cultural differences to the business let alone dealing with cultural issues in transnational marketing through the Internet. This paper is an examination of "borderless" markets where national

boundaries are no longer the only relevant criteria in making international marketing, economic planning, and business decisions, consequently, understanding political and non-political borders is especially important for products and industries that are "culture bound" and those that require local adaptation. It probes the implications of a right to culture in marketing practice by discussing the impacts of cultural values on Internet marketing. It will discuss and analyze several key cross-cultural issues in the internet marketing imperative from an anthropological perspective and make it be aware of the impact of right for culture on marketing. It examines the possible strategies of cross-cultural marketing in today's world marketplace. By examining the social-cultural functions in the interactive marketing process the author tends to construct a framework termed as multi-linguistic to the Internet marketing cross-culturally.

Cross-cultural Factors in Internet Marketing: An Examination of Cultural Impacts

Over the last twenty years the world markets have seen a dramatic increase in international trade. The globalization of the marketing environment had made it increasingly important for global/international marketing mangers to understand how to do business in different cultural context. Effective distribution of products cross-culturally has become a critical factor for global/international success, and thus makes cultural issues a crucial factor that affects the success of Internet marketing. The characters of Internet marketing roots in Internet's function and features: conveying information without time and space constrains but limited because of technology and language. Due to technological and other problems English has dominated the Internet since its coming into being. One recent study by Vilaweb (a Canada based Company <http://vilaweb.com/> accessed by the authors in Feb. 2001), for example, indicated that 68.39% of all existing Web pages are English. The other languages in the top four are Japanese (5.85%), German (5.77%) and Chinese (3.87%). This means that the principal Internet marketing resources are not available to the non-English markets; in other words, it means that the scope of Internet marketing is mainly limited to the English speakers or English cultural environment.

It is obviously that non-English Internet web pages, although increased rapidly in recent years, are still minor sections in Internet culture. One important phenomenon is that although some

of these non-English sites are extremely popular they are mostly non-commercial sites and thus not marketing oriented, such as Chinese portals sina.com, china.com and east.com. Meanwhile, it is also noticeable that commerce sites begin to take the role in the Chinese Internet works, the most popular marketing oriented web sites such as sinobnet.com, oneasia.com and yesasia.com draw enormous amounts of traffic. Internet marketing as a new way of marketing has drawn the attention from the Chinese business world in both public and private sectors.

Like the traditional marketing the Internet marketing is also influenced and affected by cultural issues. One most studied aspect of business which culture has been indicated to influence is that of import and export business. Market and consumer behavior vary from one society/group to another is also one aspect of business on that culture has certain impacts. These two aspects reflect one common phenomenon in today's business world, which is termed as cross-cultural marketing and a theme yet need to be probed (Goldman 1992; Griffith & Ryans 1995; Schuster 1991; Tian 2000b).

The impacts of culture on Internet marketing is obvious, to study about these impacts we need to probe culture *per se* first. There are many definitions about culture; however, the most cited one by the marketing scholars is the one that Harris and Moran (1987) defined. According to them, culture gives people a sense of who they are, of belonging, of how they should behave, and of what they should be doing. It provides a learned, shared, and interrelated set of symbols, codes, and values that direct and justify human behavior. In marketing and consumer behavior research use of the concept has been minimal; it has been common for marketers and consumers to ignore the depth of the concept and its implications for the analysis of human behavior. However, its underlying impact on marketing is very observable (Douglas & Craig 1995; Griffith & Ryans 1995).

According to classical anthropological theory, culture is an underlying dimension of all societies. All human behavior, including market behavior, takes place within a cultural context (Harris & Moran 1987). The creation and sharing of cultural beliefs and values is an integral part of being human, and this is also true for the web world. Researchers indicate that culture can be characterized as a continuum between two extremes: tradition-based versus modern-based. This classification is further defined along with two interrelated dimensions: economic and cultural

boundedness. Economically, modern-based cultures are characterized as market-driven, competitive, industrialized economic systems. The United States, Canada, and other Westernized societies are categorized as modern-based.

In contrast, Africa, Asia, and Middle Eastern societies are typically categorized as tradition-based which is featured with centralized, cooperative, and agrarian systems. In terms of cultural boundedness, tradition-based cultures place a great deal of emphasis on their history, traditions, and established conventions. Whereas, modern-based cultures are not strongly tied to traditions within their society (Bandyopadhyay & Robicheaux 1993; Harris & Moran 1987). The cultural boundedness of tradition-based societies carries over into its market system. In Internet marketing the cultural boundedness is reflected not only in what languages being used but how the web sites are constructed and what information are delivered.

The understanding of cultural boundedness of business (i.e., the willingness of a culture to relinquish its traditional methods and adopt new ones) is not imperative for international marketing effectiveness but also for efficient use of Internet marketing according the cultural traditions and preferences of the target marketing. Similarly, Griffith and Ryans indicate that cultural overtones in marketing operations are derived, to some extent, from consumer preferences. They suggest, "The cultural characteristics of a target market will be responsive to certain culturally bound channel structures, such as local stores, or bazaars…" (1995: 62)

It might not be easy for marketers from Western countries to understand the market system in developing countries, let alone marketing on line to the developing countries. This uneasiness could also happen within modern-based cultural societies. For instance, Griffith (1998) notices that many U.S. marketers are hard pressed to understand the French government's actions restricting retail store size, especially after the success of efficient supermarkets. He suggests that the action by the French government to protect local mom-and-pop retailers, forgoing the economic efficiencies of distribution obtained by large-scale retail distribution systems, may be cultural in nature.

It is argued that governmental intervention (such as in the case of France) might be intended to protect the culture of its society maintained within the existing market system or structure (Griffith & Ryans 1995). However, in spite of some conflicts, there are societies in where traditional

market bazaars continue to survive while more efficient supermarket structure exists, such as in some areas of China. In these areas credit system is far from mature which makes Internet marketing very difficult if not impossible.

Cross-cultural Internet marketing demands marketers to be aware of and sensitive to the cultural differences; to respect the right to culture by the consumers in various cultures and marketplaces. If the marketers want to be the winners in the Internet marketing they must create the marketing mix that meets the consumer's values on a right to their culture. Take the Chinese culture as an example, Jin et. al. (1998) in their study list many differences between China and US from societal and institutional structures to significant values. For Western marketers to be successful it is important for them to respect the Chinese government's claim for *guoqin,* which means, "to consider the special situation or character of China". The western marketers should understand that the Chinese and the Chinese government deserved the right to claim the *guoqin* be respected (Yan 1994).

From the anthropological perspective, all market behaviors are culture-bound. Both consumer behavior and business practices are determinate to a large extent by the culture within which they take place (Hamilton 1987). Therefore, in order to match the internet marketing mix with consumer preferences, purchasing behavior, and product-use patterns in a potential market, marketers must have a thorough understanding of the cultural environment of that market, i.e., marketing cross-culturally, such as the international operations by Procter & Gamble in Canada. It is reported while companies in sectors such as automotive, telecommunications and financial services have embraced multicultural marketing in recent years, the packaged goods business has been relatively slow to jump on the bandwagon. Recently, however, Procter & Gamble announced that it was stepping up its commitment to this whole area, with the establishment of a 60-person team to co-ordinate efforts in the U.S. market. Increasingly today, they are looking to be a more balanced marketer - to combine traditional and non-traditional ways of reaching the consumer. It's about being more holistic, and looking at different avenues for reaching the consumer in a more relevant and meaningful way. And micro-ethnic marketing is one of many examples of that (Saunders 2000).

However, this is by no means to suggest that all marketers focus on cultural differences only to adjust Internet marketing program to make them accepted by the consumers in foreign markets. In contrast, it is suggested that successful marketers should also seek out cultural similarities, in order to identify opportunities to implement a standardized marketing mix. To be able to skillfully manipulate these similarities and differences in the worldwide marketplaces by adopting Internet marketing is one of the most important strategies for today's businesses.

Primus Communications in the U.S., for example, has been using in-language sites to target a variety of ethnic audiences, including Chinese, Japanese, Russian and Arabic-speaking. The marketing strategy makers at Primus realize that in the New Economy, there are no national boundaries. To succeed in this increasingly Internet-focused world, businesses must think and act globally. "At Primus, we are proud of our international presence and have created this section of our website to highlight our international marketing initiatives." Primus currently has full-service offices in Europe and Asia and more than 40 customers based outside of the United States. To win the marketing war in the global marketplace they have formed a strategic alliance with Lionbridge Technologies, Inc., a leading provider of multilingual Internet services to global technology businesses, which will enable Primus to develop cooperative marketing and customer referral programs, offering customers complete multilingual support solutions (cf. <http://www.primus.com/International/> accessed in Feb. 2001).

Similarities versus Differences: Internet Marketing Targets

The traditional international or multinational approach to marketing concentrates largely on geographic markets, developing a distinct marketing mix for each market. As indicated above, Internet marketing has broken through the geographic constrains. Traditional approaches scarify experience curve effects (This concept has two dimensions: increased efficiency due to economies of scale and increased effectiveness due to accumulated know-how.) that can be gained by using the same marketing mix in more than one market. Globalized Internet marketing, in contrast, concentrates on product market (groups of consumers with shared needs), emphasizing their similarities regardless of the geographic areas in which they located. However, it does not ignore differences among markets. These differences are taken into account when implementing the marketing program. For instance, marketer's web site should be translated into different languages for different national markets. And different distribution strategies should be developed for areas with different distribution structures.

As discussed above, marketing cross-culturally requires that marketers determine the cultural viability of markets. To determine the cultural viability of market means that the marketers should positively identify cultural factors that can be used to facilitate the marketing program in the targeted markets. These factors may or may not exist in the targeted markets; a successful marketer is able to make use of those already existed factors while create other non-existed factors. The classic anthropological theory suggests that while all human behaviors, including market behaviors, take place within a cultural context, human beings are able to influence and even change, through their behaviors, the cultural context within which their behaviors take place (Hall 1976; Hamilton 1987; Harris & Moran 1987).

Accordingly, not only does culture influence marketing; marketing also influence culture. Marketers can act as agents of changes within a culture. The interactions between marketing and culture can be examined from three perspectives, namely (1) culture's influence on patterns of behavior, (2) culture's influence on the marketing mix, and (3) the influence of marketing on culture. Let us in turn discuss these three perspectives below. First, culture defines acceptable purchasing and product-use behavior for both consumers and business. Brunso & Grunet (1998) based on their analysis about the data collected in Denmark, Great Britain, France, and Germany; find out that cross-cultural factors have certain impacts on people's shopping for food behavior. Let

us also take business gift as an example; in cultures where a business gift is expected but not presented, it is an insult of to the host. In countries where gifts generate an obligation, such as in Japan, it may be beneficial to engage in the practice. Yet, in other cultures, offering a business gift could be misinterpreted as inappropriate, thus offending the recipients (Arunthanes et. al. 1994).

From the anthropological perspective, although what Gesteland suggested is useful and practicable, it is warned of the danger of stereotyping individuals from other cultures. Anthropological theory argues that it is dangerous and shortsighted to project or own behavior patterns onto substantially different cultures (Giovannini & Rosansky 1990, Hall 1976, Hamilton 1987). More specifically, people in different cultures have different market values and behaviors. One of the authors has observed, through a long time process, not only individual Chinese immigrants' consuming and buying patterns but other social/economical behaviors in China are totally different from that in Canada (Tian 1999). In many cases the marketer may know these cultures are different but do not know how they differ; the only way to find out and to know what levers to use in moving buyers/consumers is through research.

To incorporate the Internet marketing more fully into the global marketing mix with the cultural awareness, the marketers must clearly define their objectives with the consideration of various cultural values for different people. Accordingly, marketers must understand the Internet's potential contribution to the process and identify the differences between Internet marketing and traditional marketing, and to search out how to employ the Internet more properly as a solution to global marketing needs. Compared with traditional marketing the target market for Internet marketing although should contain the same contents its scope will definitely differ.

Like it in the traditional marketing the first task in developing an Internet marketing program is to define the target market. Clearly, one of the essential characteristics of the target market for Internet marketing is that it consists of people who are connected to the Internet cross-culturally and internationally located. Due to its limitations at this time, such as uncertainty of online marketers' credibility, lack of efficient distribution channels, the Internet marketers are currently targeting the business to business marketing, tpage.com Inc. is one of such a successful Internet marketer (<http://www.tpage.com>, accessed by the authors in Feb. 2001). As for the consumer market,

because most employers prohibit or significantly limit personal use of company machines, especially concerning shopping and recreation, a primary concern is with those connected at home.

Generally speaking, online consumer demographics are probably similar to those of the innovator and/or early adopter in product diffusion theory. They tend to be younger, with above average education and higher income. They receive product information from each other or from narrowly focused publications. Abramson & Hollingshead (1998) classified Internet users as Surfers or Shoppers. According to them, surfers use the Internet for recreation; they visit web sites as explorers, moving from site to site and not returning unless there is entertainment motivation. Shoppers use the Internet for a directed purpose, to gather information about a topic of interest, to make purchase decisions, or to conduct a purchase transaction. Although online shopping is becoming more popular in the North America, we need to point it out that due to the consideration of security problems for online shopping, as well as less developed credit system, currently Internet shopping in the developing countries, such as in China, is mainly used for business-to-business marketing.

Internet Marketing Mix: A Cross-cultural Approach

The marketing concept stresses the importance of satisfying the consumer. The purpose of Internet marketing is not exceptional; the rules of successful Internet marketing have not yet been clearly spelt out. It is expected that something both marketers and consumers could relate to, and relied predominantly on visual impact for Internet marketing success. Although conducting commerce over the Internet is different, there are some guidelines to follow. Below we will discuss how traditional marketing considerations can be used to provide satisfaction to ultimate consumers with an emphasis on cross-cultural issues.

The marketing literature makes much of the four P's, product, price, promotion and place, as elements of the marketing mix. This framework can be applied to developing an Internet marketing strategy cross-culturally as well. The first logical consideration is of the product being offered. Consumer products may be classified as specialty goods, shopping goods, or convenience goods. Specialty goods are ones for which the consumer has a specific preference and will go to considerable effort to obtain. Specialty goods currently offer the greatest opportunity for sale on the Internet. The customer knows the specifications of the product sought, even to the point of brand

loyalty (Nickles and Wood, 2000). The Internet is also a good place to seek hard-to-find products, like out-of-print books or recordings by obscure artists.

Shopping goods are things for which buyers are willing to put considerable time and effort in the purchase process. The inherent lack of opportunity to examine or sample goods is a detriment to marketing some shopping goods on the Internet. On the other hand, the ability to easily custom tailor specifications, as in the case of buying a computer on-line, is a particular Internet advantage. Also, if the consumer is shopping for the best price, it is possible to rapidly survey a wide range of options.

Convenience goods are frequently purchased items which buyers are willing to exert only minimal effort to obtain (ibid). These presently offer the least opportunity for marketing on the Internet. In the case of impulse purchases of convenience goods, the delay between purchase decision and availability for consumption or service is a serious shortcoming. There is little likelihood that consumers will observe something while surfing the Internet that would remind them that they need to replenish some category of product.

It is important for the marketers to keep in mind that one particular product may be categorized shopping goods in one culture but might be classified a specialty good in another culture. For instance, bicycles as most popular transportation tools in China can be treated as shopping goods but they are definitely treated as specialty goods in the United States. Moreover, an additional class of products that falls outside the traditional classification might be goods that are of a sensitive or personal nature. The lack of personal contact offered by on-line purchasing allows consumers to maintain their privacy while receiving a high degree of customer service. Such products, like sex related products or service could be best supplied to consumers who need them through Internet shopping in the United States, Canada, and some Western European countries. However, these types of products are less popular in some Eastern countries and banned in the Middle-East Muslim cultural oriented markets.

Price is one of the most important elements in the marketing mix. It certainly provides the most obvious basis for comparison (ibid). Consumers shopping on the Internet can easily access prices from a great many possible suppliers. It must be remembered, however, that many Internet suppliers have dual operations, regular vs. virtual retail stores. These operators may or may not enjoy the benefit of low overhead, especially in most developing countries. Another price advantage enjoyed by Internet shoppers, at present, is the absence of sales tax for purchases delivered cross-

nation/state boundaries. But this benefit to the consumer may reduced while taking the delivering cost into account as the delivered price of goods purchased on the Internet may be increased due to handling and shipping charges. Moreover, this can be examined cross-culturally, in some cultures, like that of rural areas in Northwest China, consumers are not familiar with the sales tax, nor even they have the access to the Internet; the Internet marketing has nothing to do with them let alone to consider sales taxes.

One of the weaknesses of Internet shopping from the perspective of the consumer is the privacy and security. There is the risk that the supplier may not satisfactorily deliver the goods ordered. The merchandise may be inferior, incorrectly selected, may never arrive. Two possible actions that can reduce consumer concern are to have a clearly articulated and fair return policy and the point out consumer protection assurances made by credit card companies. If the goods are mis-represented the card company can issue a credit to relieve the consumer of the debt. A final consumer concern is with transaction security. Sometimes credit card information is improperly accessed and the consumer is charged for a large number of improper purchases. In fact, one of the authors has such a bad experience in which he had even never heard of an online business let alone to authorize the business to charge the money to his credit card, however he was charged a large amount by that business. Although the dispute was settled properly he had to spend extra time and energy to deal with the problem with the credit card issuer and the business for the abusing. These risks can be reduced by improved electronic transmission security and a broader protection policy from the credit card issuer in the developed countries but it will take a long time for the developing countries to do so, thus it limit the capacity and scope of Internet marketing.

Originally intended as a means of communication, the Internet offers an additional advertising medium to deliver promotional messages to consumers. The problem from the consumers' perspective is in finding the appropriate sellers' web sites. The situation is similar to trying to find a Chinese restaurant in a strange city. One approach would be to travel around the city, looking for a Chinese restaurant, hoping to find a good place to eat. That undirected strategy is similar to that of the Internet Surfer who goes from web page to web page, searching for something interesting.

A more productive strategy is that of the shopper, who checks some sort of index or directory to make a selection of the desired destination, then navigates to the desired location by use of a map.

Internet Shoppers refer to a search engine or classified directory to identify possible vendors. It is important for Internet marketing success that web sites be listed in as many search engines as possible with the proper translations. Also, hyper links in related material and banner ads on popular web sites can provide easy access to the vendor's location and build traffic of potential customers. Finally, ads in traditional media can be used to direct people to Internet sites. Considering the different cultural values marketers must avoid stimulating consumers by ethnocentrism advertising. For instance, in order to increase its product market share in China Nike, the giant sport shoes marketer, adopted a promotion strategy by appealing to national pride in China rather than using a "typical" American advertising. Showing their sensitivity to Chinese consumers as well as to government officials, Nike hired Chinese-speaking art directors and copywriters to customize commercials to Chinese culture instead of imposing American culture on the people of the PRC (Warner, 1997). This is the strategic point for marketers to remember: to be successful in the targeted marketplaces one must be awareness of and sensitivity to the local cultural values; it is important that marketers get the cooperative help from the local merchant world. However, in reality it is very difficult, if not impossible, to totally avoid such mistakes as Internet users can virtually surf any websites in the Internet. The best way is to indicate clearly that who are the expected target audience. One of the issues of web site design is the conflict between creativity and profit. The creative people want to produce expressive ads and web sites with artistic merit, the sales manager wants ads that sell. The purpose of advertising and web sites is to make the consumers' tasks easy; easy to find, easy to download the information, easy to understand, and easy to use. This makes it necessary and important to convert the websites into multiple languages with the modification cross-culturally.

The Internet is more than a communications medium. It also serves to facilitate the transaction. Consumers can make their selection of alternative vendors and alternative products, place an order, and arrange payment without moving from the computer. Ease of use is probably the strongest argument in favor of consumers' use of the Internet for shopping. As the level of technology advances in the short-term future, that ease of use will increase. Marketers also need to prepare to answer the questions from customers whose culture differs from what of marketers' own.

The primary advantage enjoyed by Internet shoppers is the convenience of the place they shop -- it is from home. The Internet has a worldwide reach and any location is accessible from the

shoppers' computers. There is the added convenience of 24-hour a day shopping and the avoidance of crowds, traffic and parking. And, as previously noted, a number of sites may be comparison shopped in rapid succession. About the only disadvantage is the shipping delay that exists between making a selection and receipt of the goods. Most of the items of conventional wisdom concerning retailing apply to achieving customer satisfaction on the Internet. The physical design of the site; routing, layout, atmospherics, appearance, or image, whether it is physical or virtual, must be keyed to customer convenience. The customer forms an impression about the "store" from first exposure. If the impression is not favorable, the customer will not shop and will not return. To convert the website to please consumers from different cultures is the key point to be successful although it may generate some extra cost, from a long term perspective this type of extra cost will definitely have some extra value added to the business and eventually make those who take the earlier steps in doing so to be the winner in Internet marketing cross-culturally.

Given the facts that there are lack of final solutions for online shopping security problems and that the majority of the world population are lack of access to the Internet, the limitations of Internet marketing are clear. In a near future although online business will be increased tremendously, many retailers may run dual operations, i.e., a physical store and a virtual store. It is desirable that these two operations are mutually reinforcing and present a congruent market offering cross-functionally as well as cross-culturally.

Summery and Conclusion

The world and nearly everything in the world is changing, the marketplaces are globalizing while differences are becoming more dynamic. On the one hand the highly competitive global village demands firms implement the Internet marketing cross-culturally to win the global competition. Although, it is impossible to be able to understand every culture there can be an evolution towards a *global mind.* On the other hand many national states have made claims for a right to cultures, this type of claims may bear various formats but aimed the same goal, it is to gain more national benefits through international exchanges.

Today firms want to be successful in the marketplaces the managers and marketers must be able to draw upon resources internationally and cross-culturally to create long term and sustainable

competitive advantages, no matter traditional marketing or Internet marketing.   Compared with the traditional marketing strategies, the Internet marketing need to pay more attention to the cultural differences given the facts that it has no time and distance constrains. In the developed countries consumers today are more educated and want more information prior to making a purchasing decision; they are increasingly to expect and thus demand 24 hours a day, 7 days a week sales and service. Because the Internet meets these two basic criteria of consumer needs, the worldwide market of Internet users is growing exponentially, faster than any other media. Consumers' use of the Internet for shopping is partly a function of benefits received.

However in most developing countries in where consumer cultures differ from that of in the developed countries, the benefits of Internet marketing are not as clear as that in the developed countries. Nevertheless, it is expected that more consumers are going to be using the Internet in the future for shopping. Although the Internet is a new marketing channel, most of the traditional principles will apply, including the marketing concept. Application of the marketing concept means that merchants must look at things from the perspective of the consumer cross-culturally to be successful.

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