UNIT 8: CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

UNIT STRUCTURE

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8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the concept of Culture
- understand the Characteristics of culture
- explain the concept of sub-culture
- describe the cross-cultural influences
- explain the concept of Values
- understand the cultural differences in non-verbal communications.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

Culture is a society's personality, unique in itself and differentiated from others; it is further divided into various sub-cultures. Culture is also trans-generational, and is passed on from one generation to another. A study

on culture requires an elaborate and detailed inquiry into the very character and personality of the society that we live in. The culture of a society also has a bearing on buying patterns and consumption behaviour.

8.3 STRUCTURE CULTURE

Culture may be defined as the "personality of a society". It is broad and all pervasive in nature, inclusive of language, customs and traditions, norms and laws, religion, art and music, etc. It also includes the interests of people, the work practices and orientations, as also their attitudes towards general and specific issues. Culture delineates precisely, the do's and dont's of a society, and specifies all that is acceptable and all that is not. It is reflective of values and beliefs that are widely accepted by members of a society. The members of a society subscribe to the various values, beliefs and norms, and this gives strength to a society's culture. This does not imply that cultures are truly rigid; in fact, they evolve and adapt to changing situations and times. The culture of a society also has a bearing on buying patterns and consumption behaviour.

In terms of consumer behaviour, Schiffman defines culture as "the sum total of learnedbeliefs, values, and customs that serve to direct the consumer behaviour of members of aparticular society". The kinds of products and services and/or brands that consumers' buy and use, are all based on their cultures and sub-cultures. For example, the food they eat and the kinds of clothes they buy and wear, are all impacted by their culture, their customs, traditions, norms and values. Culture is learned as part of social experience and passed on from one generation to another. Children acquire from their environment a set of beliefs, values, and customs that constitute culture (i.e., they are encultured). These are acquired through formal learning, informal learning, and technical learning. Advertising enhances formal learning by reinforcing desired modes of behaviour and expectations; it enhances informal learning by providing models for behaviour.

8.4 CULTURE

Culture and its impact on consumption behaviour can be better explained by understanding the nature and characteristics of culture:

- **Culture is natural and permeates naturally into the social system:** It inbreeds into themembers of a social system and is all-pervasive. It influences the manner in which a person behaves, as consciously or sub-consciously, we are all governed by culture. Not only do peopleuse their values and beliefs to govern their behaviour, but they also except that others' behaviourwould also be similar and consistent (as culture is shared). Culture unites the members of asocial system.In terms of consumer behaviour, the kinds of food we buy and eat or the clothes that wepurchase and wear are all governed by the socializationprocess. Similar is with respect toother purchases that we make. Culture encompasses the general and specific patterns ofconsumption behaviour.
- **Culture helps in satisfaction of needs:** In fact, it exists as it helps satisfy the needs of people.Beliefs, values, customs and tradition, help govern the social system, and specify the manner inwhich people in a social system should behave; they delineate the do's and don't's, and therebycreate boundaries of acceptable behaviour in the social system. However, such values, beliefs,customs and traditions continue to exist as long as they meet the needs of the people in thesociety. That is why culture evolves with passage of time. As the needs of the people evolve,beliefs, values, customs and tradition also undergo change so as to meet and match with newerneeds and wants.For example, in earlier times, people preferred eating their whole meals at home. In fact,eating out was considered unhealthy and undesirable. With a change in society, and theemergence of dual income households, people have begun eating out of home; the fast foodculture is in. This has given a boost to the fast food and restaurant industry. Thus, we see thatwhen a value system fails to satisfy the members of a social system, it is adapted, changedand/or modified to suit newer social patterns and trends.
- **Culture is not inborn; it is learnt as a result of the socialization process:** There occurs asocialization process right from one's childhood, a process that continues throughout life.Culture is imparted

by this socialization process. This learning of culture could be of two kinds; viz., enculturation and acculturation. The process of learning one's native culture is known as enculturation, while the process of learning a new or a foreign culture is known as acculturation. We are impacted by our family (family of orientation and family of procreation), as well as our friends throughout our life. People learn from family and friends about what are acceptable and what is not in terms of our values and beliefs. Cultural learning could take place in three forms, viz., formal learning, informal learning and technical learning.

- Formal learning: when a child is taught how to behave by family, viz., grandparents, parents and siblings; they tell him about the right's and wrong's in behavior.
- Informal learning: when the child learns by imitating the behavior of others, be it members inthe family, or friends, or celebrities, or characters.
- Technical learning: when the child is taught how to behave in a formal educational environmentby a teacher.

The kind ofproducts/services consumers buy are ultimately determined by culture as well. For example, incertain cultures, eating pork and beef is a taboo; thus, when McDonalds came to India, they hadto introduce the chicken burger, instead of the normal beef burger sold in the US. They couldnot disregard the vegetarian population of the country and so introduced the veg-tikki burger.Marketers should design the product and service offerings (including the4Ps), in line with the culture so as to be able to gain quicker acceptance. The colors, languageand symbols, should all be kept in mind. The marketer could use all the three forms of culturallearning through designing appropriate promotional messages and using an appropriatechannel.

- **Culture is shared:** It is accepted and imbibed by all the members of the social system. In fact, it ties together the people that form a social system. Social institutions (family), educational institutions (schools, colleges and universities), political institutions (law, public policy, leaders and government), and religious institutions (like places of worship,

artefacts, and religious leaders) etc., all help in transmitting this culture to the members of the society. The mass media -print and audio-visual, also has a role to play in the transmitting of culture.

Also, these days cultures and sub-cultures are shared by people within, and outside. Needless to say, the mass media has a big role to play. We get to see stories on families from Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi and Tamilian cultures; the dressing patterns, the favourite dishes, the customs and rituals etc. With the various national and regional channels that we have in India, we have begun to share sub-cultures too. An important role on spread of culture is also through advertisements. Today there is demand for dhokla and khakra (Gujarati food) in North India, or mishti doi and hilsa fish (Bengali food) in South India. This trend is also increasing because people are crossing borders of their states and moving elsewhere for jobs and assignments.

- **Culture is dynamic in nature, and evolves constantly with time:** It adapts itself to the changing environment. As said above, values, beliefs, customs and traditions continue to exist as long as they satisfy the needs and wants of the people. Once they cease to satisfy people's needs, they change. Thus, culture changes and adapts to the environment. Marketers need to continually assess the environment so as to identify changing need patterns, and change/modify/adapt existing products and services, and even come up with new ones. One such example, i.e. dual income households and the need for eating out, resulting in demand for fast food and restaurants. With changes in culture, we can also witness its impact on the buying roles. The marketers have to identify the initiators, influencers, deciders, buyers and users, and approach them accordingly, either personally or impersonally via media. Marketers who continually assess the environment can identify opportunities and exploit them to their advantage.
- **Cultures are similar and yet different:** All the cultures across the world will address certain common or similar aspects. For example, a few of the elements found in most of the societies could be calendar,

cooking, education, family, rituals, customs etc. However, in each society there could be variations in the nature and practice of these elements. An understanding of this will help the marketers in formulating various marketing strategies.

- **Culture is gratifying and continues for a long time:** The society rewards people whose behaviour are gratifying for its members. In India, people have a lot of faith in the preaching of various religious heads. These religious heads are able to communicate and speak about the customs, traditional values and beliefs to the public through religious discourses. Such people are given due importance and recognition for contribution to the welfare of the society. The respect and gratification for those who continue this practice goes down from generation to generation. This is also a part of our culture.
- **Culture is perspective:** It involves the understanding of the behaviour and pattern of an individual, so that they must have common understanding of the right and proper way to think and act on it.

8.5 ELEMENTS/ COMPONENTS OF CULTURE

Culture is reflected through the various components that it comprises, viz., values, language,myths, customs, rituals and laws. These are briefly explained as follows:

- **Values:** Values are the beliefs and ideals shared by the people of a society, for which theyhave great respect and regard. They could assume both positive (do's) and negative (dont's)connotations, and are indicative of appropriate thoughts, feelings and acts of behaviour. For example "Nescafe coffee" has been used in the sense of optimism among young in its new advertising campaign.
- **Language:** Man is a social animal and needs to communicate with others. Language is usedas a means to communicate with people in a social set up. It is the common languagethat bindstogether the people in a social structure. Marketers must know all the languages of his potential geographical segments , so that they can sell their products to

customers of different cultures having different languages.

- **Myths:** Myths are legendary folktales and stories that describe events and occurrences, andteach values to society. They are imaginary and fictitious, and comprise characters that aregods, heroes and common men, ultimately aimed at giving lessons to the people, with respectto the causes and effects, good and bad, right and wrong, etc. Myths describe the values thatmembers of a social structure should share.
- **Customs:** Customs are habitual practices that formulate the established way of doing thingsand reflect culturally accepted patterns of behaviour. They reflect practices that have permanent,continuance and are so long established that they have the force of law; in other words they areconventions. People in a social system follow such practices collectively, and the habitualactivity gets transmitted from one generation to another. For example, giving or taking gifts on certain occasions.
- **Rituals:** Rituals are prescribed processes and procedures for conduct of religious or socialrites. They are established rites, ceremonies and proceedings that are symbolic in nature.Rituals are collective in nature, comprising many patterns of behaviour that are interdependent toeach other. For example, Red roses on Valentine's Day, cards on birthdays etc.
- **Laws:** Laws are principles, rules and regulations that are formulated/ sanctioned by anauthority (ruler, government, constitution etc.), and supported/protected by judicial authority.

  Their basis can actually be found in the society's values, customs, and rituals. Laws areuniversally applicable across people in a society/ country. They are written collection of rules andregulations to be adhered to by the people, and non-adherence to which would lead to legalaction from the judiciary. For example, in Hindu Marriage Act a person can marry only one woman at a time but that is different in other acts based on their religion.

8.6 MEASUREMENT OF CULTURE

Culture can be measured through use of many techniques, some of which are discussed below. These techniques are used to study and assess culturalpatterns, changes and trends.

- **Projective Tests:** Projective tests can be traced to the psychoanalytic psychology, whichargue that human beings have conscious and unconscious attitudes, motivations andpersonalities that are hidden and unknown from conscious awareness. The projective testsattempt to measure underlying traits, fears, anxieties and attitudes, motivations andpersonalities. They help reveal people's orientations towards the cultural values, myths,customs, traditions and rituals.The participants are shown pictures, images, cartoons and characters, inkblots andincomplete sentences/paragraphs to understand, interpret and comprehend them. Theparticipants are asked to give as responses all that first comes into their minds. Gestures andbody language, tone of voice and other reactions are also noted. The assumption behind use ofsuch tests is that one tends to project and interpret to these ambiguous stimuli from ones' sub-consciousness.Such tests are used to study motivation and personality. The two commonlyused tests are the Rorschach Inkblot Test and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).
- **Attitude measurement tests and techniques:** Attitude measurement tests and techniquesare used to measure attitudes of people towards persons, objects, and situations. They reflectpeople's attitudes and orientations towards the cultural values, myths, customs, traditions andrituals.
- **Content analysis:** Content analysis focuses on the examination of verbal, written, nonverbaland pictorial compositions/communication. The content analysis helps reveal and explainthe content of messages and the varying interpretations. Assessment about the society, and itsculture as well as evolutionary socio-cultural changes can be gauged through the content ofverbal, written, non-verbal and pictorial compositions/communication.
- **Consumer fieldwork:** Fieldwork may be conducted on consumers, so as to observe theirbehaviour, and draw generalizations about the

values, myths, beliefs, customs, traditions andrituals. Such generalizations are drawn on observable in store shopping behavior. Verbal andnon-verbal body language are also observed and recorded. Sometimes, instead of beingpassive observers, the researchers may assume active roles and interact with the consumers(participants) as salespersons. Interviews and focus group sessions may also be used.

- **Value measurement instruments:** Researchers today, are increasingly making use of valuemeasurement instruments. These are scales that measure values by means of a questionnaire.Participants are asked to give their opinion on varied issues like peace, freedom andindependence, comfort and convenience, ambition and success etc. Through interpretation oftheir responses and the observation of behavior, researchers can infer the dominant orunderlying values of the society. Such values would influence general and specific consumptionpatterns and buying behavior. Commonly used value measurement instruments are theRokeach Value Survey, the List of Values (LOV), and the Values and Lifestyles-VALS.

8.7 SUB-CULTURE

While culture is defined as the "personality of a society", (inclusive of language, customs and traditions, norms and laws, religion, art and music, etc), it is not entirely homogenous in nature. Not all people within a social system share the same language, religion, customs and traditions. Every society is composed of smaller sub-units, homogenous within, and heterogeneous outside, all of which when put together make a complex society. Such sub-units or sub-groups are known as sub-cultures; people within sub-cultures possess distinctive sets of values, beliefs, customs and traditions etc. The members of a subculture possess such values and beliefs, as also customs and traditions that set them apart from people belonging to other sub-cultures. For example, while we are all Indians, and our culture is Indian (with a common national language, Hindi, and common festivals like Diwali), North Indians are different from South Indians. While

North Indians, celebrate Lohri, as a harvest festival in January, the South Indians celebrate Pongal as their harvest festival at the same time. In other words, people within smaller units share the same language, religion, customs and traditions; and, this would be different in smaller or larger magnitude to people in other sub-units. A single culture can be broken up into various consumer subcultures. A subculture can be defined as a culture that is not dominant in its society. As consumers from various subcultures, we are different to each other. We have varying values and beliefs, customs and traditions, etc. These get reflected in our perspectives and orientations that influence our purchase patterns and consumption behaviour. That is why a study of sub-culture becomes important for a marketer.

8.8 TYPES OF SUB-CULTURE

Based on the varying criteria, there can be different types of sub-cultures. From a marketing perspective, these sub-cultures could also be discussed as market segments, which need to be studied and assessed carefully before deciding on a product/service offering and formulating a marketing mix for a particular segment(s). Following are the various types of sub-cultures:

- **Nationality:** Sub-cultures could be based on nationality. While we are all Asians, we aredistinct with respect to culture, and are different in terms of language, customs and traditionsetc. Thus, we are classified as Indians, Burmese, Nepalese, and Pakistani etc.
- **Geographical location:** Within a country, we could be different across geography, climaticconditions, regions and terrains, and density of population. This is more so in cases where thecountry is large and borders spread across a huge population occupying a vast territory. Peopletend to develop regional affinity and identification, and this gets reflected in the food they eat,clothes they wear, interests they pursue, etc. They constitute as distinct sub-cultures and peopleacross such sub-cultures are different to each other. For example, we can be classified as NorthIndians and South Indians. As consumers, our needs

are different and would translate intovarious wants, for example, i) differences in food habits, and demand for poori-sabji, paratha,idli-vada etc.; or ii) differences in clothing, and demand for cottons, woollens and silk.

- **Religion:** People also exhibit differences when it comes to the religion that they belong to.Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsi etc. are all different from one another and havedifferent values and beliefs, customs and traditions etc. As consumers, they make purchasechoices and purchase decisions that are influenced by the dictates of their religious leaders,scriptures, and holy books. In fact, many products/ services are symbolically and ritualisticallyassociated with religion. For example, as per Islam, non-vegetarian food must be "Halal", andthis itself comprises a huge segment that marketers across national boundaries are catering to.
- **Race and caste:** Culture and its components also vary across race and caste. Jats, Jaats,Rajputs, Pathans and Yadavs are all different from one another. Such racial sub-cultures alsoimpact buying behaviour and consumption patterns.
- **Gender:** Because gender roles have an impact on acts of behaviour, gender constitutes animportant cultural sub-group. Males and females across all cultures are assigned different traitsand characteristics that make them masculine and feminine. They also perform different roles insociety and are two distinct sub-groups. It is true that gender roles have got blurred, and bothmen and women are performing such roles that they did not perform earlier. Product usage iscommon to both man and woman; for example, a man shown as using a LG washing machineor making Act II popcorn. Similarly products like shavers and razors exclusive to usage by men,are also being used by women (Gillette thus introduced a razor 'Venus' for women). All this has broughtabout a big socio-economic change and led to cultural transformation. The values espoused bythe generation of today is much different to the one espoused by the previous generation.The pace of change has been further accelerated with households no longer beingsingle income

households, but turned to dual-income households. The role of women is nolonger restricted to bearing children and managing the home. Women have started workingoutside, and are contributing to household income. This has impacted consumer needs andwants as also the priorities. The impact is evidenced on consumption behaviour, where the 'decider'role is no longer confined to a single person, i.e. the man of the family. Today buying decisionsare jointly taken by husband and wife.

- **Age:** Infants, kids, teenagers and adolescents, adults and the aged, may all be looked up asdistinct sub-groups. They have different values and beliefs, and all this impacts upon theirpriorities in life. Daily lifestyles, activities and interests, fashion and accessories, food and diet,etc. receive varying priorities across the various sub-groups. For example, an aged personwould prioritize health and go in for nutritious home food as opposed to young man who wouldprioritize work and go in for fast food. Today we see a rising trend amongst kids, adolescentsand the young towards junk food, and they constitute a lucrative segment for restaurantsproviding fast food.

8.9 CROSS-CULTURE

As a result of rapid advancement and all-round development, we find ourselves exposed to people from various cultures. There has been a great deal of opening up, and the society has been impacted on all fronts, be it social, economic, cultural or technological. The cultural fabric has undergone a transformation and we see changes in our values and beliefs, customs and traditions, etc. As consumers also, we have been exposed to other cultures. We have inculcated/adopted values and beliefs, perspectives and orientations that are much different to what existed earlier. The past decade particularly, has seen changes with respect to what we eat, what we wear and how we behave. The marketer needs to go in for a study of the socio-cultural fabric of the respective country where he intends to enter and serve. He needs to have an understanding of the consumption pattern and the consumption behaviour across people from different cultures. He

needs to assess the needs and wants as well as priorities and orientations of the people that he desires to serve.

Schiffman defines cross cultural consumer analysis or cross cultural marketing as "the effort to determine to what extent the consumers of two or more nations are similar or different." The marketer must understand how consumers in targeted countries are similar and dissimilar from each other. It is important for a marketer to have this understanding as it helps him assess the social and cultural similarities and dissimilarities so that he can design appropriate marketing programs and strategies for such segment(s).

8.10 CROSS CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Today with the nations in the world getting closer, international marketing or cross cultural marketing has become popular. Nevertheless, cultural diversity continues to exist between the various countries. So the marketer must understand the cultural variances and nuances and respond to them in a way that is appealing to the consumer of that country. The success stories of companies such as Hindustan Unilever Ltd, (HUL), Procter & gamble, Colgate-Palmolive, Kellogs, Coca-cola, IBM, Pizza Hut, Pizza Corner, McDonalds etc. Shows how they have indentified the cultural variations and suitably modified their marketing strategy to suit Indian consumer's requirement .They typically need to 'Think Global act Local.

- **Relevance of Cross Culture for Marketers:** A cross-cultural consumer analysis helps the marketer assess the market potential and customer reaction for his product and service offering. People's values and beliefs, customs and traditions, as also perspectives and orientations have a bearing on customer's needs, wants and priorities, finally translating into their desire for product and service offerings. These would vary across nations and cultures, and marketers must thus go through an acculturation process. As has been defined earlier, acculturation is defined as the process of learning a new or a foreign culture. It is essential that they learn about the culture of foreign countries,

what their needs and wants are, how they prioritize them, how they form attitudes and opinions, etc. Thus, before taking decisions with respect to entering foreign cultures, and the manner in which they should be served, a marketer should conduct a cross-cultural consumer analysis. Such an analysis provides a marketer with inputs as to how he should be modifying his 4Ps so as to elicit quick adoption and diffusion of his product and service offering. Every component of culture should be carefully studied and a marketing program designed accordingly.

- Product names or brands should not have double meanings; they should not be insensitive in any manner, and they should not hurt the sentiments of people in the country where the marketer is planning to enter.
- They should be easy to remember, recall and pronounce. Else marketers should make sure that they help consumers remember and pronounce such names. For example, when Perfetti Van Melle India launched their candy Alpenliebe, they designed an advertisement that had a jingle that helped consumers pronounce the name.
- They should be distinct and not duplicate names already existing in the foreign country.
- The marketer must make sure that the product or service offering appeals to the needs and wants of people from foreign cultures.
- Marketer must make sure that he keeps in mind local customs and traditions while formulating the strategy.
- While taking decisions on packaging and labelling as also design of advertisements, he must make sure of colours and symbols. Colours and symbols have varied meanings and connotations. The marketer should be careful that he should not be insensitive to people of foreign cultures.
- Marketers must make sure that they employ local (foreign) people for sales and marketing in foreign cultures. They should avoid sending their own people as the latter would take time to be acculturated. It would be better if local people are hired who would know the

language, customs, tradition etc, and with whom the customers would be more comfortable. They would also be in a position to make localized decisions. Through a cross-cultural analysis, a marketer would get inputs into how the foreign culture is different to his native culture. When customers across two or more countries are similar, the marketer can afford to have a similar marketing program; in case they are different, he would have to adapt his 4Ps and design a separate individualized marketing strategy for the foreign country. The relevance of a cross cultural analysis for a marketer is summarized as follows:

- A cross-cultural consumer analysis helps predict customer reaction to a product and service offering; the marketer would get to assess the market potential and assess the viability of a segment(s).The marketer would get inputs into how the foreign culture is different to his native culture. This would help him decide whether to have a marketing program similar to the one that is present in the native country or to have a program that is 'individualized' to the foreign country.
- It would help him to position his product/service offering appropriately, keeping in mind the values and beliefs, customs and traditions, attitudes, opinions and lifestyles.
- It provides a marketer with inputs as to how he should be modifying his 4Ps so as to elicit quick adoption and diffusion of his product and service offering. This is particularly relevant for products that would be new to a foreign culture, and where the consumers would have to be taught about their importance and usage. The marketer would have to educate the consumers about such a product/service offering (cognition), create a favourable opinion and positive feelings (affect), and convince adoption and purchase (behaviour).

8.11 VALUES

Milton J Rokeach has defined cultural values as belief that a general

state of existence is personally and socially worth striving for. Value systems are the relative importance which cultures place on the values. For example, Indian culture has for many generations valued family togetherness (joint family system) and inner harmony as a part of our value system. While in America or the Western culture more emphasis or value is placed on individual accomplishment.

Rokeach has considered cultural values as terminal values or goals to be attained or developed. He has also defined another category of values, instrumental values which are he means of achieving the desired goals.

Rokeach's classification of cultural values can be used for studying purchasing behaviour. It may be said that terminal values are the ultimate purchasing goals and instrumental values are consumption specific guideline o attain these goals. So in terms of consumer behaviour :

- Product attributes are the means of attaining goal
- Instrumental values are consumption specific values or vehicles for attaining goals
- Cultural specific terminal values are the ultimate purchasing goals.

To a certain extent cultural values will help marketer to plan the marketing strategy. Cultural values are more likely to influence broad purchasing patterns. For example, a better understanding of the motivation behind brand purchases can be worked out by having a look at the culturally derived purchasing values.

Therefore, values are beliefs, however, values differ from other beliefs because they must meet the following criteria:

- They are relatively few in number.
- They serve as a guide for culturally appropriate behaviour.
- They are enduring or difficult to change.
- They are not tied to specific objects or situations.
- They are widely accepted by the members of a society.

In a broad sense, both values and beliefs are mental images that affect a wide range of specific attitudes that, in turn, influence the way a person is likely to respond in a specific situation.

Value Measurement Survey Instruments

Anthropologists have traditionally observed behaviour and inferred dominant or underlying values. Recently there has been a gradual shift to directly measuring values by means of survey research. Value instruments ask people how they feel about such basic personal and social concepts as freedom, comfort, national security, and peace. A variety of popular value instruments have been used in research are:

- The Rokeach Value Survey
- List of Values (LOV)
- Values and Lifestyles(VALS)

- The **Rokeach Value Survey** is a self-administered value inventory, which is divided into two parts. Part one consists of 18 terminal value items, designed to measure the relative importance of end-states of existence (personal goals). Part two consists of 18 instrumental value items, designed to measure the basic approaches an individual might take to reach end-state values.
- The **LOV** is a related instrument. Its scale asks consumers to identify their two most important values from a nine-value list.
- The **VALS** consists of two concepts that are critical for understanding the target consumers-primary motivation (horizontal dimension in the framework) and resources (vertical dimension). These two aspects decide what can be expected of a consumer in a marketplace.

8.12 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS

Non-verbal communication is a type of communication that occurs without words.It is in the form of body language and environmental context involved in any communication. It is not what is said with words but how it is said and expressed. There are many types of non-verbal communications like eye contact, hand movements, facial expressions, touch, gestures, etc. Non-verbal communication is different from person to person and especially from one culture to another. Cultural background defines their non-verbal communication as many forms of non-verbal communications

like signs and signals are learned behaviour. As there are differences in meanings of non-verbal communication, miscommunication can occur when inter-cultural people communicate. People can offend others without meaning to due to their cultural differences in non-verbal communication. Facial expressions are mostly similar in most cultures as many of them like smile and cry are innate.According to researches, six expressions are universal, they are: happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, anger and surprise. But it might also be different like the extent to which people show these feelings, in some cultures people express openly and in some people do not.For instance, you are a European, you are travelling to Japan and you don't speak Japanese. You don't have a translator or a dictionary and you can only use non-verbal communication to communicate with people.You go to a restaurant and order food by pointing at something. Similarly, you pay money and leave. The people bow to you when you are leaving the place as a satisfied customer.But there might be other instances when it doesn't go so well because of non-verbal communication like people refusing to have eye contact or getting offended when you have eye contact with them.Nods might also mean different things causing problems like when the person nods to say "yes", other people might understand it as a "no". In Japan, when you nod, they can just take it as a signal that you are listening to them.

Some of the nonverbal communication differences in different cultures are:

- **Eye Contact:** Western cultures mostly consider eye contact to be a good gesture. It shows attentiveness, confidence and honesty. Other cultures such as Asian, Middle Eastern, Hispanic and Native American do not take it as a good expression. It is taken as a rude and offensive expression. Unlike in Western cultures taking it as respectful, other do not consider it that way. In Eastern cultures women should especially not have eye contact with men as it shows power or sexual interest. In some cultures, whereas, gazes are taken as a way of expression. Staring is taken as rude in most cultures.
- **Gestures:** Gestures such as thumbs up can be interpreted differently

in different cultures. It is taken as "Okay" sign in many cultures whereas is taken as a vulgarism in others like Latin American cultures and in Japan some even take it as money.Some cultures take snapping fingers to get the attention of a waiter as alright whereas some take it as disrespect and very offensive. Showing feet is taken as offensive in some Middle Eastern cultures. Some cultures take pointing fingers as insulting too. In Polynesia, people stick out their tongue to greet people which is taken as a sign of mockery in most of other cultures.

- **Touch:** Touches are taken as rudeness in most cultures. Shaking hands is considered to be acceptable in many. Similarly, acceptability of kissing, hugs, and many other touches are different in different cultures. People in Asia are more conservative in these types of non-verbal communication.Patting head or shoulder also has different meanings in different cultures. In some Asian cultures patting children's head is very bad signal as head is taken to be sacred. Middle Eastern countries take touch between people from opposite genders is taken as bad character. Where and how you are touched or touch changes the meaning of touch. So, you must be careful when you visit a new place.
- **Appearance:** Appearance is another form of non-verbal communication. People are judged from their appearance. Racial differences as well as differences in clothing tell so much about any individual.Grooming yourself to look good is taken as an important aspect of personality in most cultures. But, what is considered to be a good appearance is different again in different cultures. Modesty is also measured from appearance.
- **Body Movement and Posture:** People receive information or message from body movements. It shows how people feel or think about you. If a person does not face you while talking to you can mean that the person is nervous or shy.It might also mean that the person doesn't like to talk to you. Other body movements like coming to sit near or far can also show confidence, power or trying to control the environment.Postures like sitting straight or slouched also show the mental condition of the person. Hands in pocket also show disrespect in different cultures. For example, sitting with crossed legs is considered offensive in Ghana

and Turkey.

- **Facial Expressions:** Face shows feelings, attitudes and emotions. The degree of facial expressions is determined by cultures. People from United States show emotions more than their Asian counterparts.Facial expressions are shown to be similar all over the world, but people from different cultures do not show it in public. The meanings of these are commonly acknowledged everywhere. Too much expression is taken to be shallow in some places whereas in some it is taken as being weak.
- **Paralanguage:** How we talk also constitutes of what we communicate. For example, vocal tones, volume, rhythm, pitch, etc. speak more than what words express. Asian people control themselves from shouting as they are taught not to do so since their childhood.They are known as vocal qualifiers. Vocal characterizations like crying, whining, yelling, etc. change the meaning of the message. Giggling is taken as a bad gesture in some cultures. Many other emotions are shown by vocal differences while all of them are included in paralanguage.
- **Physical Space (Proxemics):** People from different cultures have different tolerance for physical distance between people. In Middle Eastern culture people like to go near to others to talk while in others people might get afraid if anybody does so.Even Europeans and Americans do not have that much acceptance on the breach of physical distance and less acceptances for it among Asians. People have specific personal space which they do not want intruded. In some cultures, even close physical contact between strangers is acceptable.

Keeping the above things in mind the marketer need to formulate various marketing strategies for different markets. These non-verbal cultural differences are not only applicable across national boundaries but also within the nation.



ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Culture is a society's personality, unique in itself and differentiated from others.(True or False)

2. A single culture can be broken up into various social classes. (True or False)
3. The process of learning one's native culture is known as_____, while the process of learning a new or a foreign culture is known as _____. (Fill up)
4. Values are the ---------- and ideals shared by the people of a society, for which theyhave great respect and regard.(Fill up)
5. The types of products or services are not determined by the culture of he consumer to which he belongs to. (True or False)



8.13 LET US SUM UP

- Culture is the sum total of learnedbeliefs, values, and customs that serve to direct the consumer behaviour of members of aparticular society.
- Culture and its impact on consumption behaviour can be better explained by understanding the nature and characteristics of culture like culture is learned, it is dynamic, passed from generation to generation, it is gratifying etc.
- Culture is reflected through the various components that it comprises viz., values, language,myths, customs, rituals and laws.
- Culture can be measured through use of many techniques, such as Projective Tests, Attitude Measurement Tests, Content Analysis etc. These techniques are used to study and assess cultural patterns, changes and trends.
- Not all people within a social system share the same language, religion, customs and traditions. Every society is composed of smaller sub-units, homogenous within, and heterogeneous outside, all of which when put together make a complex society. Such sub-units or sub-groups are known as sub-cultures; people within sub-cultures possess distinctive sets of values, beliefs, customs and traditions etc.
- Based on the varying criteria, there can be different types of sub-cultures. From a marketing perspective, these sub-cultures could also be discussed as market segments, which need to be studied and assessed

carefully before deciding on a product/service offering and formulating a marketing mix for a particular segment(s).

- Cross cultural consumer analysis or cross cultural marketing is the effort to determine to what extent the consumers of two or more nations are similar or different. The marketer must understand how consumers in targeted countries are similar and dissimilar from each other. It is important for a marketer to have this understanding as it helps him assess the social and cultural similarities and dissimilarities so that he can design appropriate marketing programs and strategies for such segment(s).
- Values are the beliefs and ideals shared by the people of a society, for which theyhave great respect and regard. They could assume both positive (do's) and negative (dont's)connotations, and are indicative of appropriate thoughts, feelings and acts of behaviour.
- There are many types of non-verbal communications like eye contact, hand movements, facial expressions, touch, gestures, etc. Non-verbal communication is different from person to person and especially from one culture to another. Cultural background defines their non-verbal communication as many forms of non-verbal communications like signs and signals are learned behaviour.



8.14 FURTHER READING

1) Schiffman, L.G. and Kanuk, L.L., Consumer Behavior, Eight Edition, 2004, Prentice Hall, India.
2) Loudon, D.L. and Bitta A.J. Della, Consumer Behavior, Fourth Edition, 2002, Tata McGraw-Hill, New Delhi.
3) Kotler P., and Keller K.L., Marketing Management, Thirteenth edition, 2009, Pearson.



8.15 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: True

Ans to Q No 2: False

Ans to Q No 3: Enculturation, Acculturation

Ans to Q No 4: Beliefs

Ans to Q No 5: False



8.16 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Define culture in the context of consumer behaviour. Discuss the characteristics of culture.

Q 2: What are the forms in which cultural learning take place?

Q 3: Explain the various components of culture.

Q 4: Discuss the instruments for measuring culture.

Q 5: What is sub-culture? Elaborate different types of sub-culture.

Q 6: What is Cross culture? Discuss the marketing implications of cross culture.

Q 7: What are values? How it is different from beliefs.

Q 8: Describe the cultural differences in non-verbal communication.

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