

4.1: Social and Cultural Environment Summary

Summary

Most people hear about culture and business and immediately think about protocol—a list of dos and don'ts by country. For example, don't show the sole of your foot in Saudi Arabia; know how to bow in Japan. While these practices are certainly useful to know, they are just the tip of the iceberg. We often underestimate how critical local culture, values, and customs can be in the business environment. We assume, usually incorrectly, that business is the same everywhere. Culture does matter, and more and more people are realizing its impact on their business interactions.

Culture, in the broadest sense, refers to how and why we think and function. It encompasses all sorts of things—how we eat, play, dress, work, think, interact, and communicate. Everything we do, in essence, has been shaped by the cultures in which we are raised. Similarly, a person in another country is also shaped by his or her cultural influences. These cultural influences impact how we think and communicate.

Culture, a society's "programming of the mind," has both a pervasive and changing influence on each national market environment. Global marketers must recognize the influence of culture and be prepared to either respond to it or change it. Human behavior is a function of a person's own unique personality and that person's interaction with the collective forces of the particular society and culture in which he or she has lived. In particular, attitudes, values, and beliefs can vary significantly from country to country.

Also, differences pertaining to religion, aesthetics, dietary customs, and language and communication can affect local reaction to brands or products as well as the ability of company personnel to function effectively in different cultures. A number of concepts and theoretical frameworks provide insights into these and other cultural issues.

Cultures can be classified as high- or low-context; communication and negotiation styles can differ from country to country. Hofstede's social value typology sheds light on national cultures in terms of power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-versus short-term orientation. By understanding the self-reference criterion, global marketers can overcome the unconscious tendency for perceptual blockage and distortion.

Source

The above note was adapted from the course note from the 'Global Marketing' course published online by Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) ('Social and Cultural Environments' is Copyright (c) by Dr. Inda Sukati and made available under a Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 license.), and under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License without attribution as requested by the work's original creator or licensor.

This page titled [4.1: Social and Cultural Environment Summary](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Babu John-Mariadoss](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- **3.1: Social and Cultural Environment Summary** by [Babu John-Mariadoss](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Original source: <https://opentext.wsu.edu/cpim/>.