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Cross Cultural Consumers and Their Influence on Tourism Industry for Sustainable Environment

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Abstract: As a result of Globalization, people started travelling around the world and have created huge impact on Tourism and Hospitality industry. Though people travel to various countries for various reasons, their taste and preferences are culture bound and their decision making and adaptation to the new environment vary from customer to customer. Indian economy is increasingly becoming cross-cultural. Many tourists are visiting India to explore and experience our rich culture and traditional value at the same time not willing to give up their own cultural practices. Dealing with diverse consumers is a challenging job since they carry different cultural practices and traditional values along with them to the countries they visit which have to be taken care in host country. Tourism services are intangible; consumers make their decisions based on the reviews and experiences of previous visitors. In today's digital world everything is accessible to everyone; unsatisfied consumers share their unpleasant experiences online about the product or services they received during their visit to a foreign country. Those reviews have a great impact on the service providing organization and ultimately reflect on the country's reputation. Therefore, the service providers have to have sound knowledge to satisfy each and every customer visiting their organization globally. Despite the growth of international tourism, there is not much researches have been conducted in promoting and fostering cross-cultural visitors. This paper throws light on the awareness about the cross-cultural customers and the practices adopted in tourism industry to satisfy them for a healthy inclusive environment.

Key words: Cross-culture, tourists, hospitality industry, Indian economy, sustainable environment.

I. Introduction

Culture consists of shared elements that provide the standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, communicating, and acting among those who share a language, a historical period, and a geographic location. Modern Tourism and Hospitality environment is experiencing an increasing internationalization and globalization for sustainable development. The huge development of the hospitality industry over the past decade has been extensively influenced by advanced technology, communication systems and transportation. People travel more around the world, and their countries are integrated into global markets. This leads the exposure to culturally different societies, social interactions, and cultural exchanges. Travelling and tourism is growing into a multicultural environment which obtains both similarities and differences in worker behavior across cultural borders. Cultural diversity has a significant influence on the hospitality business and cultural diversity is highly important in hospitality business due to global customer-related industry. The best practices for enhancing cultural diversity resulted in establishing a cultural diversity committee, a language bank or a cultural event. Markets are becoming more and more geographically integrated; therefore, there is a need to conduct research that would extend a single country's boundaries in order to examine changing consumption behaviour. Marketers and policy makers need to understand the role of consumption activities in order to position products in a way which would enable to influence consumption behaviour.

Hollensen (2007), states that culture is "the learned ways in which society understands, decides and communicates." This is similar to a definition proposed by Linton (1945) as cited by Usunier and Lee (2013:5), "culture is the configuration of learned behaviour and results of behaviour whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society".

According to Hollensen (2004), there are seven main elements that are usually associated with the concept of culture; language, social institutions, education, aesthetics, religion, technology and values and attitudes. Management, provides valuable examples on how cultures influence tourist behaviour and decision-making, helping managers to develop cross-cultural skills and deal with tourists from diverse cultural backgrounds. Tourism is a service industry where people from different nationalities meet.

Tourism is a service industry where people from different nationalities meet. In the present international marketplace it is imperative that those in the industry understand the influence of national cultures on their consumers in order to compete successfully for a market share. The travel and tourism industry is placed among

the largest industries in the world. However, the degrading effects of tourism have become a big concern and need to be addressed quickly. With this in mind, the concept of sustainable tourism has emerged with the aim of reducing the negative effects of tourism activities, which has become almost universally accepted as a desirable and politically appropriate approach to tourism development

The present study focuses on the following objectives:

1. To study the need to develop and foster cross Cultural relationship among nations for Sustainable environment.
2. To understand the Cross-cultural visitor's expectation and their perceived hospitality services from the host country.
3. To suggest appropriate strategies to the hospitality service providers about the needs and expectations of the cross-cultural customer visitors as well as promoting home country's hospitality industry.

Scope of the Study:

The government of India has already established the Ministry of Tourism and Culture to boost cultural tourism in India thereby motivating service providers in hospitality industry to nurture and care for cross-cultural customers. The results of the present study can be used by researchers and the Service providers to promote Cross-cultural tourism in India as part of globalization.

Nature of the Study:

The present study is of descriptive in Nature. The contents were carefully gathered after reviewing various articles and journals related to Cross-cultural tourism, sustainable development and presented the authors understanding genuinely.

II. Review of Literature

The purpose of sustainable tourism is to make a balance between protecting the environment, maintaining cultural integrity, establishing social justice and promoting economic benefits, meeting the needs of the host population in terms of improved living standards both in the short and long term (Liu et al., 2013). In community tourism, sustainable development is applied to improve the residents' quality of life by optimising local economic benefits, protecting the natural and built environment and providing a high-quality experience for visitors (Bramwell& Lane, 1993 Bramwell, B., &Lane, B. (1993). Recent years have seen increased interest in the influence of culture on consumer behavior as well as increased research. In this article we review studies of the influence of culture that are relevant to international marketing. We discuss the various areas of research following the components of human behavior as structured in our Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior Framework which was inspired by a conceptual model by Manrai and Manrai (1996). Indeed, for a brand to be successful in the market, companies should ensure that their brand positioning strategy adequately responds to the core values and needs of consumers. Companies which act so on a global basis will find it easier to attain competitive advantage over those that do not (Hofstede, Steenkamp and Wedel, 1999).Methodology issuesin cross-cultural research have been the subjects of research for many scholars across several disciplines over the past years (Samiee and Jeoung, 1994; Parameswaran and Yaprak, 1987; Davis, Douglas andSilk, 1981; Douglas and Craig, 1983; Sekaran, 1983; Cavusgil and Das, 1997; Mullen, 1995).

Therefore, marketers need to develop a deeper understanding of localcultures and their influence upon consumers' brand choice behaviour and purchasing decisions (Shaw and Clarke, 1998). Many early anthropological studies considered consumption of goods as a 'loss' of culture induced through the coming of the market and mass consumption in the developed world (ibid, 1998). Douglas and Isherwoods (1987) argued that consumption is structured around the production of class differences, with social relations forming the basis by which the notion of 'taste' is constructed. Bourdieu (1984) elaborated the idea, describing how people use consumer goods to preserve their position in social hierarchy. Miller (1995, p. 269) states that as a result culture "will no longer be regarded as an attribute to be lost or gained, but rather as a process or struggle by which all people of the world attempt to make sense of the world and make claims to social and material forms and institutions integral to the process by which we make ourselves". The more recent view of consumption in anthropology proposes that cultures are dynamic and their change is a result of items borrowed from other cultures. Definitely items are not accepted by other cultures in their original form, instead they are assimilated in order to incorporate them into new culture (Shaw and Clarke, 1998).

According to Hollensen (2004), there are seven main elements that are usually associated with the concept of culture; language, social institutions, education, aesthetics, religion, technology and values and attitudes. One of the most important elements of culture that is evident in most of the definitions is values and attitudes. This element helps determine what a person thinks is right, what is important and what is desirable (Hollensen, 2014). "A value is a centrally held, enduring belief that one end-states of existence is preferred to an opposing end of existence" (Rokeach, 1973).

According to Hofstede (2010), the way people in different countries perceive and interpret their world varies along five dimensions; power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism- collectivism, masculinity-

femininity and long-term/short-term orientation. These cultural dimensions are summarized by Neelankavil & Rai (2014)

Subsequently, companies have to evaluate cultural changes before entering new markets with new products and preparing positioning strategies. However, the specific effects of the link between consumption and culture on individual product choices are not made clear. Therefore, it has been referred to the relationship between society and material culture (Miller, 1987), as well as contemporary social theory, recently focusing on the role of consumption in the construction of the social world (Campbell, 1999, in Shaw and Clarke, 1998). Cultural variability often leads to the development of differences in consumer behaviour within and across national borders and provides important explanations for variances in values and consumer behaviour.

According to Bramwell & Lane, the two greatest founders of these concepts in the tourism industry, sustainable tourism emerged in part as a negative and a reactive concept in response to the many tourism issues, such as environmental damage and serious impacts on society and traditional cultures (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Bramwell, B., & Lane, B. 1993). Gradually, tourism development has been seen as a solution capable of creating positive changes through the ideas of sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism has played an important role in identifying ways to secure positive benefits

Over the last two decades, the concept of sustainable tourism development has become almost universally accepted as a desirable and politically appropriate approach to tourism development (Sharpley, 2003). The tourism industry should be encouraged to embrace 'clean green' tourism, which means that firms should do their best to decrease the environmental impacts of their operations. If a destination is to achieve sustainable tourism development then the actions of its constituent firms must be consistent with and support this objective.

Kandari and Ashish Chandra (2004) says that in cultural tourism both demand and supply must be taken into account. Thus cultural tourism encompasses all the cultural activities undertaken by the visitors and the supply of products for the cultural visitors during their visit. Cultural tourism can be evaluated by combining information on tourism activities undertaken during the trips, consumption of tourism products and the cultural destinations. The variables to be taken into account are the number of establishments and local units, the number of festivals, parks, exhibitions and, maximal reception capacity, the number of arrivals of visitor, number of ticket issued, entrance fees. The economic variable is the investment value and promotion evaluations.

Deivamani *et al* (2003) in this study discuss the growth of the tourism industry, analyse the growth in tourism revenue receipts and expenditure and portray the pattern of tourism in Tamil Nadu. A cross section analysis of tourist arrivals in Tamil Nadu has been carried out. The study says tourism flourishes only where the great majority of people enjoy some prosperity and security.

Kim *et al* (2002) state that the products and brands consumers buy and the benefits they desire from their purchases are all culturally biased. There are several ways in which the various components of culture influence consumer perceptions, attitudes and the understanding of a given product or communication. All affecting the way a consumer behaves in the buying process (Doole & Lowe, 2012).

Many western buying behaviour models assume that buying decisions are focused on an individual's decision-making process but in many Asian or Arabian cultures a family may be a complex structure and an individual would have to take into account all members of the family when making major purchase decisions making the decision-making more collectivistic (Doole and Lowe, 2012).

Jeannet and Hennessey (2006) as cited by Doole and Lowe (2012) believe that there are three major processes through which culture influences consumer behaviour; cultural forces such as religion, family and history, cultural message such as symbols, morals and knowledge and consumer decision process which includes elements such as prioritizing wants and decision making. This is supported by Usunier and Lee (2013) who state that cultural values and behaviours have an impact on consumer attitudes, decision making and buying behaviour.

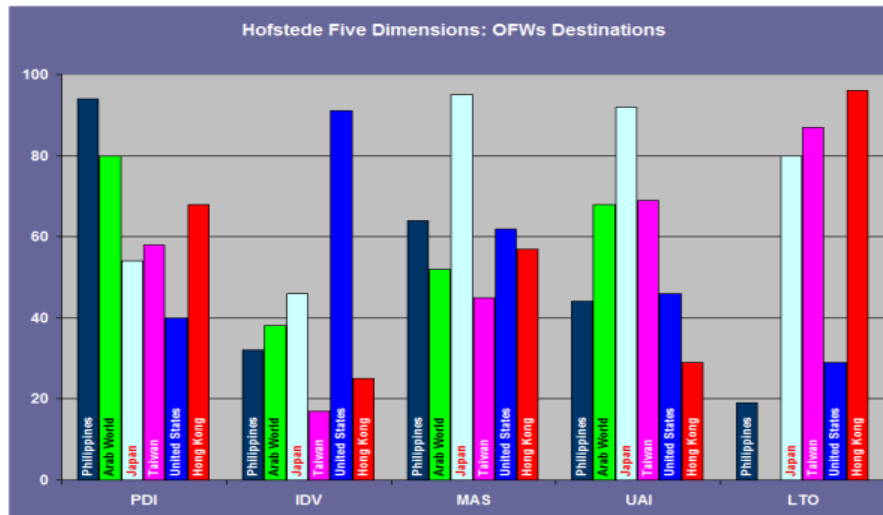
III. Hofstede's Cross Cultural Dimensions

According to Geert Hofstede, culture is the mind's collective programming that differentiates between one category of people and members of one group from another. The term 'category' might imply nations, religions, ethnicities, regions across or within nations, genders, organizations, or occupations. Hofstede's work serves as the base for other researches in cross-cultural psychology, inviting a number of researchers to study different aspects of international business and communication. These dimensions founded by Hofstede illustrate the deeply embedded values of diverse cultures. These values impact not only how people with different cultural backgrounds behave, but also the manner in which they will potentially behave when placed in a work-associated context.

Six Cultural dimensions of Hofstede:

1. Power Distance: This dimension explains the extent to which members who are less powerful in society accept and expect the distribution of power takes place unequally.
2. Uncertainty Avoidance: It is a dimension that describes the extent to which people in society are not at ease with ambiguity and uncertainty.

3. Individualism vs. Collectivism: The focus of this dimension is on the question regarding whether people have a preference for being left alone to look after themselves or want to remain in a closely knitted network.
4. Masculinity vs. Femininity: Masculinity implies a society's preference for assertiveness, heroism, achievement and material reward for attaining success. On the contrary, femininity represents a preference for modesty, cooperation, quality of life and caring for the weak.
5. Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation: Long-term orientation describes the inclination of a society toward searching for virtue. Short-term orientation pertains to those societies inclined toward the establishment of the absolute truth.
6. Indulgence vs. Restraint: This revolves around the degree to which societies can exercise control over their impulses and desires (Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Theory 2010).
- 7.



Source: Geert Hofstede QFWs Destinations (2010)

IV. Need for Diversity Training for Employees in Service Industry

Cross-cultural training is not only useful for employees from different cultures and ethnicities to work together but it is also necessary for employees to learn how to handle certain situations that are raised by customers from diverse cultures, religions, and ethnicities. Globalization has greatly affected the tourism industry by motivating people from newly developed countries now travel in large numbers. According to U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker, "International visitors spent a record-breaking \$180.7 billion on U.S. tourism-related goods and services in 2013," this represents an increase of 9 percent compared to 2012. As such, diversity has become an increasingly strategic component of the tourism and hospitality industries.

The need for diversity training is serious and urgent, because diverse customers have different cultures and traditions that have to be dealt with. Otherwise, they will be unsatisfied customers. In today's age of digital devices, unsatisfied customers can share their bad experiences with others via many different tools. When a consumer is making a purchase decision for an intangible product or service, such as those offered in the hospitality and tourism industry, he often will use interpersonal influence and word-of-mouth. As such, an unsatisfied consumer who is sharing his negative experiences with neighbors or the online community can have a significant impact on a company's reputation. His opinions can negatively influence and affect the company's brand. This bad reputation can affect the employees' work environment, leading to disengagement.

Employees in the tourism and hospitality industry are already subject to high turnover even as new service industries open every day around the world. This means employees won't hesitate to quit their job if they find a better place to work. This is why it is important to focus on their training, so they can learn how to handle the gap between different cultures that coexist in this type of workplace. Ultimately, cross-cultural training is not only useful for employees from different cultures and ethnicities to work together but it is also necessary for employees to learn how to handle certain situations that are raised by customers from diverse cultures, religions, and ethnicities.

The need for diversity training is important, because diverse customers have different cultures and traditions that have to be dealt with. In today's age of digital devices, unsatisfied customers will share their unpleasant experiences with others through online reviews, social media pages etc., When a consumer is making a purchase decision for an intangible product or service, will explore various sources to get opinion about their purchase. Unsatisfied consumers negative reviews will definitely ruin that particular service providers reputation, obviously affect the company's brand image. Employees in the tourism and hospitality industry were subject to

high turnover even as new service organizations established every day around the world. This means employees have huge options to quit and choose the organization for work. Hence, it is very important to focus on employees training to serve cross cultural customers, so that they have better exposure to learn how to handle the gap between different cultures that coexist in the Hospitality Industry. Cross-cultural training is not only useful for employees from different cultures and ethnicities to work together but it is also important for employees to learn how to handle certain situations that are raised by customers from diverse cultures, religions, and ethnicities.

V. International Comparison of Culture on the Basis of Hofstede's Model

With respect to national scores on a scale of 1 to 120 (1 representing the lowest and 120 representing the highest), the following international comparison has been made between cultures:

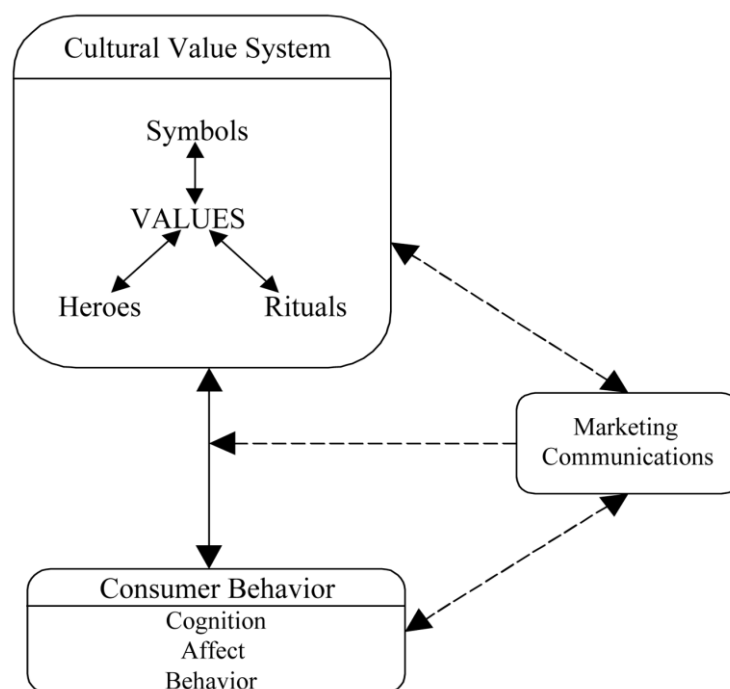
- Arab, African, Asian and Latin countries have a higher score with regards to power distance index while Germanic and Anglo countries possess a lower score. For instance, Guatemala has a score of 95 while Israel scores 13 with a very low power distance, whereas the United States stands somewhere in between with a score of 40.
- As far as the individualism index is concerned, a substantial gap exists between Eastern and less developed countries on one hand and Western and developed countries on the other. While Europe and North America are highly individualistic, Latin America, Africa, and Asia score very low on the individualism index with strong collectivist values.
- Highest uncertainty avoidance scores are possessed by Latin American countries, Japan as well as Eastern and Southern Europe. The score is lower for Chinese, Nordic, and Anglo culture countries. For instance, Germany has a higher uncertainty avoidance index with a score of 65, compared to Sweden, which scores only 29.
- Nordic countries exhibit low masculinity, with Sweden and Norway scoring 5 and 8 respectively. Again, Anglo countries, Japan, and European countries such as Switzerland, Austria and Hungary have high masculinity scores.
- Long-term orientation is high in East Asia, moderate in Western as well as Eastern Europe and low in Latin America and Africa.
- Nordic Europe, Anglo countries, certain regions of Africa and Latin America have high indulgence scores, while Eastern Europe and East Asia exhibit more restraint.

Aspects to be included in the Employee Training:

- Importance of convincing employees of the necessity to attend these courses.
- Sharing the result of the tourist rates and teaching employees the behaviors to adopt when they deal with tourists from a country with a different culture.
- Emphasizing that what is acceptable to one customer might not be acceptable to another customer from a different culture. This is important because it affects the company's reputation.
- Understanding that behavior is not the only thing employees have to modify. They might have to set up new rules to be sure tourists won't have issues while they're enjoying a company's hospitality. For example, for some people, it is important to take off your shoes before going inside the room. Employees have to make sure this situation won't lead to any trouble (i.e., shoes being stolen), which can be avoided just by being more attentive, and provide practical solutions such as warning the customer about the risks or finding a safe place to leave these shoes. For a restaurant, a new rule might be noting in writing what foods include meat, pork, beef, and so on, so customers with special dietary needs or allergies can be aware.

VI. Interaction of Culture and Consumer Behaviour

An individual's behavior is a result of that individual's cultural value system for a particular context. Individuals' cultural value systems are developed over time as they are socialized into a particular group. Societal culture as well as regional subculture and family values influence the formation of an individual's cultural value system. Culture affects consumer behavior, which itself may reinforce the manifestations of culture (Peter and Olson, 1998). An individual's consumption behavior may be viewed and imitated or rejected by others. It can then become the group's norm of behavior and be identified as part of the culture of a given population. Marketers' actions serve as a vehicle to transfer meanings or values from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods (McCracken, 1986, 1988), so marketing communications are represented in the model as a moderator of the effect of culture on consumer behavior. Emic researchers view culture as inseparable from the individual, as an inherent quality (Geertz, 1973). Culture influences behavior through its manifestations: values, heroes, rituals, and symbols (Hofstede, 1997). These are the forms in which culturally-determined knowledge is stored and expressed. Thus, each cultural group possesses different cultural manifestations.



Source: (Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Theory 2010)

VII. CONCLUSION:

The present study shows that Cross-Cultural practices have considerable role in promoting International Tourism for sustainable development. Hofstede's five dimensions of cross cultural customer behavior explain clearly about various dimensions of cross cultural practices globally. Visitors travel to different countries for various reasons, wish to have a pleasant stay in the host country by experiencing the unique tradition and cultural values of the host country, without losing their own traditional practices. Though tradition and culture varies from nation to nation, they exhibit similar traits and tendencies; hence the service providers in the Hospitality Industry should try to bridge between the host country's cultural practices as well as the visiting consumer's traditional values. Cross-cultural Practices develop mutual trust and understanding between countries resulting in the expansion of tourism industry beyond national boundaries. Every visitor is unique in their own way, the Hospitality service providers should try to understand their expectation and customize their services to satisfy their international consumers with global vision. Satisfied Cross-Cultural customers might act as brand ambassador for the country they visit. Though Visitors differ from language, tradition and cultural practices, among the cross-cultural visitors information search and also has been shown to influence travel pattern once the purchase decision is made. Thus Cross-cultural practices like standardization, tailoring and customization of their products to meet out individual visitors needs by the hospitality service providers for healthy globalization. Cross-cultural diversity will continue to grow in future as the global market is becoming more diverse and cultures infuse across borders and barriers for sustainable global environment.

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