



## The Cultural Impact on International Marketing Strategy, With a Special Emphasis of Bangladesh Perspective

Rashed Al Karim<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to examine on the one hand, the importance of the effect of cultural negotiating in an international marketing strategy. This side covers cultural elements such as language, religion, social factors, and how these impact on an international marketing strategy. On the other hand it covers on (Bangladesh side), how culture influences of marketing strategy, what is the main cultural business organization of Bangladesh, how they are doing their business following the cultural strategy and also Bangladesh business environment. The main purpose of this research paper is how culture impacts on an international marketing strategy. In addition, the study also provided insights into the process, as well as direction for progression of the research stream dealing with the behavioural aspect of the international marketing of any organization. The methodology demonstrates that a systematic approach was used in planning the investigation. Various key cultural factors are considered in international business strategy negotiation, with example and suggestions as how to these can be used to achieve success. The findings and analysis chapter presents the qualitative results of the research as outlined in the methodology. The conclusion presents a summary of the work and the conclusions drawn from it. It outlines the strengths and limitations of the study, together with suggested areas for further research.*

**Keywords:** International marketing strategy, International business environment, Culture, Cultural elements, International vendors.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

International marketing concerned with marketing across national boundaries. International marketing is also of concern to organisations of all types and sizes (Brassington & Pettitt, 2006). It is complex, not only because it potentially involves greater administrative and operational marketing effort, but also because it involves an understanding of marketing environments that might be very different from the domestic market. Hence the word ‘environment’ consists of a

---

<sup>1</sup>RASHED AL KARIM, Assistant Professor, School of Business; East Delta University, Bangladesh.

wide variety of factors and influences, such as cultural, technological, economic and competitive and political and legal influences.

As the global business emerges, international marketers tend to enter new market, new culture, new people which eventually brings new opportunities and challenges. According to Wolf (2000), the business environment has evolved in response to the continued globalization of world markets as there appears to be an increasing speed, frequency and magnitude of competitors entering a broader and more diverse set of markets. In this situation, Steenkamp *et al.* (1999) mentioned that firms are ever more dependent on new products to generate revenues and market share as they search for a competitive advantage and a profitable return. Moreover, firms must enter a broader and more diverse set of markets in order to maintain momentum and relative position. In addition, the success of a new product introduction in a foreign market is dependent on a series of factors, where some are controllable and some are uncontrollable. Hence, as an intrinsic variable specific to the market, culture remains a significant factor in international marketing research (Dunning, 1997).

Culture is a distinctive element of international marketing. Culture means different things to different people. It does not only denote civilization, but also customs, tradition and codes. Cultures are just different, not right or wrong, better or worse as cited by Cateora & Graham (2002). Besides, from the tremendous exposure to globalization, it has been found that consumers from different cultures have different attitudes, perceptions, tastes, preferences and values, and remain reluctant to purchase foreign products (Suh & Kwon, 2002). Moreover, along with Kotler (1986), consumer behaviour remains diverse, consumers are not always rational and they are not willing to change their consumption habits in favour of cheaper products that are increasingly available on the world market. Therefore, culture and its impact on international marketing practice is a major theme in various strands of research in marketing (e.g. buying behaviour, branding, segmentation, communications, and product adoption). It has been explored in both international and intra-national marketing and in both business and consumer marketing (Blackwell *et al.* 2006).

More precisely, international marketer needs to pay attention to cultural factors; issues of cultural difference because these could be affect not only the way in which a product is marketed to customers, but also the way in which business negotiations are handled. Cultural differences might be seen in terms of language, social structures and mores (including class structure, gender roles and the effect of religion) and prevalent values and attitudes (Brassington & Pettitt, 2006). Besides, as Ricks (1993) pointed out that a failure to take cultural differences between countries into account has been behind many international business failures.

Thus, this study will try to explore how international marketing is affected by cultural variety. This study will also discuss the Bangladeshi culture and the application of international marketing scenario there.

## **2. RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:**

According to Triandis (1989), Markus & Kitayama (1991) and Yaveroglu & Donthu (2002) cultural differences still remains an important aspect of international marketing research because cultural norms and beliefs are powerful forces shaping people's perceptions, dispositions and behaviours. In addition, Hewett *et al.* (2006) found that national culture did influence buyer-seller relationship strength in industrial marketing contexts, and corporate culture, a by-product of national culture, moderated the link between relationship strength and repurchase intentions. In similar fashion, Briley & Aaker (2006) also showed that culture-based differences did matter in consumer persuasion and information processing. In order to understand the impact of these variables on consumers' product choice decisions or decision making processes, cultural differences have been considered from a range of different perspectives, including their impact on attitudes and persuasion, as well as their role in the diffusion of new products (Aaker, 2000; Takada & Jain, 1991; Steenkamp *et al.*, 1999).

Therefore, the main aim of this piece of research is to describe the international Marketing strategy, to explain the elements of culture which have impact on international market and also to scrutinize how Bangladeshi market is affected by culture. In particular this study seeks:

- i. To determine the main elements of culture in International marketing.
- ii. To examine how a culture influences on planning international marketing strategies.
- iii. To evaluate how the Bangladeshi market is affected by the culture and its elements.

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

International marketing takes place all around us every day. It has a major effect on our lives, and is crucial to the survival and success of organizations. International marketing is necessary in this globalized world because, from a national standpoint, economic isolationism has become impossible. Failure to participate in the global marketplace assures a nation of declining economic influence and its citizens of a decrease in the standard of living. According to Czinkota & Ronkainen (1993, p.6), "*International marketing is concerned with planning and conducting transactions across national borders to satisfy the objectives of individuals and organizations*". Moreover, consistent with Bradly

(1995, p.5), “*International marketing means recognize needs and wants for customers, provided that products and services to give the firm a degree of difference selling advantage, communicate information about these products and services and distribute and exchange them worldwide through one or a combination of foreign market entrance modes*”. Therefore, International marketing is the tool used to obtain the goal of improvement of one’s present positions. In the international marketing field, one can observe most closely, the role of marketing as a key agent of societal change and as a key instrument for the development of societal responsive business strategy. International marketing enables consumers all over the world to find greater varieties of products at lower prices and to improve their life-styles and comfort (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 1993). Besides, along with Doole & Lowe (2008), the world is seen as a market segmented by political, economic, technological, social, cultural and legal groupings. The key to successful international marketing is therefore that of being able to identify and understand the complexities of each of these dimensions and how they affect the marketing strategies of organisations. Thus, as in domestic marketing, the successful marketing company will be the one that is best able to manipulate the controllable tools of the marketing mix within the uncontrollable environment. It follows that the key problem faced by the international marketer is that of coming to terms with the details and complexities of the international environment. So, in many instances, the international marketing environment by its very nature is of a highly complex structure (Phillips et al., 1994). Thus a fundamental knowledge and understanding of the international marketing environment is the foundation of any study of international marketing.

#### **4. UNDERSTANDING CULTURE IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETING ENVIRONMENT**

Culture has been defined in the international marketing literature through many conceptualizations. While Leung et al.'s (2002) definition of culture broadly as “*the values, beliefs, norms, and behavioural patterns of a national group*” and House et al.'s (2004) definition as “*embedded values and practices in a society*”, Hofstede's (2001) viewed of it as “*the software of the mind*” or “*collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group of people from another*” exemplifies culture conceptualizations at the cognitive, individual level. Also, Nakata & Huang's (2002) definition of culture as “*that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society*” is the view that is most appropriate in international marketing. Therefore, culture is the unique combination of learning and experience that gives an individual an anchoring point, an identity, as well as code of conduct (Czinkota et al 2009). Culture is learned, shared, and transmitted from one generation to the next. It is primarily

passed on from parents to their children but also transmitted by social organizations, special-interest groups, governments, schools and churches. Culture can also be described as the personality of the society within which an individual lives. It manifests itself through the built environment, art, language, music and the products that society consumes, as well as through its prevalent beliefs, value systems and government (Brassington & Pettitt, 2006). Correspondingly, in agreement with Chisnall (1985), culture is the total way of life of a society, passed on from generation to generation, deriving from a group of people sharing and transmitting beliefs, values, attitudes and forms of behaviour that are common to that society and considered worthy of retention.

Culture reflects the human being aspect of a person's atmosphere. It consists of philosophy, ethics, customs, and lifestyle learned from others. The role of culture in modern society is growing as more and more economies are becoming interlinked. Samuel Huntingdon identifies the cultures of the world as Western (United States, Western Europe, Australia), Orthodox (former Soviet republics, central Europe), Confucian (China, Southeast Asia), Islamic (Middle East), Buddhist (Thailand), Hindu (India), Latin America, African, and Japanese (Jeannet & Hennessey, 1998). Anthropologist Geert Hofstede cited by Usunier & Lee (2005) refers to culture as the software of the mind and argues that it provides a guide for humans on how to think and conduct themselves. Figure.1 indicates the basic sources of cultural background at the micro level of the individual.

Anthropologist and business consultant Edward Hall cited by Cateora & Graham (2002) stated a definition even more relevant to international marketing managers: "the people we were advising kept bumping their heads against an invisible barrier.... We knew that what they were up against was a completely different way of organizing life, of thinking, and of conceiving the underlying assumption about the family and the state, the economic system, and even man himself." The most important points in Hall's comments are that cultural differences are often unseen, and that if marketers ignore them it often hurts both companies and career.

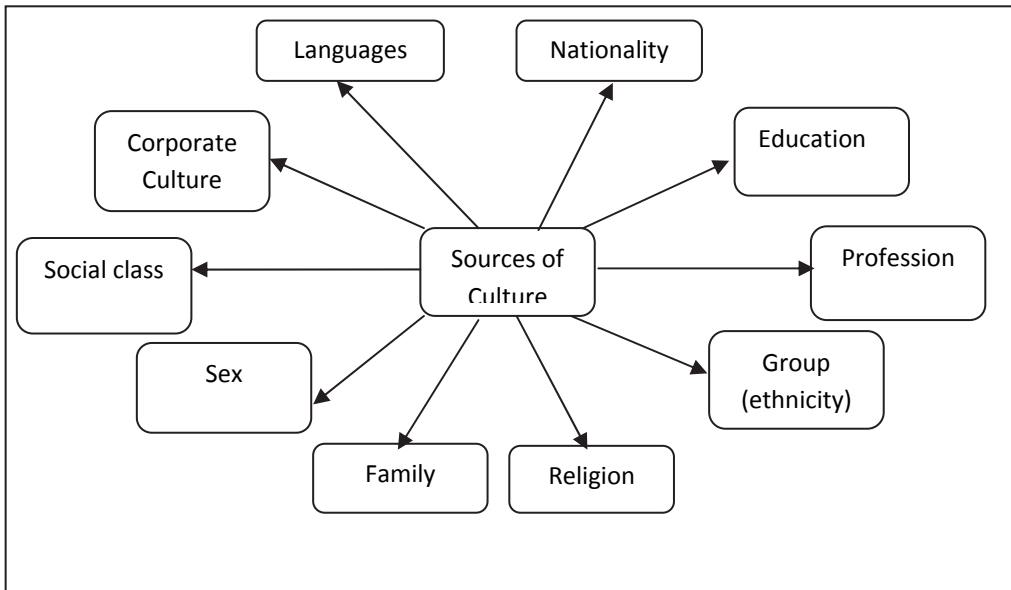


Figure 1: Sources of Culture

Source: Adapted from Usunier & Lee (2005)

## 5. THE COMPONENTS OF CULTURE:

To understand the cultural differences in global markets, Sarathy *et al.* (2006) identify eight components of culture which form a convenient framework for examining a culture from a marketing perspective are describe bellow:

### 5.1 Education

Education, either formal or informal, plays a major role in the passing on and sharing of culture. Educational levels will have an impact on various business functions. International firms also need to know about the qualitative aspect of education, namely, varying emphases on particular skill and overall level of education provide. Japan and Korea, for example, emphasize the sciences, especially engineering, to a greater degree than do 'Western' countries. Education affects all aspects of culture, from economic development to consumer behaviour. It is including the process transmitting skills, ideas and attitudes, as well as training in particular disciplines. Education can be used for cultural change (Czinkota *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, the educational system of a country largely reflects its own culture and heritage. Education shapes people's outlooks, desires and motivation. To the extent that educational systems differ by country, which expect differences among consumers. However, education not only affect prospective consumers, it also shapes potential staff for foreign companies and

for the business area overall. This will persuade business practices and competitive performance (Bekerman & Kopelowitz, 2008).

## **5.2 Social Organisation**

This relates to the way in which a society organises itself. How the culture considers kinship, social institutions, interest group and status groups and status systems. The role of women and caste systems are easily identifiable examples – if the firm has a history of successfully marketing to ‘the housewife/homemaker’, life is more difficult in a culture where women have no social status at all. House ownership is another example. In Switzerland the majority of people rent rather than own their houses and expect to rent property with domestic appliances already installed, which means the banks, not individual families, are the largest purchasers of washing machine (Doole & Lowe, 2008).

## **5.3 Technology and Material Culture**

Technological advances have probably been the major cause of cultural change in many countries. For example, the increase of leisure time as characteristic in ‘Western’ culture has been a direct result of technological developments. Technology includes the techniques used in the creation of material goods, it is the educational and technical know-how possessed by the people of a society (Cateora & Graham, 2002). Material culture affects the level of demand, the quality and types of products demanded and their functional features, as well as the means of production of these goods and their distribution. This aspect relates not to materialism but to the local markets ability to handle and deal with modern technology. The marketing implications of the material culture of a country are many. Electrical appliances may be sell in UK or France, but may find few buyers in a market where less than 1 percent of the homes have electricity. Moreover, electrical toothbrushes and electrical knives, which are acceptable in the West, would be considered a waste of money in countries where income could be better spent on clothing or food (Bradley, 1995).

## **5.4 Laws and Politics**

The legal and political environments in a foreign market are usually regarded as consequences of the cultural traditions of that market. Legal and political systems are often a simple codification of the norms of behaviour deemed acceptable by the local culture. Cultural sensitivity to political issues in international markets is of the utmost importance.

Thus an advertisement for the Orange mobile phone network in Ireland with the strap line ‘The future’s bright, the future’s orange’, clearly did not have any awareness of political sensitivities in Northern Ireland (Doole & Lowe, 2008).

## **5.5 Aesthetics**

Aesthetics refer to attitude towards beauty and great test of art, music, folklore and drama of culture. The aesthetics of exacting culture can be important in the understanding of symbolic meanings of various artistic expressions. Aesthetics are of particular significance to the marketer because of their role in interpreting the symbolic meanings of various methods of artistic used as a mechanism for brand identification, feature reinforcement, and differentiation (Brooks *et al.* 2004). In international markets, colours have more symbolic value than in domestic markets. Black colour, for example, is considered the colour of mourning in the U.S.A and Europe, on the other hand, white is the same symbolic value in Japan and Far East. Customers everywhere respond to images, myths, and metaphors that help them to define their personal and national identities and relationships within a context of culture and products benefits (Baisya, 2008). On the other hand, international marketers should be conscious about their logo or product design as well. For example, "Nike recalls shoes Bearing Logo that Muslims found offensive,". According to Associated Press, June 25, 1997 cited by Cateora &Graham (2002): a logo which was intended to represent misstep by Nike used on athletic shoe. The logo was intended to represent flames or heat rising off a blacktop for a line of shoes to be sold with the names Air Bakin', Air Melt, Air Grill, and Air B-Que. Unfortunately, the logo inadvertently resembled the Arabic script for the word Allah, the Arabic word for God. After receiving complaint from Muslim leaders, Nike recalled the offending shoes (Cateora & Graham, 2002).

## **5.6 Values and Attitudes**

The values consumers from different countries place on things such as time, achievement, work, wealth and risk-taking will seriously affect not only products offered but also the packaging and communication activities. The methods used by a firm to motivate its personnel are also strongly influenced by the local culture and practices. Encouraging local sales forces to sell more by offering cars and more money, for example, may not work in all countries. Thus values are important to marketers as they can be translated into consumption vehicles (Doole & Lowe, 2008).

## **5.7 Religion**

Religion is a major cultural variable and has significant if not always apparent effects on marketing strategy. For example, the identification of scared objects and philosophical systems, beliefs and norms as well as taboos, holidays and rituals is critical for an understanding of a foreign market (Doole &Lowe, 2008). The impact of religion on the worth systems of a society and the effect of value systems on marketing must not be undervalued. Religion affects people's behaviour, their attitude on life, the products they buy, the way they buy them, and even the newspapers they read. Attractive of certain type of foods, clothing,



and behaviour is often affected by religion, and such control can extend to the acceptance or negative reply of promotional messages (Forbes & Mahan 2005).

The major religions are shared by maximum national culture. Religion is one of the most responsive fundamentals of a culture. When the marketers has modest or no understanding of a religion, it is easy to offend, albeit unintentionally. The Islamic religion is a good example of the need for a basic understanding of all major religions. For example, Muslim people always eat “halal” meat and food, Muslim people are forbidden to eat “haram” meat which is not halal, i.e. not slaughtered by an Islamic procedure. So marketers should know Muslim community areas which Muslim people do not buy without halal product. For this reasons, many organisation produces now halal products for the Muslim community in the non Muslim area like America and Europe where a few Muslim people live. An obvious example of the effect of religious beliefs on international marketing is the prohibition of pork products and alcoholic drinks in the Middle East. When beef or any poultry is exported to Muslim countries, the animal must be slaughtered in Islamic way (Terpstra & Sarathy, 1997; Jeannet & Hennessey, 1998). Furthermore, the impact of religion may vary from one country to another. For instance, Islam requires extensive fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, the start and duration of which varies because the lunar year is 11 to 12 days shorter than that based on the Gregorian calendar. International marketing managers must be aware of religious division in the countries of operation. The impact of these divisions may range from hostilities, as in Sri Lanka, to below the surface suspicion for example in many European markets where protestant and catholic are the main religion divisions (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 1995). Thus, as consistent with Pervez et al. (2003), being culturally sensitive will reduce conflict and improve communications, thereby increase success in collaborative marketing relationships.

## **5.8 Language**

Language is obviously a major element of culture. It described as a mirror of culture. International business literature is in general centred on decision making and strategy formulation rather than the implementation of decisions. Language is important mostly in the implementation phase because implementation is largely based on communicating with others: buyers, employees, colleagues, superiors (Usunier & Lee, 2005). A language defines a culture. If a country has several different languages, it has several cultures. Belgium has two national languages: French in the south and Flemish in the north. This linguistic division goes back to the days of Julius Caesar, but even today political and social differences exist between the language groups (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 1995).

In countries where a firm has subsidiaries, the language requirements become greater. The firm then has more direct communication with its audiences. Even

here, however, the language burden is lessened because among its national managers, the firm can usually count people of the “third culture”. This expression is used to describe nationals who have become so familiar with another culture that they become a bridge between the two. For instance, when Renault and Nissan joined together in 1999, both companies decided the common language should be English. Louis Schweitzer, Chairman of Renault, later recalled that English ‘is not a familiar language either in Renault or in Nissan. Some are fluent in English, a lot are not. The risk is that people who speak English have an undue advantage over those who do not speak it well. But we have found that in a number of meetings that it is better to communicate through a translator than by speaking English. Translator can be the best way to get the message across. Over time it will improve. But the language barrier was what we expected to be the most difficult barrier and it has been (Bradley, 2002).

### 5.9 Culture and Consumer Behaviour

There are several important ways in which the various components of culture influence a consumer’s perception, attitude and understanding of a given product or communication and so affect the way consumer behaves in the buying process. Jeannet & Hennessey (2004) identify three major processes through which culture influences consumer behaviour as depicted in figure.3.

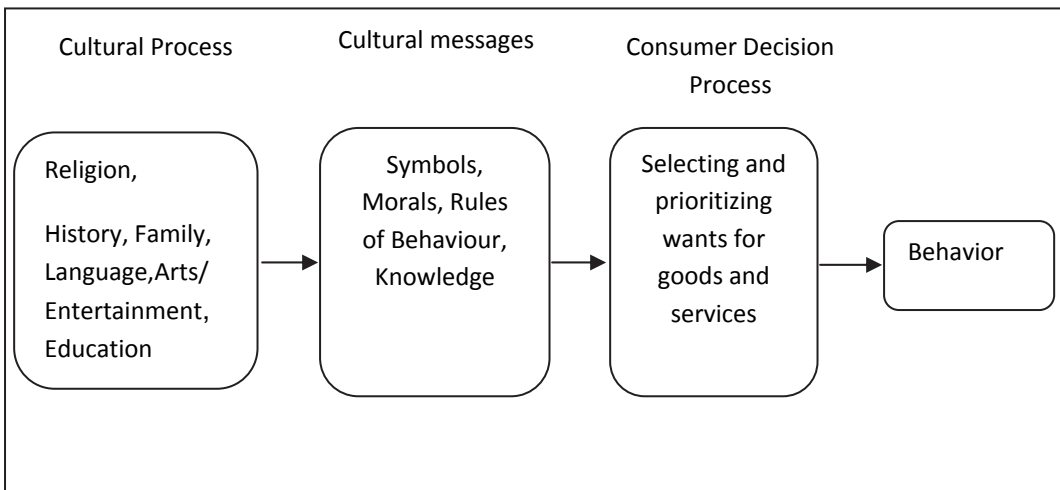


Figure 2: Cultural Influence on Buyer Behavior

Source: Adapted from Doole, I. & Lowe, R., “International Marketing Strategies”, (2008, p.80).

Culture is seen as being embedded in elements of the society such as religion, language, history, and education (cultural factors). These elements send direct

and indirect messages to consumers regarding the selection of products and services (cultural message). The culture we live in determines the answer to such questions as: Do we drink coffee or juice at breakfast or Do we shop daily or weekly basis and so affects the consumer decision process (Doole & Lowe, 2008). Thus, in order to understand and influence the customer's wants and needs, marketers must understand the culture, especially in international environments.

The above literature review is trying to understand different types of culture in all over the World including Bangladesh perspective. It is very important for international marketing strategy, at least in the light of the academic underpinnings that expand over many areas of culture. In general, culture can directly affect the behavior which can help a marketers prosper.

## 6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the aim of this study is to investigate the cultural impact on international marketing strategy and how culture affects in Bangladesh perspectives, so the type of the study is exploratory in nature. In addition, inductive approach has been chosen for this study. Furthermore, among various diverse analyses (such as qualitative, quantitative and triangulation), qualitative analysis has been used in this study to investigate the cultural impact on international marketing and how does it affect in Bangladesh context. More precisely, the primary data of this study has been collected from Bangladeshi multinational organizations such as [Grameen phone](#) Bangladesh, [Robi Axiata Limited](#), [Banglalink](#) Limited, Coats Bangladesh Limited, [Unilever Bangladesh](#), and [GlaxoSmithKline Bangladesh Limited](#) etcby conducting semi-structured interviews. Hence, from the organization, six (6) interviewees have been selected by using convenience sampling technique from the top management levels. Eight open-ended questions are used because the answer ranges can vary and broad or respondents might not have detailed knowledge about the topic to give probable answers.

## 7. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The main objective of this research study is to describe the elements of culture which have impact on international market and also to scrutinize how Bangladeshi market is affected by these cultural elements such as language, education, religion, political situation, socio-economic conditions etc. The summery of the answer of each interview question given by respondents are described following:

**In the first question**, respondents were asked to express their opinion about the cultural impact on international marketers to operate their business in overseas

market. Majority respondents were agreed that culture is a one of the key factor for international marketers. They think international marketers should be acquainted with vast knowledge before launch the overseas market. Because culture is one of the most sensitive elements in international market, which is vital factor for international marketers to doing the operation in overseas market. Only one respondent was disagreed that culture does not impact in national market. Hence, in relation with respondents' opinions, many authors and researchers such as Brassington & Pettitt, (2006), Markus & Kitayama (1991), Yaveroglu & Donthu (2002) and Hewett *et al.* (2006) also mentioned in their study that culture is one of the most sensitive elements in international market. According to their view, cultural differences still remains an important aspect of international marketing environment because cultural norms and beliefs are powerful forces shaping people's perceptions, dispositions and behaviours.

**In the second question**, respondents were asked regarding the cultural sensitivity of Bangladeshi business environment. More precisely, participants were asked that is there any impact of culture in Bangladeshi market for foreign investors. Majority respondents demonstrated their opinion that though Bangladesh is a highly recognised Muslim country in the world, however its environment is completely suitable for foreign investment and there is no obstacle for international marketer's to operation their business in Bangladesh as well. But as most of the people of this country are Muslim so, alcohol or any "haram" product is not suitable for sale these market places because these type of product are completely prohibited for Muslim nations. In this context, all the international firms must be sensitive to religious differences in its foreign markets and willing to make adaptations which are consistent with Pervez *et al.* (2003), Terpstra & Sarathy, (1997); Jeannet & Hennessey, (1998).

**In third question**, participants were requested to express their opinions about the political circumstances of Bangladesh and also its impact on business. Out of six, four respondents (Interviewee 1, 3, 4 and 5) were agreed that political stability is the foremost influencing factor in international market as well as Bangladeshi market. They thought that business, in any country, is largely affected by political domination. In addition, politics has come to be recognised as the major factors in many international business decisions, especially in terms of whether to invest and how to develop markets.

So, cultural sensitivity to political issues in international markets is of the extreme importance. But couple of years before Bangladesh political situation was considered to be risky for foreign investors because of political instability but now a day's political stability is very relatively stable for foreign investors. Nevertheless, interviewee 2 and 6 were disagreed with the opinions of other participants.

They thought because of some political leader's nature, still Bangladeshi political situation is not fully stable and also not suitable for foreign investors. Furthermore, unstable political governments expose foreign businesses to a variety of risks that they would generally not face in the home market which is provided support to Doole & Lowe, (2008). They pointed out that political risk due to a sudden or gradual change in a local political environment is disadvantageous or counter-productive to foreign firms and markets.

**In the fourth question**, interviewees were requested to say about the present economic circumstances of Bangladesh. Again, out of six interviewees, almost everybody said that Bangladeshi economy is still growing slowly because of its highly volume of populations. Besides, unemployment problems, natural catastrophe, political instability, birth rate problems are also responsible for slow growth of economy. But present government is trying hardly to overcome these disadvantages which are not suitable for foreign investors.

**In the fifth question**, interviewer attempted to establish that how educational levels of Bangladesh bring up any constraints for the marketers. All the six interviewees believe that education affects all aspects of culture, from economic development to consumer behaviour. An education system of a country represents the countries culture and custom and nations viewpoints, aspirations, enthusiasms etc. In addition, education also affects business functions as well. Such as recruitment of local sales personnel, for example, depends on the availability of adequately educated people. Thus international firms need to know about the level of education of a county before investing. Hence, the respondents' opinions are consistent with Bekerman & Kopelowitz (2008) and Czinkota *et al.* (2009), because they mentioned that the educational system of a country largely reflects its own culture and heritage and it shapes people's outlooks, desires and motivation.

**In sixth question**, respondents were asked to express their opinion about the state of religion in Bangladesh and its impact on business. Majority Interviewees were agreed that religion is a key issue for Bangladeshi market as because of its high percentage of Muslim populations. In Bangladesh, religion influences individuals' behaviour, life style, manners, food habits (halal/haram) etc. Thus, international marketers must be sensitive regarding religious differences in its foreign markets and willing to make adaptations. In these context interviewees opinions provided support to the authors Doole & Lowe (2008) and Forbes& Mahan (2005). They also said that religion is a major cultural variable and has significant if not always apparent effects on international marketing strategy. It affects people's behaviour, their attitude on life, the products they buy, the way they buy them, and even the newspapers they read.

**In seventh question**, researcher is actually making an effort to determine that is there any language barriers for international marketers to launch business in Bangladesh. Almost every respondent were agreed that still language barrier exists for international marketers in Bangladesh to operate their business because 99% of total population are used speak their native language which is 'Bangla' where English is a second spoken language widely used in business, commerce and especially in city area. Though, adult literacy rate in Bangladesh as on 2006 is 65% still, there is a big shortage of highly skilled and educated workforce.

Thus, Language is a vital facet of culture in Bangladesh and international marketing communications are still affected by the existence of language barrier in Bangladesh. In addition, many authors such as Gudykunst (2005), Czinkota *et al.* (2009), Usunier & Lee (2005) also mentioned in their study that Language is obviously a major element of culture which is described as a mirror of culture. It defines the culture of the nations. It has a significant impact on international market. To overcome this language barrier, businesspeople all over the world have relied on three approaches: the direct translation of written materials, interpreters, and the acquisition of foreign language skills.

Finally, **in the last question** interviewees were asked to express their view about the business environment of Bangladesh for international marketers. All six respondents were agreed that Bangladesh business environment is suitable for foreign investor because Bangladesh is now a believer place for foreign investors to invest. There is no political crisis at this moment. The government provided plentiful facilities for foreign investors even though foreign investment is not hundred percent yet. Still government need to develop economy condition, reduce unemployment problem, increase rate of literacy and control birth rate which will provide a fertile business environment for the foreign investors.

## 8. CONCLUSION

First of all, in the literature review, the present situation of international environment was focused and then this study also tried to explain culture and its impact on international market. Besides, on the basis of previous research, this study also tried to highlight the components of culture, which have vast impact on international marketing environment. In this context, it was found that language, religion, aesthetics, education, social organisations, law & politics, technology & material cultures and values & attitudes are the main elements of culture. International marketers have to consider all these elements before entering to any new market to operate their business. Besides, culture is a distinctive element of international marketing and it means different things to different people. It does not only denote civilization, but also customs, tradition and codes as cited by Cateora & Graham (2002).

Furthermore, it was found from the findings of interview that culture has significant impact on Bangladeshi market as well. Cultural components such education, language, religion, political stability, socio-economic conditions etc are the most influencing factors in Bangladeshi market. Most of the interviewee mentioned that Bangladesh is culture sensitive country. They thought that Bangladesh has a tolerant Muslim population along with its Bangladeshi culture. They used to live their life according to their religion, educational level and socio-economical conditions. They also revealed that as Bangladesh is a highly recognised Muslim country in the world, however its environment is completely suitable for foreign investment and there is no obstacle for international marketers to operation their business in Bangladesh. But as a Muslim community, alcohol or any “haram” product is not suitable to be sold in market places because these type of product are completely prohibited for Muslim nations. In this context, all the international firms must be sensitive to religious differences in its foreign markets and willing to make adaptations.

Besides, all the respondents also expressed their opinions regarding present educational levels in Bangladesh. According to their opinions, education affects all aspects of culture, from economic development to consumer behaviour. It is including the process of transmitting skills, ideas and attitudes, as well as training in particular disciplines. Education can be used for cultural change. But still in some rural areas, most of the people are uneducated, which might be affects in Bangladeshi market in future. Thus international firms need to know about the level of education of a county before investing because an education system of a country represents the countries culture and custom and nations viewpoints, aspirations, enthusiasms etc. Moreover, according to the respondents, Bangladeshi political state is also another important element for international marketers. They thought that business, in any country, is largely affected by political domination. However, Bangladesh is a culturally sensitive country but all the interviewee agreed that Bangladeshi business environment is suitable for foreign investor because Bangladesh is now a believer place for foreign investors to invest. There is no political crisis at this moment. The government provided abundant facilities for foreign investors. To get hundred percent foreign investment still government needs to develop economy condition, reduce unemployment problem, increase rate of literacy and control birth rate which will provide a fertile business environment for the foreign investors.

Finally, international marketer needs to pay attention to cultural factors, issues of cultural difference which might be seen in terms of language, social structures and mores (including class structure, gender roles and the effect of religion) and prevalent values and attitudes. Because these could be affect not only the way in which a product is marketed to customers, but also the way in which business negotiations are handled. Eventually, consistent with Ricks (1993), a failure to

take cultural differences between countries into account has been behind many international business failures.

## **9. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:**

There are few limitations attached to the research approach and design of this study:

- i. This study had to face constraints with regards to time and fund availability, which restricted to take the study only in the Chittagong city (Business Capital) of Bangladesh.
- ii. Limited access to the top management of the respective company as well as it was very difficult to get an appointment of them within the limited time span.
- iii. It was a long process to find a right person for the interview.
- iv. The sample size was too small for this study.
- v. The convenience sampling is used in this study for data collection which might not represent the total population.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETERS:**

International marketers have to consider all elements of culture before entering to any new market to launch their product or to operate their business.

International marketers should be aware of some sensitive cultural elements such as religion, political state etc. Before the entrance to any new market or country, it is necessary to acquire vast knowledge regarding religion, social lifestyle, economic and political situation of that country, because the knowledge about culture will be more useful for undertaking their marketing operation in the foreign countries.

International marketers also need to consider subculture as important influential components of culture.

## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FURTHER RESEARCH:**

Due to the time limitation, only five marketing executives have been selected for interview in this study, which is not sufficient to depict the proper state of affairs. More robust findings may be possible with the use of a larger sample set and so that a higher level of validity can be achieved.



Data for this research have been collected from only one company, which may not give a compressive picture. Further research can be conducted by covering more foreign organisations to highlight the more accurate current scenario.

Further research can also find out marketers' opinions to overcome the problems they may face on individual culture.

## REFERENCES

- Aaker, J.L. (2000). Accessibility or diagnosticity? Disentangling the influence of culture on persuasion processes and attitudes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26(4), 340-57.
- Baisya, K.R. (2008). *Aesthetics in Marketing*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.
- Briley, D.A., & Aaker, J.L. (2006). When does culture matter? Effects of personal knowledge on the correction of culture-based judgments. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 43, 395-408.
- Brooks, I., Weatherston, J., & Wilkinson, G. (2004). *The International Business Environment*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Bradley, F. (2002). *International Marketing Strategy* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Bradley, F. (1995). *International Marketing Strategy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Blakwell, R. D., Miniard, P. W., & Engel, J. L. (2006). *Consumer Behaviour* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). Mason, OH: Thomson South Western.
- Bekerman. Z., & Kopelowitz.E. (2008). *Cultural education-cultural sustainability: minority, diaspora, indigenous and ethno-religious groups in multicultural societies*. London: Rutledge.
- Cateora, P. R., & Graham, J. L. (2002). *International Marketing* (11<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: McGraw-Hill.
- Czinkota, R. M., & Ronkainen, I. A. (1993). *International Marketing* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). USA: The Dryden Press.
- Czinkota, R. M., Ronkainen, I. A., & Moffett, M. H. (2009). *Fundamentals of International Business* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Bronxville.
- Chisnall, P.M. (1985). *Marketing: A Behavioral Analysis*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Dunning, J.H. (1997). *Micro and macro organizational aspects of MNE and MNE activity*. England: University of Reading.
- Doole, I., & Lowe, R. (2008). *International Marketing Strategy: Analysis, Development and Implementation* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.).UK: South-Western Cengage Learning.
- Forbes, B.D, & Mahan J.H. (2005). *Religion and popular culture in America*. USA: University of California Press.

- Hewett, K., Money, B.R., & Sharma, S. (2006). National culture and industrial buyer-seller relationships in the US and Latin America. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34(3), 386-402.
- House, R.J., Javidan, P.J., Dorfman, P., & Gupta, V. (2004). GLOBE Cultures, Leadership and Organizations: GLOBE Study of 62 societies. Newberry Park, CA: Sage Publication.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). Culture's Consequences. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Jeannet, J. P., & Hennessey, H. D. (2004). Global Marketing Strategies (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). USA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Jeannet, J. P., & Hennessey, H. D. (1998). Global Marketing Strategies (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). USA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Kotler, P. (1986). Global standardization-courting danger. *The Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 3(2), 13-15.
- Leung, K., Bond, M.H., Carrasquel, S.R., Munoz, C., Hernández, M., Murakami, F., et al. (2002). Social axioms: the search for universal dimensions of general beliefs about how the world functions. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 33(3), 286-302.
- Markus, H.R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: implications for cognition, emotion and motivation, *Psychological Review*, 98(2), 224-53.
- Nakata, C. C., & Huang, Y. 2002, Culture theory in global marketing research: an assessment from the literature”, Winter Educator’s conference of the American marketing Association.
- Pervez N. G., & Usunier, J.C. (2003). International business negotiations (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). UK: Pergamon.
- Phillips, C., Doole, I., & Lowe, R. (1994). International Marketing Strategy: Analysis, Development and Implementation. London:Rutledge.
- Ricks, D. (1993). Blunders in International Business. London: Blackwell.
- Sarathy, R., Terpstra, V., & Russow, L. C. (2006). International Marketing (9<sup>th</sup> ed.).USA: Dryden Press.
- Steenkamp, J.-B.E.M., Hofstede, F.T., & Wedel, M. (1999). A cross-national investigation into the individual and national cultural antecedents of consumer innovativeness. *Journal of Marketing*, 63(2), 55-69.
- Suh, T., & Kwon, I.W. (2002).Globalization and reluctant buyers. *International Marketing Review*, 19(6), 663-80.
- Terpstra, V., & Sarathy, R. (1997). International Marketing (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). USA: The Dryden press.
- Takada, H., & Jain, D. (1991). Cross-national analysis of diffusion of consumer durable goods in Pacific Rim countries. *Journal of Marketing*, 55(2), 48-54.
- Triandis, H.C. (1989). The self and social behaviour in differing cultural contexts. *Psychological Review*, 96(3), 506-20.
- Usunier, & Lee, (2005). Marketing Across Culture (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: Prentice Hall Ltd.

- Wolf, C.J. (2000). Globalization: meaning and measurement. *Critical Review*, 14(1), 1-10.
- Yaveroglu, I.S., & Donthu, N. (2002). Cultural influences on the diffusion of products. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 14(4), 49-63.

## **APPENDIX:**

### **Questionnaire:**

**Topic: The cultural impact on international marketing strategy, with a special emphasis of a Bangladesh perspective”.**

### **Eight Open-ended Interview Questions for Respondents**

1. Do you consider culture is a dominant factor in international Marketing strategy?
2. Is Bangladeshi culture sensitive to the international marketers?
3. How much does politics influence the culture in Bangladesh?
4. What is the state of Economy in Bangladesh?
5. Does the educational level of Bangladesh bring up any constraints for the marketers?
6. What is the state of religion in Bangladesh and what impact does it leave on Bangladeshi market?
7. Does language impose any barriers to international marketers in doing their business in Bangladesh?
8. Is the business environment in Bangladesh positive for international marketers?

### **Sample Interview-1**

**Topic: “The cultural impact on an international marketing strategy, with a special emphasis of a Bangladesh perspective”.**

**1. Do you consider culture is a dominant factor in international Marketing strategy?**

**Answer:** Yes, I do. Because what culture is differentiate one human group from another. Without knowing the patterns of behavior of the target human group, it is not possible to set up strategies. Because culture is a mirror of human life. That’s why it is necessary to study about the local culture in-depth before offering a product to any market

**2. Is Bangladeshi culture sensitive to the international marketers?**

**Answer:** Yes, Bangladeshi culture is might be sometimes sensitive to the international marketers. Bangladesh welcome all ‘cultural shifts’ which does not conflict with their cultural elements especially language, religion, and values and attitudes. For example, the cultural shift towards greater concern about health and fitness and increased desire for ‘leisure time’ has resulted in increased demand for health club membership, exercise equipment, microwave ovens, washing machine and many more.

### **3. How much does politics influence the culture in Bangladesh?**

**Answer:** Politics in Bangladesh have strong influence on almost everything. But International businesses are welcome in Bangladesh. Various steps are taken to attract foreign investment. Bangladeshi politics starts from far away and its journey starts from cultural issues. Influence of the politics has become a huge factor in culture of Bangladesh. For the political reason people of Bangladesh has taken various decision.

### **4. What is the state of Economy in Bangladesh?**

**Answer:** Bangladesh is a developing country and its macroeconomic goals have been problematic mostly due to corruption. It runs a large trade deficit which is financed largely through aid receipts and remittances from workers overseas. The economy has grown at the rate of 6-7% p.a. over the past few years. Two-thirds of the population involve in agriculture while many new jobs have been created by ready-made garment industry.

### **5. Does the educational level of Bangladesh bring up any constraints for the marketers?**

**Answer:** Bangladesh has one of the lowest literacy rates in south Asia. And poverty is the main reason for primary school drop-out. But a large number of students finish their study at college and university. There are so many public and private universities which provide higher level of study and research work. This makes a great resource to support the marketers. But It certainly creates some constrains might be for the marketers especially in rural area to promote their marketing activities.

### **6. What is the state of religion in Bangladesh and what impact does it leave on Bangladeshi market?**

**Answer:** The constitution of Bangladesh establishes Islam as the state religion but provides for the right to practice others – subject to law, public order and morality. And market is operated on open market policy basis and religion has impact on market sometimes. Islam has a great impact on the way of living of people like – on food habit, dress, attitude and manner etc.

### **7. Does language impose any barriers to international marketers in doing their business in Bangladesh?**

**Answer:** Bengali is the official language of Bangladesh and English is also widely spoken and understood. Internally there is no language barrier in Bangladeshi people speaking each other but international business man might be facing some language barrier because most of the Bangladeshi people cannot speak English properly.

**8. Is the business environment in Bangladesh positive for international marketers?**

**Answer:** Foreign investment is not hundred secured for international marketers yet. Weak form of infrastructure and old fashion service environment are the main concern for international marketers. But the Government of Bangladesh influences the quality of their investment climates through policies, institutions, and their relationship with the private sector. Technological changes are also taking place to make a better environment for business and investment. Moreover, Bangladesh business environment is excellent from previous any time.