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The Importance of International Marketing

This marketing class has been like no other marketing class that I have taken in that it focuses on human behavior in a way that respects people as people not necessarily just a statistic. The class started with “Section 1: Evolution and Culture”, which covers most of the basic information needed for the rest of the class, the information provided in “Section 1” gives the context that is needed for “Sections 2 and 3”. The international element of this class heavily involves the discussion of cultures and how they form and differ from each other, therefore marketing is the knowledge of people and what brings them together and separates them and culture is how we define those differences.

“Section 1” is about the similarities in all people and why. In most marketing classes, this sort of basic information is often assumed common knowledge and is not explained in a way that makes it relevant to marketing. It would be difficult to sell a product, company, or name without understanding why people are the way they are. This leads to the first major point at the beginning of “Section 1” which is the difference between what your body needs and what you feel otherwise known as “Proximate vs. Ultimate” causation. The example used shows a common need, the need to eat, where the “Ultimate” cause is that the cells need fuel to do their job, however, the body tells the brain that it needs food with high caloric content which is the “Proximate” cause.

These inherent needs are survival, sociality, and reproduction. To reproduce requires one to survive and know how to be sociable, creating sort of a stacking situation with these needs. The most basic need of these three is to survive, and humans have the benefit of a brain that is good at adapting to the situations they find themselves in. This idea of adaptation leads to the combination of “Nature” and “Nurture”, in the fact that the nature of humans is to adapt to change that the “Nurture” would usually bring within the environment.

The talk about the needs and the adaptation to fit those needs lead to one of the most important, if not the most concept within this class, Kendrick’s pyramid. Kendrick’s pyramid is built on top of Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs” which was just speculation, however, Kendrick built his pyramid of needs based on the current scientific knowledge they have on this subject. The pyramid is actually similar to the three needs mentioned before, just broken down further. First, there is survival, where in the pyramid there is immediate physiological needs, and self-protection, which are focused on individual and in-group survival. Second, there is sociality, in which in the pyramid there is affiliation and status/esteem which show how humans are such social creatures. Third, and finally, reproduction is separated into three categories in Kendrick’s pyramid, mate acquisition, mate retention, and parenting, which deal with the three major stages of reproduction. Sociality and reproduction are both Socio-cultural goals, which deal with how people interact with other people in small and large cultural groups.

In-groups are the groups of people that one identifies with due to one or more of multiple factors that include geography, sexuality, religion, race, and other concepts that differentiate people. The out-group is the group one does not participate in and in turn often appears more homogenous and less unique than one’s in-group even if it is just as, if not more unique than that in-group. These groups dictate morality favoring the in-group and often being much harsher

towards the out-groups, and this can be seen in many situations, including the current political climate within the United States.

The next major part of “Section 1” is about the differences between males and females and even the concepts that make the differences between those two groups. The first part mentioning the differences is about “Differential Parent Investment” which describes in what ways the responsibilities between males and females during the reproduction stage differ. Males hold less responsibility for offspring and having multiple partners is possible and even valued. They often can attract more mates based on the amount of power and influence they may carry or by creative intelligence. They generally take a “High Risk/High Reward” method of attracting mates, often attempting to use status to sway the odds in their favor. Males, however, become much more insecure and often extremely jealous of female sexual infidelity. In contrast to that, females become insecure and often extremely jealous of male emotional infidelity, because that often means a withdrawal of support for children.

The next section that compares the differences between males and females specifically compares alpha and beta traits in males and females. This sub-section was also fairly important within the class and has been brought up several times since the introduction of the concept. Specifically, the idea of alpha females had been brought up multiple times. Alpha females are described as attractive and demanding. They become selective in their choices of mates and become very skilled at getting the resources they need. Alpha females often attempt to appeal to the alpha males and the type of female that is considered attractive. However, beta females are described as promiscuous and smart or caring. Beta females are also often more likely to fight for women’s rights and other social issues since that generally brings down the current alpha males while the alpha females are generally content with the alpha males where they are.

Alpha males are described as physically or socially dominant and insensitive. They also tend to have attractive qualities that may not be the conventional concepts that one might think of. Alpha males are also resource controlling, often more discerning in their decisions of who to provide resources to. Beta males tend to have creative intelligence and are sensitive. They tend to care for their mates long-term and are more willing to provide resources for them. One major point within the idea of alpha and beta males specifically is the idea of status. Many of the problems caused in our current social climate are caused by low-status alpha males, who have the alpha concept mentally and physically but had not gained the resources that they wanted and become belligerent. While high-status beta males show no real physical threat but are generally highly creative and full of humor.

The four divides are in-group vs. out-group, status and mating, alpha vs. beta, and the last divide is fast vs slow life strategy. The fast life strategy is often many casual relationships with a “High Risk/High Reward” ideal, generally with a high level of creativity. The slow life strategy appears more standard, relating a lot to what we see as the corporate ideal where one takes their time, and generally only has a few long-term relationships. The four major divides are the four major concepts of differentiation among humans and the first three had been discussed in the paragraphs before. These four major divides are important to this class and are one of the major concepts covered.

This brings the class to the beginning of the discussion of culture now that a human and the basic behaviors of humans have been defined. Culture is a product of learning and learning is a process used in every form that knowledge comes in. Culture is built off of sets of ideas that help dictate how a specific society lives, which could also be described as memes, in the traditional sense of the word. Culture throughout the world is not so different in structure but can

vary wildly in content from one culture to another, often being brought up by environmental triggers. Within these cultures, there are “67 Human Universals” or 67 features of culture that can not be changed or exempted as part of a culture. In relation to that, the class places stress on the negative aspects of trust and cooperation, due to the concept being viewed as generally a positive thing, the class reminds us of the negative things that have happened due to the concept. These negative things happen, due to the same issue with morality, which is that values change from culture to culture, meaning this trust and cooperation could lead to trust in concepts that in the end, are arbitrary.

When culture meets international marketing, it becomes reliant on optimal distinctiveness, when selling a company culture and even possibly the company’s cultural origin in a foreign market. It becomes important to appear in the sweet spot of familiarity, known as optimal distinctiveness. If your company feels too familiar, it becomes uninteresting and can fall into the background, but in comparison, if your company feels too out there, it may be hard to get customers to approach your company. However, it is possible to shift the optimal zone by boosting the familiarity of your company or product slowly. That is still hard to do due to “Cultural Speciation”, which is essentially the way cultures separate from other cultures and the importance of those differences.

Humans have existed since approximately 180,000 years ago, however, everything changed about 10,000 years ago with the end of the “Last Ice Age” and the start of the Agricultural Revolution, especially in the Fertile Crescent, which had a majority of seed grasses in the world, livestock, and a suitable climate. Domesticated animals led to more stable lives for the people who settled there and could be used as transportation, work, and food. Not to mention that the growing of grain led to the allowance for higher population density and the increase of

food meant that jobs could be more specialized and were divided based on specialties and not just the need to survive. You could also relate this to meeting the immediate physiological and self-protection needs. As time went on agriculture and other discoveries were moved into the rest of the world in a fairly stable manner until 1500 with the introduction of Protestants.

Protestantism was born out of fighting against the corruption of the Catholic church and focused on the individual's work ethic and literacy. Protestant countries generally have some of the lowest corruption rates. Protestantism in business ethics, however, lost favor during the Industrial Revolution in the United States, due to a change of values.

As cities become larger so does the importance of investing in emerging markets. This is due to the growing existence of the middle-class, a class of people who have some money to spend and will spend more when the environment is good for it. Emerging market middle-class people often have a more uniform taste than an already developed middle-class. Finding the market potential of these emerging markets can be done in several ways including clustering, indexing, and the three-step method which itself includes screening, identification, and selecting. Often, however, large countries are very diverse, and this country-wide research is not as useful as breaking it down into smaller groups. It becomes very apparent that one should make sure to do research on the relationships between these small groups to avoid making strong mistakes.

The class covered multiple case studies including the monopolization and intense marketing strategies of the diamond cartel. The class also covered emerging markets in more depth including studies on Amazon in emerging markets, and why Ethiopia has a lot of potential as an emerging market. The class finished off the case studies by showing two real-world examples of companies entering foreign markets and how they handled the cultural differences to different degrees of success. The class discussed L'Oréal in China and Louis Vuitton in Japan.

The class finished off with guest lectures from the talented Youngok Sunny Song who discussed what beauty means to different cultures and why that is. From the evolutionary perspective, beauty shows that one is looking for a mate and enhances the chance of attracting one. Several concepts from earlier in the class are brought to light again, and the term “Sexual Dimorphism” is introduced as describing the attributes that differ in an extreme way between males and females. Then the second part of the guest lecture discusses the differences in how culture affects how people perceive beauty and how those changes what type of products are sold there since they have different purposes in trying to achieve their own cultural beauty. Sunny goes on to talk about specifically the differences between makeup in the United States and Korea.

That was everything taught in the class, with small simplifications. Most of this class focused on evolutionary theory and how that applies to people and how people make up marketing. This marketing class has taught me more about what cultural markers to look for when entering a new market in a new culture. That would be the main thing that this course teaches. The concept I was the most ignorant of was the concept of alphas and betas, so that was very interesting to learn about. This course was about history, evolutionary theory, and people. All three of those lead to the study of cultures, which was the overall topic of this course. The differences between cultures could be what makes or breaks a company, and I know that now.

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