

International Marketing Communications: Problems, Issues, Strategies, (ECOWAS, Africa And The Globe)

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Abstract

International Marketing Communications cannot be separated from international marketing which involves all forms of marketing beyond the borders of a country and between two or more countries with similar needs and wants to serve particular target market. The communications to these target markets in various countries constitute the international marketing communications, and some of the components or elements are advertising, sales promotions, personal selling, publicity, public relations and direct marketing. The media of communications are television, radio, newspapers, magazines, journals, out of home (billboard) and the Internet. The strategic use of media, message and creativity, may be constrained by the problems within the environment including cultural, political, technological, economic and social barriers that are differently manifested in various countries. The immediate difficulties are the problems of centralisation or decentralization, standardization, or differentiation that have complicated communication operations especially in the applications of costs use of facilities and methods such as adaptation or imposition principles. International marketing communications could be used by international and multinational organisations that have the same products to satisfy the global market, and those with product variations are meant for the regional markets, such as ECOWAS and Africa. The use of Internet and the cable television network has globalized the world and could contribute to the internationalisation of many products international marketing communications will continue to improve the knowledge of consumers in different countries about those products that are manufactured in other countries of the world. This study has been presented in the following arrangements of abstract, introduction, framework, and overview of international marketing communications. Others are the imperatives of strategy, the impact on ECOWAS, Africa and the globe, and implications for marketing and conclusions.

Keywords: International Marketing, Communications, Ecowas, Africa and World

INTRODUCTION:

International marketing communications may seek to communicate the target market audiences in two or more countries with common needs and wants, similarities in the behaviours of consumers, their purchasing power and economic dispositions, and possibly equitable levels of social and political development. Smith (200:216) suggests that if a manufacturer targets roughly the same socio demographic groups in different countries and touches a common nerve within these target markets, then same product and service can be packaged and promoted in a uniform manner.

The emerging world, courtesy of information technology, has become a global or single village or community with many things in common that are at parity among the varying countries' populations including cultural interests, product preferences and consumption patterns, social values, common knowledge and information about products. The manufacturers and marketers are expected to position their brands of products in the minds of millions of consumers and therefore, have to direct the communications about these brands to them. The Internet has reinforced this by creating some homogenous groups from the stratified or different countries across the world. However, within these homogeneous groups are to be found different cultural affinities, social diversifications, language peculiarities, and disparities in the economic levels of development, and these may constitute barriers to communications. Foster (1984:292) agrees that ethnic groups have also to be studied and it should be realised that they have the habit of not conforming to national boundaries drawn by politicians.

The various marketing communications elements including advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing, public relations, publicity, and packaging designs have made it difficult to actually predict or determine what works best in international marketing communications. This becomes even more challenging with the media of communications that may not be available and in some circumstances unaffordable by consumers, thereby, increasing the costs of communications, such as the use of television, radio, newspapers, magazines, journals, and out of home (billboard) and the Internet.

The immediate challenges to communicators or marketers would be the question of strategic imperatives of centralisation or decentralization, standardization or differentiation in reaching the target markets of consumers across the various countries. Thus, the problems of localisation, regionalisation and globalisation will be readily associated with the types of strategies to be adopted, and that may also have to do with the media, messages and creativity, both in tactical approaches and implementations.

The essential ingredients on strategy could be considered from the perspectives of what Baker (1999:498) suggests as three essential inputs to the marketing strategy which also are used in planning advertising, including: the information about product; who are the purchasers and consumers, and the decision on what advertisements have to do. The product information may include contents, performance, price, distribution and the consumers and their behavioural characteristics would simply be concerned with attitudes, shopping habits, tastes, beliefs and so on, while advertising as the most visible of the communications tools could be focused on exposing the products and concentrating on changing the behaviour of consumers or reinforcing their beliefs.

The control of the media is also an important strategic decision that has to deal with the aspects on costs of operations in planning and buying the media, choosing the agency, solving the creative problems of messages adaptation or adoption, the use and meanings of symbols and their various interpretations in different countries. The impact of these measures can be streamlined to reflect the implementations at the domestic, regional and global levels such as the ECOWAS, Africa and the world. The implications of all these contributions of international marketing communications on the future of marketing may be argued on the costs savings from central planning and control, the improved delivery systems, the closer ties and relationships, and improved problems solving and better decisions from good qualitative and volume of available data.

The presentation of this study has been arranged to reflect on the abstract, introduction, framework, the overview and perspectives, and the imperatives of strategy. Others are impact on ECOWAS, Africa and the globe, implications for marketing and conclusions.

Statement of Problem

Marketing communications have always been presented as the weapon that pierce the human mind and exploit the weakness of reasoning and push the individual to the brink of accepting to buy what may not have been intended and embark on conspicuous consumption or waste of financial resources. The blame game is that the media is responsible for this problem, the other schools of thought contexts that the strategies adopted by the media are responsible and yet there are still others who believe that cultural factors, the deceptive presentations of products beyond the limit of the values and the volume of information at the disposal of consumers constitutes the factors responsible for the impact of communications on consumers. What are the different consumer reactions to communications and what strategies are adopted in presenting products messages to consumers at ECOWAS, Africa and Global levels?

Objectives of The Study

The objectives of this study are to:

- (i) determine the effect of marketing communications on international consumers
- (ii) explore the different reactions of consumers to international marketing communications
- (iii) determine the strategies adopted for international marketing communications

FRAMEWORK OF STUDY:

Marketing communications has the distinct characteristics of focusing at a specific target marketing audiences in a market place, and this is what distinguishes it from mass communications and corporate communications that may not be exclusively directed at specific consumers. Foster (1984:182) argues that the mass media evolved to facilitate more effective communications between vendors and buyers. Baker (1995:216) suggests that marketing communications is quite different from mass communications which an organisation addresses to a largely undifferentiated mass audience (hence the term) for a non commercial purpose by such means as press editorials, radio news, television documentaries, drama or political propaganda. However, in the use of marketing

communications, the organisation will target a deliberately differentiated audience for commercial purposes and would employ such vehicles as advertising, sales promotions or presentations, personal selling, direct marketing, interactive communications or internet, packaging designs and other promotions tools.

International marketing communications is directed at target market audiences in different countries having similarities in the consumption pattern, level of economic development, purchasing power of consumers, homogenous consumers in their needs, wants, tastes and preferences for products.

International marketing communications has to take into cognisance the marketing concept that confers the rights of active participation to consumers on matters affecting them including communications. The marketers are expected to have a full knowledge of consumers in the various countries especially their mode of thinking and preoccupations that have to be incorporated into communications presentations. Consumers will accept better the information that incorporates their feelings and aspirations that will give them a sense of belongingness. The integration of the entire marketing mix as an embodiment of communications have to be balanced with the promotional mix to give full information to the consumers about products.

Foster (1984:205) considers that agency has to be an integral consideration in marketing communications especially in advertising, and in international marketing communications, the position of the agency is vital to provide some special skills and advice to clients. The agency can also bring an independent mind and considerable expertise on matters as marketing strengths and weaknesses of clients, the effectiveness and impact of the firms communications mix compared to those of competitors, other marketing mix of price and distributions, displays and strategic promotions activities at channels and consumer or customer levels. The agencies involvement in clients marketing planning especially at regional and national level son a continuing basis will enhance the chances for better and a more effective communications especially advertising, that may be created and used, thus, creating a greater stability and integration to the client and agency relationships.

The framework of study therefore considers international marketing communications as communications directed at a specific target market audiences or consumers and customers, who are active in the formation, planning and presentations of the messages as participants and in consonance with the fundamental goal of the marketing concept. However, the importance of cost control cannot be ignored, thus, the management of communications cost in the rising volume of communications in the international marketing scene, becomes paramount. This was what Randal (1970:13-3) refers to as total communications, which is a concept of consciously setting out to manage as one entity not just advertising but all forms of communication between a company and its numerous publics. The concept has the objective of reducing costs and improving effectiveness.

The concept assumes that organizations with several divisions may consider the total effort as being more important since the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and products, brands, or services of one division are more acceptable in the market of associated with the corporation's or organisation's total efforts. In related thinking it is assumed that if not coordinated the messages of different divisions or brands may conflict and confuse the consumers or customers. The organisations with many brands, divisions or branches ensure that all the labels, literature, advertisements and every form of promotion tool carry prominently and always in the same style the organisations corporate identity, such as 3m that depicts or identifies with Minnesota, Mining and Manufacturing Company.

OVERVIEW AND PERSPECTIVES:

International marketing communications is directed at target market audiences in two or more countries across the world and usually meant for promotions of products and services De Mooij (1994:12) Wells et al (1989), and Baker (1995:217) affirm the same position that it is to promote a cause, an organisation and the sale of its goods and services is more than one country and different parts of the world, and may also involve consumers active participation rather than merely receiving the information but a form of exchange between consumers and marketers.

The entire marketing communications mix forms the promotions elements required to more products from the production centres to the doorstep of consumers in different countries of the world. Belch et al (2001:674) argue that advertising and promotions are important parts of the marketing programme of firms competing in the global market place, and an effective promotional programmes is important for companies competing in foreign markets.

Hite et al (1988:95-105) suggest that promotion is the most visible of all the marketing mix functions and it involves relations building through vocal messages that could be seen and heard directed at convincing the consumers.



Fig. 1: Relationship between Domestic, International and Global Markets.

Source: Ehikwe A. E., (2002) Transportations and Distribution Management. Enugu: Precision Publishers Limited

The contentious problems associated with international marketing communications are the activities and operations in the environment including cultural, economic, technological, social, legal, political, demographic and societal dispositions. Belch et al (2001:675-6) submit that companies have difficulties developing and implementing advertising and promotional programmes for international markets for reasons of differences in values and beliefs, customs, consumption patterns, differences in consumers behaviours, habits and attitudes, their purchasing powers and motives.

ECONOMIC:

The economic environment is more volatile in various countries that marketing communications have been riddled with difficulties from lack of infrastructures such as communication, transportation, financial, distribution networks and poor production facilities that results in low income that affects the purchasing power of consumers especially in developing countries.

DEMOGRAPHIC:

The consumers in different countries suffer from different problems that affects the promotions of products and services especially in the aspects of population explosion in some countries and others have been ravaged by wars and natural disasters that have depleted the population. The promotion of products in any country must take into cognisance the distribution of consumers by age, occupation, income levels and distribution, education, occupation, literacy levels, (illiterates do not read and write and this can hamper success in print media) and the life styles, habits and attitudes and behaviours of consumers have to be seriously taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of international marketing communications programmes.

The market prospects and potentials of any country can be determined from the demographic data available. Belch et al (2001:677) suggests that Brazil as the largest consumer market in South America, was expected to have a population of 200 million in year 2000 and is growing with more than 50 percent of age below 26 years, 30percent under the age of 15years, thus suggesting that children have a substantial segment of the market, and many big-time advertisers would readily be interested in such detail, for promotional programmes.

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL:

The cultural complications in the lifestyles, beliefs, attitude, norms, moors, level of social development, languages, values, moral and ethical backgrounds, among the people in a country can affect directly the success or failure of marketing communications and invariably, the promotions of products and services. A typical example could be the meanings of symbols and signs in advertisement and most strikingly the interpretations of words and languages spoken and written in different countries. as explained by Belch et al (2001:678) pepsodent tooth paste was unsuccessful in South East Asia because it promised white teeth to a culture where Black and yellow teeth are symbols of prestige. The culture of a people can be considered as most significant in their life's because it is traditional, generic, and forms their beliefs and aspirations and goals of life that have been lived with, shared, revered and held in the highest esteem that impact greatly on their value system, norms, behaviours and general conduct of life.

LEGAL, POLITICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL:

Any development in a country in the extent of legal development of rules and regulations, law and order and the enforcement, imbibe the culture of legal principles in the citizenry and conduct of affairs. The laws operating in a country determines the extent and success of organised business transactions. Legal controls may take outright banning to limiting commercial promotions of products, protecting the consumers from bad advertising messages, misleading and false information and the considerations for national sovereignty, economic and cultural factors political developments may create uncertainties and upheavals in the developing countries of Asia and Africa, such as the dehumanisation in Sudan, the conflicts in various countries are impediments to promotional activities that affects international marketing communications. The advancement in technological developments creates better manipulations of advertisements and promotional activities.

SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT:

The level of social structures in a country can contribute to the promotional programmes and activities among the consumes and general publics. Promotions in developed countries are easier and better organised than the developing countries. In developing countries, promotions could increase costs of products to the detriment of consumers, especially with packaging products. The stage of product life cycle with newly introduced products require more promotions thereby incurring more costs than when the product life cycle is at maturity with lesser promotions.

The competitive activities, level of production of goods and services, channel development and general market situations can affect the promotion of products. In consumer perception, different countries have varying degrees of perceptual influences that affects consumers in their knowledge of promotion of products. Huff et al (1998:47-56) suggest their findings in Malaysia and Taiwan, that consumers in Taiwan have more negative attitudes and lower levels of use of both sweep stakes and coupons promotions than consumers in Malaysia and Thailand.

Belch et al (2001:706) argue that strong retailing require in store promotions among other trade structures that affects promotions. The coupons may not be redeemed, post promotions may not be adequately followed with product displays and negligence of good information handling. Nigeria will small cubicles as stores may not be able to display enough products in the store rooms, and point of purchase displays outside the store house.

COMPONENTS OF PROMOTIONS:

International marketing communications is the duplication or replication of domestic advertising in different countries with similarities of messages, agency functions, media planning, selection and budgeting. The components of marketing communications in international marketing are advertising and other promotional mix variables that have direct impact on consumers' awareness preferences and choice of products.

ADVERTISING:

The spread and dissemination of commercial information about products, are directed at consumers in a target

market across different countries of the world. Advertising is the most prominent element of promotions that is present in all other promotions mix. However the growth of advertising has caused an increase in the costs of advertising for product promotions, the problems though are the differences in cultural and economic developments that affects advertising. Eztel et al (2000:76) argue that the difficulty in international advertising is that what works in one country or culture might take on quite another meaning elsewhere. However, advertisers need to capture the attention of consumers and would therefore have to device various means to attract their attention by use of honours, fears, emotions, shocks, fantasies and others.

The challenges in the use of layouts, appeals, copy and theme are the need to contrast them in different cultural settings by adaptation or have a central programme and structure that apply simultaneously to all the cultures. Eztel et al (2000:76) further argue that the goal of advertising is the same in any country, namely, to communicate information and persuasive appeals effectively. The implication thereof is that using whatever works best in a particular country or culture may be the solutions to the problems of cultural barriers to advertising in any country.

SALES PROMOTION:

The use of gifts, products sponsorship, extra packs, sampling, couponing among others are sales promotion approaches for international and domestic markets that entice and motivate customers for higher patronages. Though most sales promotions maybe short lived or temporary measure, the results are often overwhelming. The use of trade promotions for channel members or market intermediaries maybe quite different from product or consumer promotions directed at consumers.

The problems with sales promotions are that they are used as stop gaps probably to reverse sales declines, or to fight competitors challenges rather than incorporated into a sales programme as part of an integrated marketing communications. Promotions could be considered as domestic though, results may be internationalised such as sponsorship of winners of a sales contest to travel to different countries, or use of celebrities such as beauty queen's or pageants, Michael Jackson or Pele of Brazil promoting some products in various countries. the world football Federation of International Football Association (FIFA). The Olympic games, coca cola and other organisations use these measures to promote sports and products respectively around the world.

Sales promotion differs in different countries and care had to be exercised to ensure that each country is considered for cultural, economic, social and demographic backgrounds for successful and effective promotions. However, the proliferation of media, liberalization and privatisation of trade and media respectively in cable and satellite television, the exchanges and transfer concepts of ideas on sales promotion have helped to internationalise sales promotions. Belch et al (2001:707) however, suggest that local managers are given the autonomy to execute their sales promotion programmes, though, global brands require uniformity in marketing communications and as such the promotion programme should be determined at headquarters, including objectives, positioning, allocations of budget, and use of consumers versus trade promotions.

PERSONAL SELLING:

In international marketing communications, the use of personal selling is the culmination of all other promotional programmes because it is the only means for basic explanations of product functionality, applications and substitutability, maintenance and other measures for direct raining of users. The industrial and high technical products are mostly disposed to this arrangement as it deals directly and physically with customers though the internet is now vast with personal selling on the net. The problems of culture, economic and demographic structures could be reduced by use of personal selling as its rate of adjustability, adaptability and adoption of immediate situations on ground at the domestic market could be incomparable to other promotion tools.

DIRECT MARKETING:

Bennett (1988:58) defines direct marketing as the total of activities by which the seller, in effecting the exchange

of goods and services with the buyer, direct efforts to target audience using one or more media (direct selling, direct mail, telemarketing, direct-action advertising, catalogue selling, cable TV selling, etc) for the purpose of soliciting a response by phone, mail, or personal visit from a prospect or customer. Direct marketing as an element in international marketing communications is targeted at individuals in a target market across various countries with the objective of solicit for sales or exchange transactions on one to one basis. As an element of communications, it can avoid the barriers imposed by culture, demography, economic, social and others, because information exchange is tailor made to suits individuals.

The major problems associated with direct marketing in international marketing communications are those of access to communication facilities especially in the developing countries with low level of telephone and GSM ownership, television is a luxury that only few can afford, poor street numbering and absence of area codes for surface and electronic mails, poor data available on individuals profiles, near absence of computers in private homes and officers. The dissemination of information is poorly organised with the high level of illiteracy.

There are no independent agencies for research and development that can provide records or statistical records of consumers and other members of the publics, the national census commission responsible for population and individuals records has no reliable data especially in Nigeria. The poor electricity supply does not allow for reliable use of electronic equipment and the few that can afford computers cannot operate than for lack of power supply.

PUBLIC RELATIONS:

International and multination organisations involve with marketing of products across the various countries of the world rely heavily on marketing communications, to reach the various customers and consumers in different countries. The international communications may use the advantages of adaptation to encourage different counties to handle marketing communications to the requirements of particular countires. The multinational organisations maintain the same approach and standard across the whole countries. However, both the International and Multinational organisations use the exclusivity of culture, social, technological and political structures to deal with the various publics including consumers, government functionaries, the media groups, the relevant publics, (non governmental organisations, social and human rights activists, religious organisations, trade associations) that may have different stakes in the economic life of different nations. These are also sources of possible crises and disruptions through organised protests, strikes, withdrawal of services, and other non cooperative services.

The responsibilities of public relations is to intervene, be proactive, refute negative publicity, neutralise crises, act in the nick of time against crises, prevent the crises, promote peace, create conducive and an enabling environment of peace and cooperation for the success of international and multinational marketing activities in different countries of the world.

The major weapons of public relations warfare are organisation of press relations, press interviews, sponsorship of editorials, visits to prominent media houses to reach the various publics, use of cable and satellite television network to reach out to different publics across various countries, participate in national celebrations such as independence day celebrations, human rights celebrations and special cultural festivities. In all these engagements, the companies, organisations, firms, industries logos, trademarks, corporate identities, trade names, products and services offered must be prominently represented.

The use of international media such as journals and the company's trade journals must be widely circulated at embassies, consulate offices, trade association headquarters and public places. These must be in adherence to all existing laws of national and international organisations such as United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF), United Nation's Organisations (UWO), International Labour Organisations in General (ILO) and the constitutions of the various countries. the essence of all these are to promote the product of the companies, present the organisations or firms as good corporate citizen interested in the growth and development of the country, to polish and maintain the good image of an organisation and its product, and avoid conflict of interests between the organisation or firm and those of the domestic market.

PUBLICITY:

The greatest threat to international and multinational organisations are the bad images suffered from negative publicity that may take time to be refuted, and repair of the damages done may be extremely difficult. Belch et al (2001:709), Speer (1999:26), sellers (1999:72-78) present the cases of McDonald and Coca cola, thus, McDonald negative publicity in Europe as an anti-American protest against World Trade Organisation (WTO) decision ordering Europe to accept hormone – Fed beef produced in the United States, French Farmers Rejected this and vent the venom on McDonalds as an American Outfit. In a related case, Coca Cola also suffered similar problem when Belgians (School Children) took ill after consuming Coca Cola that was contaminated by bad carbon dioxide in its Antwerp Belgium bottle and traces of fungicide on wooden pallets used in its Dun Kirk, France Canning facility. France and Netherlands than banned the sale of any products that came from there plants. In response, Coca Cola ran full-page news advertisements from its chairman in the countries where the company had withdrawn its products, apologising for the quality control problem.

THE IMPERATIVES OF STRATEGY:

The challenges of international marketing communications are those matters that have to do with strategies, as measures required to accomplish the goas and objectives in international promotions. An obvious and interesting aspect of this was what Smith (2000:217) argues as point to ponder, that a single communications strategy (incorporating everything from branding to the complete range of communications tools) rarely works for all the players operating in international markets. This suggests further that there is no definite strategy and what could be considered to work best, a state of inquisitiveness that marketers have continued to unravel. This whatever seem to work in a particular country may have to be adapted and adopted as the version of international marketing communications. Bovee et al (1992:678) put forward a model strategy that may be pursued as measures to attaining the goals of international marketing promotions. Companies, that already market domestically, existing product and promotions strategies can be duplicated, altered, or disregarded completely when marketing internationally.

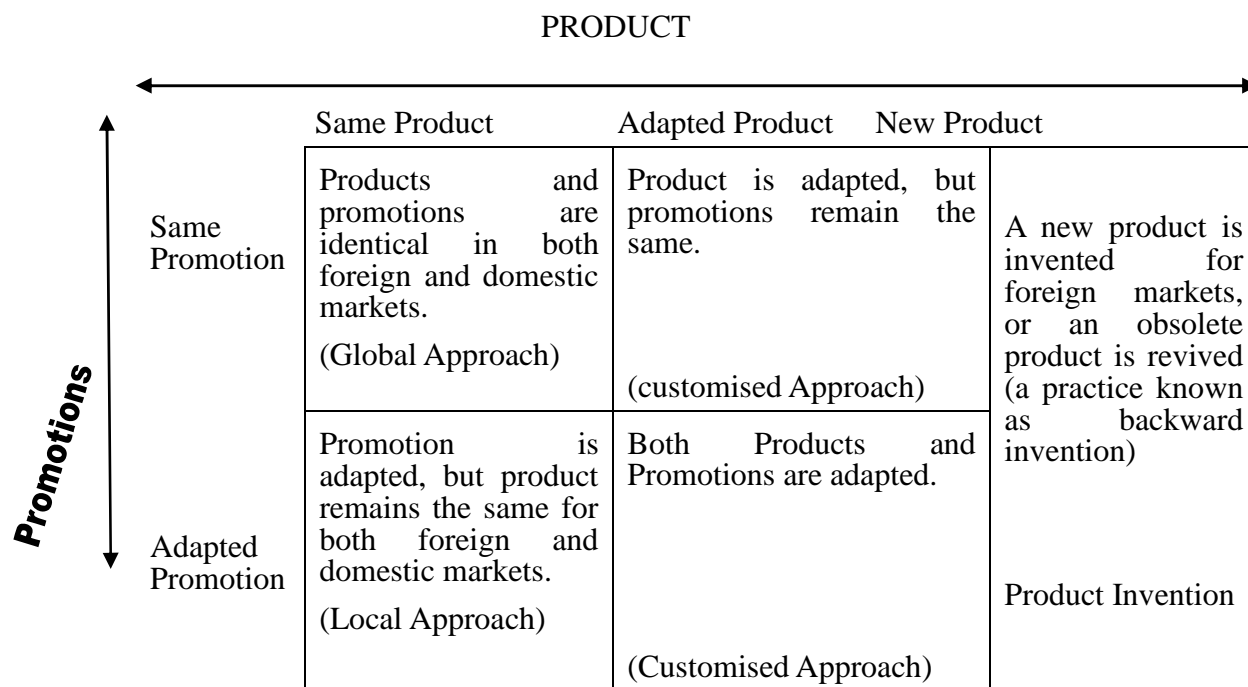


Fig II: Marketers can use one or more of the alternative strategies to market their products or services internationally.

Source: Bovee, C. L., and Thill, V. J. (1992) Marketing.
 New York: Mc GrawHill, Inc P 678

Thus, a further submission as contained in fig. II is the use of the triangular model of global customised and local approaches. Global approach favours the use of product and promotion standardization in all the markets around the world with one message, creativity and same approach for dissemination of messages. Companies such as Coca-Cola, Daimler Benz are among the major users of this approach. The customised approach is the use of adaptation of product and promotion to the distinct characteristics of each market in a country. This may also require that product and promotion can be modified or altered to meet the unique needs of the market, and a mixture of both altering and adaptation could be used for promotions especially with messages and creativity. The product or promotion creation or invention can also be used as a strategy by bringing about new developments such as Coca Cola and others that developed high protein foods specially to sell as diet supplements in foreign countries with heavy use of samples to allow for tests of product tastes, quality, and acceptability in the foreign markets.

Smith (2000:226) also identifies standardization and differentiation as important strategies for international marketing communications. The standardisation of promotions has to reflect on the product conditions in the market, such as having same product and same communications or a different product and a different communications as well as same product but different communication. In all these situations, the consumers in each country may have different or similar reactions to these changes. The prevalent conditions are usually culture bound and a reflection of the economic, political, social and technological developments.

The crucial determinant of success in the use of these promotion factors of public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing may be the adaptation of each approach to the country's requirements, rather than a single or holistic applications in all the countries. In particular the central control of production, from concept to finish that may be compelled or prevailed on all the countries is highly unlikely to succeed. Centralization and decentralisation are developed and applied as strategies by having a centralised authority residing in a particular headquarters and all other countries follow from the guidelines and directives.

In the alternative decentralization has to be adopted by having central planning but decentralized implementation applicable and suitable to each of the countries.

MEDIA, CREATIVITY AND MESSAGES:

The media of promotions form the strategic imperatives of international marketing communications, including the use of traditional media of television, radio, newspapers, magazines, journals and the multimedia and internet, as well as out of home or billboard. Batra et al (1998: 726-7) suggest that many factors are likely to be differently experienced across countries including costs of media, target consumers reached spending levels and patterns of competitive products, the life cycle stage of products, household penetrations for the product category. The considerations for media may also extend to the budget as this may be different in each country, the characteristics of the media include reach, spread, penetration, types, combination, media mix, availability, accessibility by consumers and customers, ownership structure, flexibility in the use of media, the audiences or consumers profile such as demography in age, education, income level, patterns of consumption, the location, shopping habits and outlets, occupation and switching patterns and product substitutability.

A strategic imperative on media is the centralisation of planning and buying of media at regional or local levels, suggesting that each country's peculiarity of culture, level of economic development, media availability, language and messages translations, regulatory and legal controls and other sensitive decisions are best handled at local levels in each country rather than a centralised control. However, some companies adopting the global structure and strategy may still consider having the core elements such as target audience definition, reach and frequency goals in use of media decided at the central level or be subject to the approval of the centralised authority and carried down to the local or regional levels. In particular, the localization of media or adaptation of media programmes must be made according to the local or regional definitions especially in costs, language, cultural limitations, legal and regulatory controls, timing of media programmes, choice of local media and a host of other decisions (Kotler et al (1999:816-7), Baker (1995:) Batra et al (1998:727).

The greatest influence in media strategy is the creativity of layouts, use of appeals, symbols and signs that reflects the cultural interests in different countries. There have been series of crises in the use of cartoons that may have misrepresented the interests of particular cultures in religion, language, colour and political matters. Batra et al (1998:725) argue that the use of logic and reasoned arguments may need to be adapted to the level of education and product category of the consumer's knowledge. A fear appeal may work better if it uses local variations of what people find most threatening and anxiety provoking. Thus, the selection of agency must consider the creative talents in the various countries, and a central agency should have the capability and capacity to be represented in major cultural groups such as Asia, Africa and Middle East.

The choice of messages to be used is a function of the copy artist or copywriter. The benefit to be conveyed, the

positioning of the product in the minds of consumers, the theme of the messages, the sloganeering required for particular campaigns, the nature and type of media available, the level of literacy, the competitive challengers are strong factors that constitute the strategy to be adopted for the media. The globalisation of message will be based on the homogeneity of needs across the various countries, the same product that has to be presented in brand positioning and nature of appeals and responses required from the audiences. The localisation of messages will therefore be centred on execution and implementations such as the tone and format of the message, selection of the message, on the basis of rationality, emotional, honour, fear, comparative appeals, the image posture to be presented and structure of messages.

TYPES OF MEDIA:

Media availability is the greatest problem encountered by advertisers in international marketing communications, especially in the developing countries with poor media development with only few available to handle the advertisements. However, a contrary situation exists in advanced countries with too many media that it becomes a problem for advertisers to be able to cover the costs of advertisements for the use of every available media. An additional dimension to this contrasting situation is the presence of few large and powerful international media corporations across the countries, are in control of prices, costs and other negotiations to the detriment of domestic media that does not cover the international advertising such as the British broadcasting corporation (BBV), Voice of America (VOA) among others.

The use of newspapers remains the oldest form of international media and has improved with new technologies with satellite printing that can simultaneously publish in more than one country at a time to reach global audiences across many countries. The magazines and journals are highly influential in the highly technical matters and among the influential audiences. The Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, The Economist, Harvard Business Review, (HBR), The Times and others are among the most circulating ones, though the reach and penetration do not cover the mass consumer markets.

The television has globalise the world and reduced the barriers of distance and obscurity in international boundaries. The introduction of cable Televisions Broadcasting automatically changed the face of the world. Batra et al (1998:721) Moriarty et al (1990: 341) suggest that the standardisation of international advertising is more common for television advertisements than for print especially among business to business and high technical product categories such as computers, audio and video equipment, cars and trucks, and among emotion, image and fashion oriented product categories including fragrance, clothing and Jewries. Companies such as Gillette, Pepsi, Coco Cola, view television as the best way to reach mass markets and effectively communicate the advertising messages (Belch et al (2001:703). The role of CNN, BBC, Euro Sports, are becoming legendary in international advertisements.

The other forms of media are the out of home (billboard) radio, international trade fairs and exhibition, sponsorships, direct mail, and video and other multimedia. The out of home is improving with the use of transit advertising with taxis, buses, trucks, park benches, busstops shelters, use of jumbo billboards, electronic billboard have changed and transformed this form of media into national and international repute (Kotler et al (1999:815-816).

Internet and interactive communication media such as video text and pay television are becoming popular. The internet has revolutionised international communications and with the deregulation and privatisation of the communications, there is now an information bang with the proliferation of commercial television and cable and satellite broadcasting. The internet and cable television have now reduced and are breaking down cultural and legal and regulatory barriers and controls respectively. Kotler et al (1999:814) suggest that the emergence of mega brands as a result of merger activities is another development of note that can concentrate media buying and in turn influences media development. The online promotion give international exposure to products' different features, enrich company profiles, and encourage consumer participation in online promotions. The Internet has now provided companies and organisations multicultural websites that is country specific (Betch et al (2001, 172) especially with languages, cultural and traditional signs and symbols. The customers and other visitors to different websites see the brands of products as the same, with similar messages adapted at the different sites.

Discussion of Findings and the Implications for Marketing Communications in ECOWAS, AFRICA and the GLOBE:

International marketing communications assumes the privacy of national markets but creates the global messages and themes for the advertisements of global products to global consumers, that are beyond the confines of national boundaries. Thus, recognising the regional and domestic markets but globalising the markets with a

single product and message philosophy. Bovee et al (1992: 573) argue that the challenges include language barriers, cultural norms regarding geographic symbols, and care should be exercised in taking campaigns to other countries to avoid offending people and to maximise promotional impact. In some cases a simple translation may be required, in others a complete overhaul of the marketing programme might be necessary. The contentions issues have always been the use of standardized campaigns by adaptability of global principles.

Levitt (1989:2-16) suggests the need for globalisation by making it that instead of adapting to superficial and even entrenched differences within and between nations, the modern global marketer will seek sensibly to force suitably standardized products and practices on the entire globe. There is no gainsaying that globalisation is real, but the argument has been the extent of globalisation, thus, the suggestions for total or partial globalisation both in concept and implementation across various countries have been severally considered (Batra et al (1998:721) Kotler et al (1999:814) Bovee et al (1992:679). The argument of Moriarty et al (1990: 341) show that advertising standardization can vary on a continuum, such as message strategy and tactical execution components, may have total implementation, or standardise strategy with translated executions or modified executions, or total localise strategy and executions. Hite et al (1988:17) suggest 9 percent standardization globally, 37 percent complete localised advertisements, 54 percent local agencies to tailor umbrella strategy theme to the customs, values and lifestyles of their local markets. James et al (1991:71) also suggest the use of standardised themes and creative contexts (exeutional elements) by multinationals for 40 percent of the time, and local operations in more affluent local markets, thus supporting the use of more localization.

There are reasons to suggest that in most countries of Europe, consumer durables such as electronics, cosmetics and alcohol beverages, have adopted single agency networks, but the retailers and media companies and some manufacturers of mostly food and drinks have remain inclined to the localisations due to cultural differences. The same is applicable to Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with great differences in languages and culture that tend to adapt localization principles more than centralisation and standardisation, though, multinational be average products such as Nescafe Manufactured in Ghana has been acceptable in all Nigerian Consumer Markets. Batra et al (1998: 722) argue that advertising campaigns for food and beverage products, are often hardest to standardize because eating and drinking habits and beliefs are often very culture bound.

The impact of product image and life cycle can be another difficult aspects for standardization as it may be easier for new brands to be standardized than an old brand with an accepted or rejected product images established in different localisations around the world especially with different stages of life cycles. Regionalization may also play significant role in standardization and impact of marketing communications in different countries, because it may be easier to standardise by localization within a regional block like ECOWAS, Africa, Middle East, Asia and Western Europe where consumers are more in clusters with closer similarities than across continental or regional blocks with greater differences. Batra et al (1998:724) further argue that Japanese tend to be more 'indirect', less pushy, more symbolism, less copy intensive, more emotional, humorous, status oriented, aimed at building common image, less competitive, than advertisings in USA. British televisions tends to be more soft-sell in approach and more entertaining than the United States advertisings as a result of cultural, historical and advertising practice reasons. In Africa and in particular ECOWAS countries, the use of humour from testimonial and endorser advertisings tend to be more than sexual and rational appeals as a result of cultural, less developed economies, recovery from colonial past that deny them luxuries and the relaxation atmosphere for radiant and fantasy love life as obtain in Western World. Africa reflects the course for struggle and survival, hunger, war and deprivations that reflects in the advertisements of products. The use of reassurance messages, and surprises appeals dominates, for example in Nigeria the advertisement of maltina with a human being jumping out from the bottle with happiness, or jik cleaner that cleans rusted and decayed toilet sinks, and get it sparkling in just seconds of its application, tablets of drugs relieving pains in seconds are evidences of localization of messages that may not be acceptable in other regions. Consumers in Nigeria may wish that local advertisings should be more informative, easier to understand, more believability and less dramatisation and personified messages by testimonials that represents individuals than product characters.

The greatest impact in regional and global marketing communications are felt in different areas of cultural, language, illiteracy and literacy rates, colour codes, symbols and signs, gestures, national interests, media availability, accessibility and costs, usage rates, characteristics and credibility of media, western and regional media culture, and legal restrictions. The influence of competition, non global players in product manufacture and distribution, the differences and varying costs structures and the geographic locations and groupings of the world markets into regional, localized, international, global developed, developing, rural, urban and advanced markets are the various ways and aspects in which the international marketing communications impact on world

markets.

The situations for the international marketing communications are the mix trends of applications and methodologies in the standardizations and differentiations, centralization and decentralization along the lines of localization or domestic, regionalization and the globalisation. The trend has now become more of “think globalisation but act localization” or “think international act local” and this presupposes that a central planning will be visibly pursued by local implementation is feasible most of the time.

The internet has made the global planning and implementation realistic in methodology and strategy, and increasing globalisation of markets and media, have been motivating a cultural convergence of the various consumers in different countries with homogeneity in consumption patterns and similarity of needs, wants, demands and social class income and purchase patterns. The costs of products, advertising and promotions distribution and production of communications have likely tendency for decline and thus a boost to savings in research costs. In some instances, companies are now leveraging the concepts and ideas in creativity and other successful developments in some markets and transferring them automatically into the other markets across the world. There is flexibility in the mobility of ideas and concepts from one part of the global markets to the other, especially in messages strategies and tactics. However, the media scheduling, timing, buying and role of agencies have been difficult to be standardized because they are culture bounds and localization inclined than other aspects of communication elements. There are reasons to suggest that international networks may be established for part or full ownership of agencies, joint ventures, strategic alliances, buyouts, mergers and representations (Batra et al (1998:729).

The representative agencies and central agency programmes have to be complementary to avoid double handling in implementation and executions at the local or regional markets. The tendency for resistance by local consumers against those message contents considered as foreign in creativity and imposition on the local markets may be reduced or eliminated. The media planning and buying, executions of creativity are local conceptions but the media strategy in audience definitions, frequency and reach of media runs may have reasons to be centralised in conceptualisation. As Levitt (1983:92-102, 1986) notes, the worldwide market place has become homogenized and consumers basic needs, wants, and expectations transcends geographic, national, and cultural boundaries. Hence globalisation.

The implications of International Marketing Communications in globalisation including the cultural, market and economic differences, the media availability, legal and regulatory control's, the intermittent ordering patterns, inconsistencies of government polices of protectionism, have made universality in applications unrealistic. This was the submission of Belch et al (2001:689) that some agencies call this approach “Think globally act locally,” and Grey Advertising describes it as “global vision with a local touch”, has been considered as a suitable option for marketing communications in international and global marketing. The “global products, local messages” concepts is quite ideal to sustain the vagaries in cultural and socio-economic dispensations.

The international marketing communications is considered from different perspectives in the communications with consumers in the international and global markets including the necessities for standardisation or differentiation and centralisation and decentralisation of approaches in concepts on and use of media, messages and creativity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of product features, consumers' demographic profiles, cultural, economic and local and regulatory controls should be considered as strategic to the decisions of globalisation, localization and regionalization. The products with same features have to be communicated globally to consumers and those with variations in features and uses, are to be communicated with adaptations in the local or regional markets to the consumers. There should be no hard and fast rules but to do what will win consumers preference for the products, in all the markets across the various countries of the world.

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