



## THE ROLES PLAYED BY SUBCULTURES ON CONSUMER CHOICE OF GOODS: A REVIEW OF EVIDENCES FROM LITERATURE.

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### ABSTRACT

Culture is the fundamental determinant in a person's want and behaviour.

Individuals are brought up to follow the beliefs, value and customs of the society and to avoid behavior that is judged unacceptable or considered as a taboo. Each culture consists of smaller subcultures that provide more specific identification and socialization for their members (Kotler 2003). The paper reviews evidences documented in the

### Introduction

Culture has a potent influence on all consumer behaviour. Individuals are brought up to follow some believes, values, and customs of their society and to avoid a behaviour that is judged unacceptable or consider taboo. In addition to segmenting in terms of cultural factors, marketers also segment over all societies into smaller sub-groups (subcultures) that consist of people who are similar in terms of their ethnic origin, customs and the way they believe. These subcultures provide important marketing opportunities for astute marketing strategies (leon and leslie 2003).

Subcultural analysis enables the marketing managers to focus sizeable and natural marketing segments. When carrying out such analysis, the marketer must determine whether the beliefs, values, and custom shared by members of a specific subgroup make the desirable candidates for special marketing attention. Subcultures, therefore, are relevant units of analysis for market research.

### What is subculture?

Leon and Leslie (2003) define subcultures as a distinct cultural group that exist as an identifiable segment within a larger, more complex society.



*literature as they pertain to subcultural influences on consumer choice. The paper discovered that each society contains subculture groups with shared value. As well the paper recommended that marketers should be guided in segmenting their markets by the knowledge of the existence of subculture*

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In the definition above, it must be noted that cultural profile of a society or a nation is a composite of two distinct elements.

- A. The unique beliefs, values and customs subscribed to by members of specific subcultures and
- B. The central or core cultural themes that are shared by most of the population, regardless of specific subcultural membership.

To illustrate the importance of ethnic origin as a subcultural market segment this paper work tends to examine religious and age subcultures.

➤ **Religious Subcultures**

There are over 500 religious subcultures. Of this number, protestant denominators, Islam, Roman Catholicism and Judaism are the principal organized religions faith. The members of all this religious groups at time are likely to make purchase decisions that are influenced by their religious identity. Commonly, consumer behaviour is directly affected by religions in terms of products that are symbolically and ritualistically associated with the celebration of various religious holidays. For example, Christmas has been the major gift-purchasing season of the year.

Religious requirement or practices sometimes take on an expanded meaning beyond their original purpose. For instance, dietary laws for an observant Jewish family represent an obligation, so there are toothpaste and artificial sweeteners that are kosher for Passover. The U and k marks on food packaging are symbols that the food meets Jewish dietary laws. For non-observant Jews and an increasing number of non-Jews, however this marks often signify that the food is pure and whole some a kind of Jewish Good housekeeping seal of Approval. In response to the broader meaning gives to kosher-certified products a number of national brands, such as Pepperidge farm cookies have secured kosher



certification for their products. Indeed, most kosher food is consumed by non-Jews [Kelvin (2000)].

Micheal (2005) examine the barna research group estimate that there are 2 billion Christians, 1.2 billion people practicing Islam, 900 million are Hindus, 315 are Buddhist, 15 million are Jews and a category it terms primal indigenous make up another 109 million. In addition, there are 750,000 practicing scientology and 700,000 Rastafarians religious affiliation has the potential to be valuable predictor of consumer behaviour. In some cases, dietary or dress requirements create demand for certain products and these items then may gain in popularity among other groups.

Religious subcultures in particular may exert a significant impact on consumer variables such as personality, attitudes towards sexuality, birth rates and house hold formation, income and political attitude. Church leaders can encourage consumption, but more importantly they can discourage it sometimes with powerful effects the Disney corporation discovered how effectives these movements could be when the southern Baptist convention voted to persuade all its members to boycott its television, Disney studies, ESPN, dimension films and Miramax films. The anti-mickey rebellion was instituted because of the gay days held at the theme parks and a view that hisney have a radical homosexual agenda that it promoted through its broadcast.

Soon other organizations joined the cause, including the American family Association, the general council of the assemblies of god, congregational holiness church, the catholic league for religious and civil rights, and the freewill Baptist. The fallout from the boycott was significant, resulting in a lay off to a 4000 employees. One year after the boycott, Disney theme saw business drop by 8% from the previous year's corresponding quarter and ABC television and Disney Studies also announced cuts because release failed to achieve expected profits.

➤ **Age subculture**

It's not difficult to understand why each major age subgrouping of a population might be thought of as a separate subculture. We listen to different music than our parents and grandparents, dress differently, read different magazines and enjoy different TV show? Clearly, important shifts occur in an individual's demand for specific types of products and services as he or she goes from being a dependent child to a retire senior citizen. This paperwork will examine four age groups in age subcultures moving from the youngest to oldest. Generation Y, generation X, Baby boomers and seniors.

**A. The Generation Y Market**

An age cohort is a group of individuals born over a relatively short and continuous period of time and has similar experiences.



This age cohort includes the approximately 71 million Americans born between the year 1977 and 1994 (the children of baby boomers). Members of generation Y are often describe as pragmatic savvy, socially and environmentally aware, and open to new experience.

### **Appealing to generation Y**

They have grown up in a media saturated environment and tend to be aware of marketing type. For example, they will tend to immediately understand when a shopping Centre locates popular teen stores at opposite ends of the mall. They are being encouraged to walk the mall [Laureen (2000)].

This age cohort has shifted some of its TV viewing time to the internet and when compared with their parent shop in smart, retailers have found it profitable to develop website specifically targeted to the interest of the Gen Y consumers.

### **B. The Generation X market**

This age grouping often refer to as characteristics, buster or slackers-consist of the approximately 46 million individuals born between about 1965 and 1979. As consumers, there 23-27 yrs olds spend about N125 billion yearly they do not like labels, are cynical and do not want to be singled out and marketed to. They matured during an era of soaring divorce rates and latchkey children. Also, while their parents who are frequently baby boomers, they are in no rush to marry, start a family, work excessive hours to earn high salaries. For generation X consumers, job satisfaction is typically more important than salary. It has been seen for example, that baby boomers live to work, Gen Xers work to live they are not particularly interested in long term employment with a single company but instead prefer to work for a company that can offer some work life flexibility and bring some fun aspects into the environment.

### **Appealing to Generation X**

Members of generation X often pride themselves on their sophistication. Although they are not necessarily materialistic, they do purchase good brand names (such as Sony) but no necessary designer labels.

They want to be recognized by marketers as a group in their own right and not as mini-baby boomers. Therefore, advertisements targeted tit is audience must focus on their style in music, fashions, and language. One key for marketers appears to be sincerity. Xres are not against advertisement but only opposed to insincerity. Baby boomers media do not work with generation X members. For example, while 65% of 50-64 year olds and 55% of 30-49 years old read a newspaper regularly, only 39% of adults under 30 (the young Xers) regularly read newspaper [John (1999)].



**c. The baby boomer market**

The term baby boomer refers to the age segment of the population that was born between 1946 and 1964 these 78 million or so baby boomers represent more than 40% of the adult population. The magnitude of these statistics alone will make them a much sought after market segment. Although each year more baby boomers turn 50 years of age, they do not necessarily like the idea. Increase the health club membership and a boom in the sales of vitamin and health supplements are evidence that these consumers are trying hard to look and feel “young “- they do not want to age gracefully but will fight and kick and pay whatever is necessary to look young. For example, 35-50 years olds are the largest market for plastic surgery, and the majority cosmetic dentistry patients are 40-49 yrs of age.

**Consumer characteristics of baby Boomers**

Baby boomers tend to be motivated consumers. They enjoying buying for themselves, for their homes or apartments, and for others, they are consumption oriented. As baby boomers age, the nature of the products and services they must need institution are also paying more attention to assisting boomers who are starting to think about retirements.

Gen Yers, Gen Xers and baby boomers differ in their purchasing behaviour attitude towards brands, and behaviour towards ads [Leon and Leslie (2003)].

**D. Senior or Older consumer**

In the United State, “Old age” is officially assumed to begin with person’s 65<sup>th</sup> birth (or when the individual qualifies for full social security and Medicare). However, people over age 60 tend to see themselves as being 15 years younger than their chronological age.

Research consistently suggests that people’s perceptions of their ages are more important in determining behaviour than their chronological age (or the numbers of years lived).

The elderly are by no means a homogeneous subcultural group. One consumer gerontologist has suggested that the elderly are more diverse interest, opinions, and actions than or the segments of the adult population. Although this view run counter to the popular myth that the elderly are uniform in terms of attitudes and life style, both gerontologist and market researchers have repeatedly demonstrated that age is not necessarily a major factor in determining how older consumers respond to marketing activities.

**Marketing to the Older Consumer**

Older consumers do want to be marketed to but only for the “right” kinds of products and services and using the right advertising presentation. Part of the



problem, according to some writers on the subjects, is that the advertising professionals who create the ads are often in their 20s and 30s and have little understanding or empathy for older consumers. Seniors often want to be identified not for what they did in the past but by what they will like to accomplish in the future. Retirement or moving to Sunbelt community is views as the opening of a new chapter in life and not a quite withdrawal from life. In the same vein, the increase in the number of older adults taking vacation cruise and joining health clubs signifies a strong commitment to remaining “functionally young” Leon and Leslie (2003).

➤ **Sex as a Subculture**

All society tends to assign certain traits and roles to males and others to females. In some societies, for instance, aggressiveness and competitiveness often were considered traditional masculine traits: neatness, tactfulness, gentleness, and talkativeness were considered traditional feminine traits in terms of role differences; women have historically been cast as home makers with responsibility for child care and men as a providers or bread winners. Because such traits and roles are no longer relevant for many individuals, marketers are increasingly appealing to consumer’s broader vision of gender related role options.

**Consumer Products and Sex Roles**

Within every society, it is quite common to find products that are either exclusively or strongly associated with the members of one sex. For examples, shaving equipment, cigars, pants, ties and work clothing were historically male products, bracelets, hair dryers, hair spray and sweet-smelling colognes generally we considered feminine products. For most of these products, the sea role link has either diminished or disappeared; for others, the prohibition still lingers. An interesting products category with regard to the blurring of a gender appeal is men’s fragrances. Although men are increasingly wearing fragrances, it is estimated that 30% of men’s fragrances are worn by men.

In terms of its appeal, men and women are different in terms of attraction to the internet. For example, medical information, cooking ideas, government information, and chatting, in contrast, men tend to focus on exploring, discovery, identifying free software and investments. This provides further support for the notion that men are “hunters” whereas women are “nurtures.”

**The Working Person**

Marketers are keenly interested in the working women. Especially the married working women. They recognized that married women who worked outside of the home are a



large and growing market segment, one whose needs differ from those of women who do not work outside the home (frequent self-labeled 'stay-at-home'). It is the size of the working women market that makes it so attractive. Approximately 60% of American women 16 years of age and older in the Labour force, which represents the market of over 65 million individuals. Whereas more than half of all women with children under the age of 1 are working. Almost 78% of women with ages 6 to 17 are employed.

Because 40% of all business travelers are women, hotels have begun to realize that it pays to provide the services women want, such as healthy foods, gyms, and spas and wellness center. Female business travelers are also concerned about hotel security and frequently used room services because they do not want to go to the hotel bar or restaurant.

### **Segmenting the Working Women Market**

To provide a richer frame work for segmentation, marketers have developed categories that differentiate the motivation of working and non-working women. A number of studies have divided the female population into four segments: stay-at-home house wives; plan-to-work house wives; "just-a-job" and "career oriented" working women is particularly meaningful. "Just-a-job" working women seem to be motivated to work primarily by a sense that the family requires the additional income, whereas "career-oriented" working women, who tend to be in a managerial or professional position, are driven more by a need to achieve and succeed in their chosen careers. Today, though, either more or more female college graduates in the workforce, the percentage of career oriented working women is on the rise.

Working women spend less time shopping than non-working women. They accomplish this "time economy" by shopping less often and by being brand and store loyal. Not surprisingly, working women are likely to shop during evening hours and on weekends, as well as to buy through direct-mail catalogs.

Business that advertise to women should also be aware that magazine are now delivering a larger women's audience than television shows. Whereas early 1980s TV show had higher ratings than popular magazines, today the top 25 women's magazines have large audience than the top television shows targeted to females.

### **SUBCULTURE INTERACTION**

All consumers are simultaneously members of more than one subcultural, segment (e.g., a consumer may be young, Hispanic, catholic home maker living in the Midwest). For this reason, marketers should strive to understand how multiple subcultural membership interest to influence target consumers' relevant consumption behaviour. Promotional strategy should not be limited to target a single subcultural membership.



## **FINDINGS**

Each society contains subcultures, groups with shared values emerging from their special life experiences or circumstances. Members of subculture share common beliefs, preferences and behaviors. To the extent that subcultural groups exhibit wants and consumption behaviour, marketers can choose subcultures as market targets.

Marketers can reap unexpected rewards in targeting subcultures. Marketers must understand people's views of themselves, others, organizations, society, nature and the universe.

## **CONCLUSION**

People have many things in common with others merely because they are about the same age. Consumers who grew up at the same time share many cultural memories because they belong to a common age cohort, so, they may respond well to marketers' nostalgia appeal that reminds them of these experiences.

Subcultural analysis enable marketers to segment their markets to meet the specific needs, motivations perceptions and attitudes shared by members of a specific subcultural group. As a result, product characteristics can be tailored to the specialize needs of the market segment.

Because all consumers simultaneously are members of several subcultural groups, the marketers must determine for the product category how specific subcultural membership interacts to influence the consumer's purchase decision.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Every marketer of goods or services, regardless of product category should seriously consider the reality of subcultures and their attendant influence/implications for customer attraction' retention and loyalty in the face of ferocious competition.

Marketers of both goods and services should be guided in segmenting their markets by the knowledge of the existence of subcultures this paper offers, because wrong segmentation will not allow for successful targeting and positioning.

Marketer must market products that correspond to society's core and secondary values, and address the needs of different subcultures within a society.

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