CONSUMPTION CULTURE IN THE PRESENCE OF GLOBALISATION: THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION, NATION AND ETHNICITY ON CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

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Abstract. *The aim of this paper is to discuss existing consumption culture approaches and to analyse various consumption patterns determined by national, ethnic and religious differences. The current consumer culture is usually approached from two major positions: consumption homogeneity and consumption heterogeneity. Although globalisation has penetrated a number of areas in the modern world, one can see that consumption patterns have not become universal. The differences exist not just among the countries, but in some cases even within countries. The migration and population trends make these differences even higher. Even though the tendency of using the same products could be noticed all over the world, the reasons for consumption are different due to various national, religious or ethnical values. Paper type: general review.*

Key words*: globalisation, consumption, nationality, religion, ethnicity*

Introduction

Consumption has become a rather important part in our lives. It has penetrated all areas from daily-basis activities to education or even religion. However, reasons for consumption differ among individuals. Arnould and Thompson (2005) in their study "Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research" tried to classify theories of consumption into four major categories: consumer identity projects, marketplace cultures, the sociohistoric patterning of consumption, and mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumer's interpretive strategies. It is necessary to note that in three of them cultural and societal issues are considered to have an influential role. This fact

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proposes an assumption that the worldwide consumption is still highly heterogeneous and therefore not affected by globalisation.

The *aim of this paper* is to discuss the existing consumption culture approaches and to analyse various consumption patterns determined by national, ethnic and religious differences. The article is structured in to four main sections. The first section covers a critical review of articles in the field of two main approaches towards consumer culture. In the second, third, and fourth sections the impact of national, religious and ethnical elements on consumption are analysed. The articles for a review have been selected with regard to the Academic Journal Quality Guide developed by the Association of Business Schools of the United Kingdom (the Association of Business Schools, 2010). The chosen papers have been published in economics, management and marketing journals ranked with indexes 2, 3 or 4, which indicates the leading trend in the field. In the final section, conclusions and implications are given.

1. Homogenization versus heterogenization

The growing convergence of global economies fosters the worldwide pervasion of information technologies (Nayyar, 2006). They in turn tend to stimulate societies for a greater exposure to global mass media, marketing activities and even to the English language which becomes an almost universal tool for communication (Cleveland, Laroche, 2006). That is why there exists an opinion that these trends of globalization lead to universal homogenization (Ardalan, 2008; Levitt, 1983). Moreover, some of the authors draw a relation to the past here while saying that the modern globalization is an outcome of colonization (Jackson, 2004) or even enlightenment (Walle, 2001).

Levitt (1983), an adherent of universal homogenization, claims that consumption trends are becoming more and more similar all over the world. He treats consumer as a rational individual who always seeks for an economically best solution. That is why, according to him, standardized products which ensure low production costs will definitely invade markets, leaving 'cultural preferences and national tastes' (Levitt, 1983, p. 96) in the past. Other supporters of globalization have a more flexible view which focuses on global consumer cultures (Alden et al., 1999; Dawar et al., 1996). This term reflects the broad global segments that have the same needs and expectations regarding consumption.

Although the standardization strategies might look attractive for marketers due to the provision of time and cost economy, they should be accepted very cautiously. The increasing globalisation can have an opposite effect – the increased level of national, ethnical identity expression or, in other words, a greater heterogeneity among nations (Asgary, Wally, 2002; Ger, 1999). In the literature, there can be noticed several explanations of this trend. One reason could be associated with historical issues and colonization. Although the term of globalization refers to global exchange, many authors

agree that the dominant power here is maintained by the West (Asgary, Walle, 2002; Cleveland, Laroche, 2006; Jackson, 2004; Nayyar, 2006). For this reason, ex-colonial countries, for instance India or Morocco, can be more willing to reject western products due to the infamous experience. However, the prevailing explanation of globalization rejection focuses on differences in value systems among countries (Asgary, Walle, 2002; De Mooij, 2003, Jackson, 2004). It is claimed that cultural values comprise the basis of every society. The long history of their evolvement makes them resistant to comparatively constant changes. That is why it can be said that the growing homogeneity in global economies can affect only the framework of the world, while its essence people and societies will tend to maintain their unique character (Asgary, Walle, 2002). De Mooij (2003) notices that advocates of globalisation base their assumptions of consumption homogeneity on macro-level data, such as units of cars per population, although it is frequently forgotten that there are great differences among the countries in terms of the degree, way and time of consumption. For instance, while in the U.S. McDonalds is associated with fast, cheap and casual place to have a meal, in other countries like Russia or Argentina it is approached rather as a cultural experience. That is why even 'napkins, straws and packaging are often taken home as souvenirs' here (Asgary, Walle, 2002, p. 62).

The business practice shows also that there are significant differences among the countries that should be considered. Here, examples of Cadbury in China, McDonalds in Muslim nations (Jackson, 2003) or IKEA in countries like the U. S. or Turkey could be given (Ulver-Sneistrup, Svensson, 2010). Even the global giant Coca-Cola, usually treated as a synonym globalization, in two decades, after the publication of Levitt's study "The globalization of markets" where Coca-Cola was mentioned as one of the most successful examples of standardization, had to admit the impact of cultural differences: CEO of Coca-Cola at the time claimed: "We kept standardising our practices, while local sensitivity had become absolutely essential to success" (Financial Times, 27 March 2000, as cited in De Mooij, 2003, p. 184).

These examples reconfirm the fact that globalization is not universal. Culture and the shaped values play the fundamental role in the formation of local consumer cultures. That is why marketing professionals must not reject the multi-layer cultural sensitivity.

2. Nationality

The nation as a source of culture was perceived a hundred years ago. The first efforts to analyse national cultures can be noticed in ancient Greece, although as a comprehensive science it arose a century ago (Hofstede, 1984a). National value differences, as reflections of history, traditions and even geographic peculiarities, have an influence on individuals' attitudinal and perceptual dimensions which impact the actual behaviour as well (Clark, 1990). One of the most comprehensive studies that analyse these distinctions among the cultures was carried out by Geert Hofstede several years ago (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede

classified 76 countries according to five dimensions: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long- versus short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2001). In the following paragraphs, in regard to Hofstede's dimensions, a number of cases explaining how national cultures can affect consumption will be given.

In large power distance countries, such as Malaysia, Mexico or France, individuals are approached by their hierarchical position (Hofstede, 2001). That is why particular attention to status details is paid here. This phenomenon explains why the consumption of luxury and globally well known goods is higher here in comparison with countries such as Denmark or Austria which represent low power distance (Hofstede, De Mooij, 2010). De Mooij (2010) noticed that the expenditures on trendy dressings and cosmetics are higher in large power nations as well.

A similar trend can be noticed also in masculine countries, such as Japan or Italy. A high rate of expenditure is spent here on the products that stress their status, e.g., jewellery or watches (De Mooij, 2003). This phenomenon is based on the prevailing values: in masculine societies, achievement and success values are appreciated, whereas in feminine countries the focus falls on the quality of life, care and equality (De Mooij, Hofstede, 2010). That is why in the feminine nations a higher level of shared household works as well as a higher shopping activity among men can be noted in a comparison with masculine societies (De Mooij, 2010).

In collectivistic countries, such as Pakistan or Colombia, group influence plays an important role (Hofstede, 1984b, 2001). This tendency highly influences the hierarchy of needs as well. Hofstede (1984b) argues that here, differently from Maslow's hierarchy of needs model which reflects individual cultures, more important are harmony and group support than self-actualization as a top of necessity. The impact of a group is highly reflected in trends of loyalty and importance of relations (Usunier, Lee, 2005). That is why the companies that want to enter a new collectivistic market may face more obstacles in comparison with individualistic countries such as Great Britain or the United States.

The low-power distance and high-uncertainty avoidance nature of Lithuanian culture suggests that advertising appeals should not refer to hierarchy, status or instability. Advertisements should rather be more direct and explicit or verbal, since Lithuanians appreciate low-context communication (De Mooij, 2003). It is worth pointing out that explicitness in marketing communications is also an advantage due to a higher uncertainty avoidance level that requires more detailed information about a service or a product (De Mooij, Hofstede, 2010). An advertisement in Lithuania would work most effectively if one of the following forms is applied: all variations of announcements and lessons, association transfer with a focus on lifestyle and metaphor or drama that would be directed towards problem solution. However, other forms, such as imagination or special effects, could work as well due to their universal applicability (De Mooij, 2010).

Loyalty and relationship issues are important in long orientation countries such as Japan or South Korea (Hofstede, 2001). These countries orientate their distance of thinking towards future; that is why the focus falls here on both long-term financial and relation capital investments (De Mooij, 2003). This is the other reason why they tend to buy more durable and reliable products in comparison with short-term-orientation countries (De Mooij, 2010). The latter ones, such as Great Britain or Canada, 'focus on pursuit of happiness rather than on pursuit of peace of mind' (De Mooij, Hofstede, 2010, p. 90).

High uncertainty avoidance countries, such as Greece or Belgium, tend to avoid unpredictable situations more than do low uncertainty avoidance nations; that is why adoption of innovations is lower here (Hofstede, 1984b; De Mooij, Hofstede, 2010). Loyalty is a much more prevailing trend here than in low uncertainty avoidance nations. In these countries, like in large power distance and masculine societies, people are spending more on good quality outfits and footwear. Moreover, the consumption of mineral water and medicines is also significantly higher here than in low uncertainty avoidance nations (De Mooij, 2003). The latter countries are more keen on going in for sports than on taking medicines in order to remain healthy (De Mooij, 2010).

According to De Mooij (2010) and De Mooij and Hofstede (2001), in order to ensure efficiency, all cultural dimensions should be taken into consideration while planning the advertisement style. For instance, inhabitants of the Baltic States are more self-determined, more open-minded and much more hard-working than their Eastern neighbours (Smith, 1990). Moreover, the education level is considerably higher in the Baltic region (United Nations, 2010). Differently from other Baltic States and due to the closely related past, Lithuania has also cultural commonalities with Poland, which is known as a highly religious country, and Germany, which is famous for its orderliness (Huettinger, 2008). This fact allows for an assumption that Lithuanians are more disciplined and devoted than their neighbours.

Lithuanians are willing to expose more to the advertisement appeals that are directed towards individualism, such as success, independence, task orientation, pleasure (De Mooij, 2010). However, these motives should be considered with caution, since Lithuania, according to Huettinger (2008), is also a feminine country. On the contrary, the countries that score low on masculinity focus on relations and the quality of life rather than on personal achievements (De Mooij, Hofstede, 2010). However, this discrepancy could be effectively employed in order to achieve the value paradox which, according to De Mooij (2010), could reflect inner personal rather than cultural values. If compared with the neighbouring countries, Lithuania scores similarly as the Scandinavian region in masculinity, individuality and power distance. The uncertainty avoidance level is higher in Lithuania. However, even small cultural differences should be considered when it comes to international advertising or consumer behavior (Siraliova, Angelis, 2006).

Moreover, it is important to mention that the cultural dimensions of Lithuania differ significantly from the Russian case (Hofstede, 2001; Huettinger, 2008).

However, to approach a nation as the only source of culture is too superficial. None of the countries reflects a pure national homogeneity or a sheer ethnocentrism (Clark, 1990). Cultural differences lie in a more complex framework consisting of different entities, such as nation, religion, and ethnicity (Usunier, Lee, 2005).

3. Religion

Since olden times, religion has played a fundamental role in people's lives, sometimes even more important than their nation. Its significance can be explained by its cohesive nature (Essoo, Dibb, 2004). Emilie Durkheim (1912), a famous French sociologist, distinguished more functions of faith, such as disciplinary, administrating, vitalizing, providing the meaning and purpose of living. Thus, in other words, religion supplies individuals with a particular frameworks that help to orientate, understand and interpret the world (Delener, 1994). Different creeds provide various cognitive frameworks which highly influence consumption behaviour as well (Delener, 1990; Bailey, Sood, 1993). Harrell has indicated that religion can impact it in two ways (as cited in Essoo, Dibb, 2004, p. 684): first of all indirectly, while shaping certain values and attitudes, and also directly by defining certain norms that affect an individual choice.

A quality value orientation is a new trend of modern management. Quality value orientations (national, society, religions, bodies of government, market participants, consumers) and quality culture are significantly important in the global economic collaboration and trade, as well as in the international communication – on the business, scientific or personal level. Quality value orientations have evidence in different aspects – customer preferences, use of different management methods and systems, product and service consumption, assortment, business lunch traditions, etc. For many years, economic scientists try to reveal the dependence of the level of countries' economic development on their dominant religion. The fact that religion unavoidably influences society, its lifestyle, culture and economy is not arguable (Ruževičius, 2010). We have to accept the fact that separate aspects of this question were discussed rather broadly by Azzi and Ehrenberg, McCleary, Barro and several other scientists (McCleary, Barro, 2006). However, the question of how to change the relation between religion and economy is still under discussion. Max Weber was the first scientist who emphasized the influence of religion on the countries' economic growth in his work "Protestantism ethics and capitalism spirit" in 1905. Some scientists deny the causality of the economic grows and religion, while, others confirm it. R. McCleary and R. Barro see a dual relation between religion and economy, meanwhile L. Iannaccone finds a triple relation (McCleary, Barro, 2006; et al). Here are several statements from the previous studies made by the author in search of the relation between quality, religion and business. By

the Azzi–Ehrenberg model, religiosity is more or less concerned with the probability of salvation. The more time people devote to religious activities, the higher is the probability that they will get into heaven after death. Afterlife consumption: more prayers now, more enjoyment and afterlife consumption. Busy people pray less and consume more now (McCleary, Barro, 2006). In highly predestined countries, people devote less time to religious matters and spend more time on economic activities (e. g., Protestans). On the contrary, a Buddhist spends more time on praying to earn a higher probability of salvation (Ruževičius, 2010).

A number of studies were carried out to explore how different religions and their value systems indirectly reflect on the actual consumption behaviour (Ruževičius, 2010; 2011). The differences were discovered in terms of gender roles (Delener, 1994), possession (Ger, 2005), cognitive and perception issues (Delener, 1990; Essoo, Dibb, 2004; Hirschman, 1982, 1983). One of the most comprehensive researches implemented by Essoo and Dibb (2004) revealed the existing consumption and shopping behaviour differences among three major religious faiths: Hinduism, Islam, and Roman Catholicism. First of all, authors show that there exist significant differences between devoted and casually religious individuals. The latter ones are more practical and less conservative. These findings correspond to Delener's (1989) and Hirschman's (1983) studies. Essoo and Dibb (2004) have revealed that Catholics tend to be more traditional and relying on group opinion in their purchase behaviour than Hindus and Muslims. This trend is explained by the fact that Christianity focuses on conformity and humility. This is another reason why Catholics are more willing to buy popular and well known brands. Moreover, they have been found to be more demanding due to the perceived higher importance of the product quality. On the other hand, Muslims are more practical in their purchase behaviour due to a greater reaction to a promotional activities. Furthermore, they are more innovative while trying new products. The higher level of risk-taking can be based on Muslims' assumption that the outcome of their behaviour is the will of God. The research has also revealed that Hindus are the least active shoppers with a low tendency to be innovative and practical as compared with the rest two groups. The importance of caste issues as well as religious values such as tranquillity and self-control were found to be important factors here. Also, Hirschman (1982) has revealed that Jews are most innovative consumers in comparison with other religious groups. This trend is highly affected by 'normative pressures in Jewish families and religious institutions favouring the acquisition of knowledge by the individual' (Hirschman, 1982, p. 231.). The other important trend related to Judaism and noted by Delener and Schiffman is gender equality in the consumption decision-making process, which that is not common in other major religious faiths (as cited in Essoo, Dibb, 2004, p. 689).

Religious faiths make a direct influence also on dietary, clothing, entertainment and housing norms (Bailey, Sood, 1993). The next part of the paper will focus on dressing and nutrition peculiarities.

According to Arthur (1999), clothing acceptable in different religions is another important object that affects consumption. Dressing is a direct reflection of religious norms and values and in many cases provides a symbol of social control (Arthur, 1999). Some examples may be given here. Muslim men on a daily basis have to wear dressings that cover part of their body from stomach to knees, whereas women are obliged to cover their heads and not to wear dresses that expose their figure. A similar manner of dressing can be noted in Judaism. Females here have to wear modest outfits, usually black-coloured. The head covering is recommended for both men and women here as well. Moreover, Jews are not allowed to wear outfits made from a combination of wool and flax (Arthur, 1999).

However, there is a sphere where the relation between religion and business is more than obvious – it is religious-ethnical quality, hygiene, ethic and certification control regulation of the Islamic *halal* products, of Jewish *kosher* products, etc. Every religion has its norms concerning diet as well. For example, Hinduism prohibits consuming beef, Buddhism stimulates to refrain from meat in general, while Christianity holds the same rule only on certain occasions. Islam and Judaism in this field have a more constraint rules (Jacob, Ashkenazi, 2010). In the business context, the most prevalent religious prohibitions are related to the Jewish Halakhic (Blech, 2004) and Islamic law (Riaz, Chaudry, 2004; Ruževičius, 2010; 2011). In Islam, the *halal* term is used for defining a broader range of the objects that are allowed to consume (Riaz, Chaudry, 2004), whereas in Judaism *kosher* represents just a norm for diet (Blech, 2004). The Arabic word *halal* is related to food and means "authorized by Islam". Both religions prohibit consuming pork and have strict regulations on other meet consumption. For example, only the front parts of a neat can be considered as a kosher, while Muslims can consume cattle the meat of that was slaughtered with the name of God. In both religions, the defined norms also regulate the consumption of alcohol drinks, diary products. Moreover, Jews have more precise norms on fish consumption while Muslims have stricter regulations on products as oil, spices, flour (Blech, 2004; Riaz, Chaudry, 2004). It is important to highlight that Islamic law regulates determines the consumption of food, cosmetic, medicine, hygiene products (Riaz, Chaudry, 2004). Halal religious-ethnic regulation of production and product quality covers also the fields of a particular activity of an enterprise, hygiene requirements, religious-ethnic and ethical requirements, accreditation of certification bodies, food and beverage quality and safety, medicaments, leather products, services, etc. Halal product certification might be relevant not only for meat and other food exporters, but also for other manufacturers. It is very important to follow all halal requirements at all stages of food production. Systemization of this process is a key to success in working

with products aimed at religious markets. The most important aspect in halal production should be strict control. Halal products must not contact with uncertified products as they can have *haram* substances (Ruževičius, 2011).

It should be noted that even in such a small country as Lithuania where Muslim and Jewish communities comprise less than 1% of religious community, local entrepreneurs are commencing to conform their businesses to the standards of halal and kosher requirements. However, it should be noted that the latter certification is not an object of the contemporary trend. Overall, it is a rather complicated process of religious-ethnic regulation, which is still vaguely perceived by the majority of Lithuanian businesses. The latter trend is also determined by the lack of Lithuanian literature, including both scholarly textbooks and practical manuals for business practitioners. Meanwhile, the terms such as 'Halal Business', 'Halal Quality', 'Halal Certification' 'Halal Products' are becoming widely prevailing concepts in the contemporary global business press. This tendency is strongly conditioned by the increasing trends of globalisation and the self-awareness of Muslim community.

The market of halal products is becoming one of the most profitable markets in the world. The importance of halal quality certification could be also supported by the fact of 10% annual global market growth. More over, it is estimated that every fourth in habitant of the world is a Muslim and more than 1.7 billion people are constant consumers of halal production. Overall, the annual global halal market constitutes around 1000 billion USA dollars, of them 70% falls under the food category. That is why involvement in the halal business seems to be a reasonable decision of such world industry leaders as Nestle, Tesco, Colgate, McDonald's, Carrefour, etc. (Ruževičius, 2011).

Notably, approximately 80% of halal food products are produced in non-Islamic countries, for instance three quarters of the exported French poultry meet the halal standards. Interestingly, one third of the halal products are consumed by non-Muslim consumers that perceive the halal certificate as a symbol of quality, ecology, health and ethics. This conception could be reasonably justified since halal standards raise comparatively high requirements for the ethics, quality and safety of the product.

Apart from purely religious requirements, Islamic law also sets a strict regulation on animal well-being, health, slaughtering ways and means, hygiene, etc. Particular attention here is paid to humane slaughtering in order to cause as little pain and stress as possible to animal experience during butchering. That is why halal certification laboratories have particular technological devices that help to indicate not just the meat components prohibited by law, but also to estimate stress hormone levels.

The importance and prospects of halal business could be further elaborated knowing the fact that the Codex Alimentarius Commission, founded by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), from 1997 started to treat the halal and kosher regulatory aspects as part of their activity. The halal

religious-ethnic regulation covers a wide range of fields including company activities, accreditation of certification bodies, the safety and quality of foods and beverages, the quality of cosmetics, perfumeries, personal hygiene products, genuine leather goods and some other products. Thus, one can see that halal certification could be relevant not just for the companies that produce and export foods, but also for businesses that operate in other industries. Halal regulations have started to expand in other service-based areas such as Islamic banking, transactions of deposits and liabilities, tourism, supply chain and logistics, catering service, education and other fields. Thus, it could be concluded that the halal business is a global and rapidly growing phenomenon which is becoming more and more important for the business environment and societies of different countries. Interrelations between worldwide religions and businesses, consumption, quality value orientations as well as the influence of national cultures and religion on the effectiveness of modern management methods require more profound further scientific studies.

4. Ethnicity

Nationality and religion are not the only factors that influence consumption behaviour; another really important and closely related element is ethnic groups or subcultures. Usually these groups differ from major society by the communal heritage and experience, values and beliefs and even religion (Hoyer, MacInnis, 2008; Usunier, Lee, 2005). The ethnic group can be determined by region (e.g., Scandinavia), race (for example, black) or by the country of origin (e.g., Russia (Hoyer, MacInnis, 2008).

Migration and population trends play an important role in ethnic diversification across many countries (Usunier, Lee, 2005). For instance, it is estimated that more than 30% of the U.S. population consist of three major subcultures: Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians. Moreover, it is forecasted that in twenty years half of the U.S. youth population will belong to ethnic groups (U.S Census Bureau, 2004 as cited in Hoyer, MacInnis, 2007, p. 315). These facts show that ethnicity issues are becoming more and more important and should be highly considered by marketers.

Ethnic groups usually have a common trend in consumption as an identification of oneself as belonging to a certain subculture (Cleveland, Laroche, 2006; Hamlett et al., 2008). It is a crucial element that helps individuals to interpret the environment and to operate in it better (Cleveland, Laroche, 2006). That is why the over-expressed ethnicity among members of certain subcultures can be used as a tool for a better orientation and to lower ambiguity. The strength of ethnicity expression depends on the adaptation level to the host culture (Usunier, Lee, 2005). Four basic strategies can be distinguished here: assimilation occurs when an individual adopts the host and rejects the home culture, whereas separation defines the opposite situation; integration strategy determines an individual's ability to employ both home and host culture, while in the case of marginalization none of these cultures are maintained (Berry et al., 1987, as cited in

Usunier, Lee, 2005, p. 100). It can be concluded that separation and integration strategies have the highest influence on ethnicity expression, though in different ethnic group it occurs differently. In the following paragraph, some examples of ethnic consumption peculiarities among one of the largest ethnic groups will be given.

According to Lamont and Molnar (2001), the ethnic group of African-Americans is one of the most active subcultures in terms of expressing their identity through consumption. Authors base this statement on highly prevailing racism issues in the past. That is why 'consumption becomes a simple and effective way of expressing both black distinctiveness and membership in mainstream society by virtue of demonstrating equal purchasing power with whites' (Lamont, Molnar, 2001, p. 43). In order to emphasize their equality, blacks spends much more money on luxury goods in comparison with white. Moreover, consuming just the best products becomes almost a mandatory trend which is more about showing off rather than obtaining prestige or comfort. Lamont and Molnar (2001) indicate that this is equally prevailing in both high and low classes. In the latter case, an individual is prone to acquire one luxury good while spending disproportionally less on daily products.

The other ethnic group, Hispanics, which shows a rapid growth all over the world, especially in the U. S., demonstrates similar consumption trends (Deshpande et al., 1986; Hoyer, MacInnis, 2008). Hispanics tend to buy well-known, prestige brands and demonstrate a high loyalty to them (Deshpande et al., 1986). However, the reason of consumption in this case is different in comparison with blacks. Hispanics are more family-orientated; that is why in this case the showing-off trend is not so important, and the focus falls on quality and reputation (Deshpande et al., 1986; Russell, 2002). The other important feature among Hispanics is a higher preference of cultural brands (Hoyer, MacInnis, 2008).

Conclusions and implications

The growing convergence of global economies stimulates resemblance also in other fields such as information technology, mass-media or marketing activities all over the world, although one can see that consumption and consumer culture do not obey globalisation rules. The differences exist not only among the countries but in some cases also within countries. The migration and population trends make these differences even greater.

It is important to note that if even the same products are used all over the world, the reasons for consumption may differ, and this difference is highly influenced by national, religious or ethnical values. For example, luxury goods in some countries can be used as a symbol of status, in others as an allusion to success and achievement, whereas for some segments it would mean an acquisition of membership in mainstream society. Moreover, it is not only the perceived value inequality that exists among the nations. Other differences cover direct regulatory restrictions in the consumption of certain

products. Religious prohibitions are most prevalent here. In the business context, the most prevalent religious prohibitions are related with the Jewish Halakhic and Islamic laws related to kosher and halal products. The halal religious-ethnic regulation of quality covers the fields of particular activity of an enterprise, hygiene, religious-ethnic and ethical requirements, accreditation of certification bodies, food and beverage quality and safety, the quality of cosmetics, perfumery, personal hygiene products, medicaments, leather products, etc. Halal certification might be relevant not only for meat and other food exporters, but also for other manufacturers. Currently, halal is penetrating the service sector markets: halal or islamic banking, deposit and loan services, travel and tourism, supply chains and logistics, food services, education, training and other areas. Thus, it could be concluded that halal business is a global and rapidly growing phenomenon becoming more relevant to the business and culture environment which is becoming more and more important not only for large Western countries, but also for smaller ones such as Lithuania. Interrelations between worldwide religions and business, consumption, quality value orientations, as well as the influence of national cultures and religion on the effectiveness of modern management methods demand further more profound scientific researches.

Practical failure examples, for instance, eBay in China or Wall-Mart in Germany, show that disregarding cultural sensitivity can lead to both the loss of profits and market share. That is why marketing managers should thoroughly consider the marketing strategy before entering new markets. While standardization strategy may look more attractive and efficient due to the greater economy, the reality shows different examples. Researches indicate that standardization can be successful only in very few cases, for instance, in perfume trade, when the country of origin is applied as a strategic framework. However, in other cases it is usually doomed to failure. That is why adaptation is the most effective and a far less risky solution for companies entering foreign markets.

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