Inquire: You and The World Around You

Overview
How much do you know about other cultures around the world? Have you visited another country? Have you experienced another culture? How did you interact with members from that culture if you have? These questions are important to keep in mind when learning about globalism and a global communication market. This lesson will teach about the global communication market, how to write for an international audience, the impact culture has on marketing, and the impact globalism generally has on cultures around the world.

Big Question: How should you change your behavior when interacting with members of a different culture?

Watch: Selling Soap
Our world is more connected now than ever before. When was the last time you spoke to someone in a different city? A different state? A different country? Maybe you haven’t spoken to someone on the phone from a different country, but have you been online shopping recently? If so, you interacted with the global marketplace.

When a market is globalized, it means it is operating on a global scale. Let’s say you have a soap making business. You used to make soap and sell it to people around your town, but you became more popular. Now, you have created a website and you sell soap all around the United States, and a few other countries! You have become globalized!

Globalizing your business brings with it many new customers, but also more responsibility. Now that your business operates on a global scale, you have an obligation to implement international communication. This is more than just using Google Translate to speak to your French customers! As you might remember, different cultures communicate differently based on what they have been taught from a young age. This will affect how they are best marketed to. You, and all of your soap business employees, will need to learn how to communicate with people of different cultures and adapt if needed. This might include learning different cultural norms, writing in gender-neutral terms, or even changing your advertisements to be shown in different countries!
In this lesson, you will learn about the global marketplace, international communication, and more. Before we dive in, take some time to think about when you have had to implement international communication. Have you had to adapt when speaking to someone of a different culture? If so, were you able to adapt, or were you unsure on what adaptations to make? How comfortable do you feel speaking or writing to someone from a different country?

Read: Globalism and Communication

Overview

In the wake of a global marketplace continuing to become interconnected thanks to online sales, it is important to understand how communication between different cultures takes place. This lesson will focus on how to make your way through a globalized communication market, international written communication practices, the impact of culture on marketing, and how globalism affects culture.

How to Navigate a Globalized Communication Market

Globalization is what happens when a business operates on a global scale. If your online store ships to people in America, Canada, and Germany, then you are globalized. With the advent of faster and more reliable kinds of global communication, such as the Internet, globalization has started to occur at a faster pace than ever before. In such an environment, it is vital to be able to navigate a global communication market. These skills will help you be successful no matter what cultures you encounter in the workplace.

First, be aware that cultural differences exist and that your culture isn’t necessarily the right or wrong culture, it just is. That goes for other cultures as well. They operate differently from your culture, and that is just fine! Embracing these differences and finding ways to learn from other cultures is a vital part of the modern workplace.

Second, be open to learning new things. Once you accept that cultures are different from each other, then you can start moving in the direction of learning new things from other cultures. Some cultures are fantastic at finding healthy expression for emotions. Some cultures are not. If your culture isn’t great at expressing emotions, being aware that other cultures are, and being willing to learn what that culture has to teach you is an important part of navigating a globalized market. It shows that you are accepting and willing to work with other cultures to reach a goal, even if that means changing how you accomplish some tasks.

Finally, once you have opened yourself up to learning new things, it’s time to actually do it! Seeking out resources that can teach you different cultural behaviors will put you a step above the rest when it comes to working with international audiences. If you have already learned how to interact with certain cultures, when it comes time to actually do so, that reflects very positively on you as a person and a representative of your company. Proactively learning what you can about other cultures around the world will help you be successful in the global marketplace today.

International Written Communication Practices

Written communication is a more formal form of communication. It is easier to edit a message before it’s sent to make sure that it is culturally appropriate. This section will offer a few tips to ensure that when you write a message for an international audience, you can do so with confidence.
First, use gender neutral language like manager, doctor, or professor. Avoid using terms like chairman or salesman. Not all cultures are as male dominated or male focused as American business is. So, using gender neutral language is the best way to ensure you address your correct audience, regardless of the gender of the person reading your message.

Second, avoid using jargon, slang, or idioms. Not all phrases of speech that you use in your daily life translate as well as you might think. If there is a phrase that is unique to your job, your group of friends, or your region, it might not have a regional equivalent all over the world. Using words that are universally accepted to mean certain things in certain situations is best to avoid confusion.

Third, as with all written communication, be clear and concise. Write sentences that are short and to the point, rather than long and flowy. Doing so ensures your message has less of a chance of getting lost amongst all the pretty language.

Finally, be careful what you say in the final draft. The final draft that gets sent is permanent, especially in a world of digital copies. Be mindful of the things you write, and double check to make sure you are being respectful and careful with the words you use before you send the message into the world.

What Impact does Culture Have on Marketing?
Marketing is a powerful force in the realm of global sales. Marketing methods must adapt when one culture is marketing toward another culture. The culture that creates the marketing campaign imparts into that campaign their beliefs and values. Have you ever noticed an ad on American television that features a family? That’s because our culture values spending time with family. Marketing campaigns are one of the primary ways that cultures go about spreading their values to other cultures. This process of spreading your culture’s values to other cultures around you is known as cultural exporting.

When marketing to other countries, certain changes may have to be made to accommodate the cultural norms of the audience. For instance, in China, it is considered disrespectful, and has now become illegal, to show human bones in different forms of media. So if the Call of Duty game has a mode featuring zombies, the advertisements for that game have to censor out any parts that contain bones. Culture is a powerful driving force in the global marketplace. Changing your marketing methods to be respectful of other countries’ cultures can make all the difference in the success of your marketing campaign.

Globalism and Culture
Cultural exporting doesn’t only deal with marketing. Cultures are communicating more with each other than ever before — spreading goods, ideas, customs, and beliefs all around the world. This sharing can sometimes be a good thing, like when cultures with similar beliefs are able to support one another from across the world. This was seen when several countries — Canada, Mexico, Afghanistan, Armenia, and more — helped to rebuild Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

However, there are harms that come from exporting cultures. Cultural erosion is what happens when culture A is being exported into culture B, and begins to override and erase customs culture B has maintained for hundreds of years prior. One thing American culture has that other cultures don’t is ownership of ideas. This idea is made into law with patents and trademarks. In several small tribal communities, this idea is unheard of, as resources are shared by the tribe. When America exports its culture, it implements these patent laws, preventing some members of tribes access to resources they have had access to for hundreds, if not thousands, of years.
Reflect Poll: Who Should Adapt?

When you are trying to sell a product in a global marketplace, should you adapt to a potential customer’s culture, or should they adapt to your culture?

- You should adapt.
- They should adapt.

Expand: Avoiding Essentializing

Overview

Learning about other cultures is important. Adapting to members of other cultures is important. But, there is a fine line to walk as well. Members of other cultures are different people with different ideas than other members of a culture. Just because someone is from America does not mean they enjoy fast food, or that they love watching football and baseball. Thinking that people only identify with core, essential components of a culture is called essentializing. This section will explain ways to avoid doing it while still maintaining a respect for cultural differences.

Avoiding Essentializing

Cultures teach us many behaviors that we are unaware that we do. These passive behaviors are helpful to know if you are trying to understand a culture. It’s important to avoid essentializing people from a culture. Instead of expecting them to only act in a certain way, such as being loud, proud, and in charge if they are from America, understand that they might have been raised to behave that way, but they might have outgrown it, learned a better way, or they may be adapting to the situation the same way you are. Rather than expecting them to behave how you think someone from their culture might, you should instead adapt to how they are acting and acknowledge that they might be doing it to try to adapt to what you would expect based on your own culture. Adaptation does, after all, go both ways.

Once you start to think of the person as an individual instead of someone who is just the core part of the culture they come from, you can take simple steps to ensure you are still respecting the cultural upbringing they have without essentializing the person you are speaking to. The best way to do this is to remember the cultural norms you have learned about the culture someone is from and treat those norms with respect, even if the person is not following all of those norms. If the culture you are dealing with dislikes physical touch, but the person has already shaken your hand and clasped your shoulder, appreciate the adaptation they have made to your culture, but don’t push it by trying to touch them any more than they are comfortable with, such as the handshake.

Lesson Toolbox

Additional Resources and Readings

An article providing seven things to keep in mind when crafting a written message for an international audience

- Link to resource: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140426121325-62292553-seven-writing-guidelines-for-a-global-audience
An article giving some tips on how to learn about cultures that you will interact with during business trips
- Link to resource: https://www.export.gov/article?id=Business-Culture

An article explaining what impact culture has on marketing and its effectiveness

Lesson Glossary

globalization: when business operate on a global scale

cultural exporting: the process of spreading your culture’s values to other cultures around you

cultural erosion: when culture is exported and begins to override and erase customs a different culture has maintained for hundreds of years prior

Check Your Knowledge

1. Globalization is a trend that has started to decline thanks to the Internet.
   a. True
   b. False

2. Written communication is less formal than spoken communication, so you should only speak when communicating with an international audience.
   a. True
   b. False

3. Gender neutral language is better to use when dealing with an international audience.
   a. True
   b. False

Answer Key:
1. B  2. B  3. A

Citations

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