

THE CASE OF BARBIE

Taking a global perspective, what socio-cultural influences are emerging in the current decade that the manufacturers will need to be able to forecast, and how do you suggest they might respond to these changes?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Globalization is popularly described as the absence of border and barriers to trade between nations (ohmae, 1995), but also has been viewed as shifts in traditional patterns of international production, investment, and trade (Dicken, 1992), and as interconnection between overlapping interest of business and society (Brown 1992; Renesch, 1992). The differences of opinion about any aspect of globalization are a matter of perspective.

Globalization sources can be technological, economical, political, cultural and environmental. PEST examining Political, Economical, Socio-cultural and Technological categories into which external influences on the organization can be placed.

These are the levels at which the influences occur alongside the PEST categories. The levels are Local, National and Global (Long). The third level describes as global affecting all part of the world in similar and simultaneous ways. The global issues also affect the local and national level of an organization.

Culture plays important part in growing at international level of the external environment. Following are the obvious illustration of cross culture issues: Language, Behavior & Culture Shock.

The most important illustration of culture is language. When operating in another culture, language plays an important part. Barbie has often been used to promote different names in different times for e.g. twist & turn Barbie, Talking Barbie, Crystal Barbie, Sweet sixteen Barbie, Crystal Barbie etc. can be a good names in one culture but can carry a different meaning & image of Barbie.

Second important illustration of culture is behavior. As from the beginning, Barbie had her critics, from feminists and others, has been that she reinforces sexism, representing a young woman with questionable intelligence and a near-impossible physique.

Barbie is sold around the world in the original blonde-haired, blue-eyed version along with international Barbie such as Kenyan Barbie, Polynesian Barbie, spring time in Tokyo Barbie (has black hair), etc. not all cultures have responded positively to her. In Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries, Barbie is not only likely to be banned but even replaced by dolls that these countries' governments have helped develop.

Third most important illustration in culture is culture shock. From language to food, from individual behavior to collective customs, culture shock is a real and debilitating influence on any organization. It often relates to the inability to assimilate the new culture, causing difficulty in knowing what is appropriate and what is not. Often this is combined with strong disgust about certain aspects of the foreign culture.

From start Barbie has been the center of controversy. Recognizing that mothers wouldn't like this sex doll, thus, from the start, Barbie's function was to teach young girls to be concerned with their weight, their hair, their clothes and their face. Part of the problem stems from the fact that she is all out of proportion.

Emerging global issue related to Barbie is important in terms of manufacturer point of view. The representations of Barbie for different culture in different times are important as it can affect society as well as business of Barbie.

Ultimately, it is impossible to prove whether Barbie is a more potent force than any other product of western consumer culture. Indeed, if anything, sociologists have spent more time examining the weird sub-cultures and behavior that Barbie seems to have provoked than the role she has in gender stereotyping.

Although Barbie represent different images and manufacturer are working hard with different images of Barbie. Following factors are important in understanding the emerging global socio-cultural affect:

- Manufacturers of Barbie need to think about different names of the Barbie which can carry a good meaning according to the culture of that country.
- Manufacturers of Barbie also need to consider different culture values in different countries and need to think about the dress, clothes she wears.
- Finally manufacturers of Barbie also need to change the physique which is not realistic.

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1.INTRODUCTION

This report examines the Socio-cultural affect emerging globally due to Barbie, that the manufacturer need to consider and how manufacturer should respond to these changes.

Human societies across the globe have established progressively closer contacts over many centuries, but recently the pace has dramatically increased. Jet airplanes, cheap telephone service, email, computers, huge oceangoing vessels, instant capital flows, all these have made the world more interdependent than ever. Multinational corporations manufacture products in many countries and sell to consumers around the world. Money, technology and raw materials move ever more swiftly across national borders. Along with products and finances, ideas and cultures circulate more freely. But for billions of the world's people, business-driven globalization means uprooting old ways of life and threatening livelihoods and cultures.

Globalization is popularly described as the absence of border and barriers to trade between nations (ohmae, 1995), but also has been viewed as shifts in traditional patterns of international production, investment, and trade (Dicken, 1992), and as interconnection between overlapping interest of business and society (Brown 1992; Renesch, 1992).¹ The differences of opinion about any aspect of globalization are a matter of perspective.

Globalization sources can be technological, economical, political, cultural and environmental. PEST examining Political, Economical, Sociocultural and Technological categories into which external influences on the organization can be placed.

¹ Parker,B. (1998) Globalization and business Practice

- Political Influences on an organization can be rules and regulations imposed by the government or various trade associations, trade unions and chamber of commerce.
- Economic influences on an organization include the impact of banks, stock market, the world money market and different trade unions.
- Sociocultural influences on an organization include changes in the age and structure of populations behave and the way in which the culture of population or country changes.
- Technological influences can be rate of change an organization face and how this affects to meet the customers. It includes information and communications technology and the application of technology by organizations.

However there exists a second dimension to the external environment of an organization. These are the levels at which the influences occur alongside the PEST categories. The levels are Local, National and Global (Long).

- Local level can said to be immediate town, city or region in which the organization operates.
- National level is then the home country in which an organization reside.
- Global level is anything outside the local and national levels.

The third level describes as global affecting all part of the world in similar and simultaneous ways. The global issues also affect the local and national level of an organization.

This report will discuss the global socio-cultural influences emerging in the current decade that the manufacturers of Barbie doll need to consider and how they should respond to these global issue.

2.FINDINGS

As mentioned earlier that the organization need to consider political, economical, social and technological circumstances in other countries when contemplating international business operations. Culture plays important part in growing at international level of the external environment. Following are the obvious illustration of cross culture issues:

- Language
- Behavior
- Culture Shock

I. LANGUAGE:

The most important illustration of culture is language. When operating in another culture, language plays an important part. Volkswagen's multi-passenger vehicle suffered when it introduced to the UK from being called Sharon a name not associated with the profile of customer to whom it was expected to be sold. Likewise Vauxhall Nova, General Motors' 1980 mini hatchback, was branded Opel Corsa in the rest of Europe as 'Nova' which was meant to have connotations of new actually translates as 'does not go' in many European languages.²

Barbie has often been used to promote different names in different times for e.g. twist & turn Barbie, Talking Barbie, Crystal Barbie, Sweet sixteen Barbie, Crystal Barbie etc. can be a good names in one culture but can carry a different meaning & image of Barbie. As the transition or choice of words meaning other things in different languages is not the only skill

• ² Capon,C.(2000) Understanding Organizational Context

required overseas. The important thing is saying the right word in the target language or the word should represent a right word in other languages.

II. BEHAVIOR

Second important illustration of culture is behavior. For example, consumption of alcohol in Muslim states and of beef in India, where the cow is sacred to Hindus. There are some cultures in which physical contact between the different sexes or people of the same sex is an issue. For example, in many Middle East and far eastern cultures, any touching between the sexes is unacceptable and in some countries a girl having a boy friend is also not considered good.

As from the beginning, Barbie had her critics, from feminists and others, has been that she reinforces sexism, representing a young woman with questionable intelligence and a near-impossible physique.

Barbie is sold around the world in the original blonde-haired, blue-eyed version along with international Barbie such as Kenyan Barbie, Polynesian Barbie, spring time in Tokyo Barbie (has black hair), etc. not all cultures have responded positively to her. In Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries, Barbie is not only likely to be banned but even replaced by dolls that these countries' governments have helped develop. As some people said that "Barbie wears a bikini and drinks champagne" As people didn't wanted their children to get away from their Arab traditions and the lifestyle that Barbie represents. In Middle East, in September 2005, as the Barbie doll started disappearing from the shelves of many toy stores. In their place was Fulla, a dark eyed doll with, as her creator puts it "Muslim Value". Fulla

roughly shares Barbie's size and proportions, but steps out of her shiny pink box wearing a black abaya and a matching head scarf.

In Malaysia, the Consumers' Association of Penang has called for Barbie dolls to be banned outright. The doll's blond, leggy and non-Asian appearance promotes the wrong aesthetics, they said. Also the Barbie doll does not encourage creativity and the use of imagination in children because dolls are "fixed" and ready-made.

Barbie has also clashed with cultures closer at home. Puerto Rican Barbie may be liked in Puerto Rico, but Puerto Ricans in New York object to her. They claim that her colonial garb misrepresents Puerto Ricans and the history of Puerto Rico on her box is not entirely accurate.

In Iran, the government condemned the forever young and childless-by-choice Barbie (and her long-time boyfriend Ken. No plans for marriage, ever.) as a threat to traditional culture. Barbie doesn't define herself in relation to children or family as Iranian women supposedly does. Banning the pair hasn't worked, so the government came up with a pair of its own, allegedly more suited to Iranian culture. Sara and Dara, who were brother and sister, were designed and marketed by the government-sponsored Amusement Department of the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults.

Barbie also seems to have turned into something of a gay icon. Barbie attracts a huge following among adults, for whom collecting is a serious. A study by an American psychiatrist into homosexuality suggested that all the boys he classified as "feminine" played with Barbie, according to their parents; for nearly a fifth of them, she was their favourite toy.

Only two-fifths of the “masculine” boys were reported as playing with Barbie even occasionally.³

Therefore, the behavior of foreign executives, the design of product and services ad labeling, packaging and advertising of goods and services must all be subject to intense scrutiny before the launch of any product.

III. CULTURE SHOCK

Third most important illustration of culture is culture shock From language to food, from individual behavior to collective customs, culture shock is a real and debilitating influence on any organization. It often relates to the inability to assimilate the new culture, causing difficulty in knowing what is appropriate and what is not. Often this is combined with strong disgust about certain aspects of the foreign culture.

From start Barbie has been the center of controversy. Recognizing that mothers wouldn’t like this sex doll, thus, from the start, Barbie’s function was to teach young girls to be concerned with their weight, their hair, their clothes and their face. Part of the problem stems from the fact that she is all out of proportion. If she were a real woman, she would be seven feet tall, have a 40” bust, a 22” waist, 36” hips and five foot long legs. In April 20, 2004, Cindy Jackson wanted to look like Barbie doll and had 47 plastic surgeries just to look like her idol.⁴

³ Website: The Economist

⁴ See Appendix-1 for detail article.

Hence, generations of young girls have struggled to be more Barbie-like. Barbie doll became a role model for a lot of young girls. Great deals of girls want to look like top models too. As a result, the majority of those girls suffer from dystrophy and a variety of psychological illnesses.

It is difficult for any company to know how culture will behave or how culture shock can be dealt with until it has been experienced.

The world today is experiencing some major changes in terms of societal, cultural and political processes. Some of the trends and dynamics related to Barbie are discussed in this part of the Report: cross cultural issues such as language, behavior and culture shock. All the three factors are important for Barbie manufacturer and can be emerging issues in terms of globalization.

3. CONCLUSION

Since the beginning of time, toys have often been an indicator of the way a society behaves, and how they interact with their children. Because of Barbie's powerful influences, she is sometimes held responsible for changing little girls into the women of modern society. By giving the female population an unreasonable dream to achieve, Barbie gives young girls and women alike the impression they are not good enough for society if they are not up to Barbie's standards.

It's not all glamorous careers for Barbie. She has also been a teacher, engineer, pet doctor, dentist, lifeguard and president—even a paleontologist & the current Barbie web site allow parents to give tips. Thus, Barbie is also a good role model for everyday occupations for little girls.

Emerging global issue related to Barbie is important in terms of manufacturer point of view. The representations of Barbie for different culture in different times are important as it can affect society as well as business of Barbie.

Ultimately, it is impossible to prove whether Barbie is a more potent force than any other product of western consumer culture. Indeed, if anything, sociologists have spent more time examining the weird sub-cultures and behaviour that Barbie seems to have provoked than the role she has in gender stereotyping.

4. RECOMMENDATION

The global socio-cultural issue affecting manufacturers with regard to Barbie are crucial. Young girls in the see Barbie as an icon, and try to become as Barbie, conservative parents who would not dream of buying Barbie's for their daughters seem happy to shell out for a modest doll.

The Long PEST analysis study of Political, Economic, Socio-cultural and Technological on local, national and global level provides a useful starting point to the analysis of environment surrounding an organization.

Manufacturer of Barbie doll should think about the culture and country before launching of new model of Barbie in any country. This is due to the name, image associated with Barbie as a glamorous girl. The culture of different countries does not accept Barbie doll with the same glamorous girl as she has been throughout her life. Therefore manufacturer have to change the image of Barbie in launching globally to different part of the world. As in some part of the world people see her as villainous destroyer of young girl's self images and she is often said to be promoting Americanization cultures.

Although Barbie represent different images and manufacturer are working hard with different images of Barbie. Following factors are important in understanding the emerging global socio-cultural affect:

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