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A Comparison between Dairy Consumer Behavior of the Islamic Republic of Iran and France (with Cultural Approach)

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Abstract

Today, worldwide researches have been done throughout the world in relation to consumers' behavior. But there are still countries where are behaviorally unknown for the marketers. Iran is one of countries where can be attractive for international marketers. The aim of this study is to compare consumers' behavior of Islamic Republic of Iran and France (with cultural approach). Totally, 384 and 273 persons were participating in this research from Iran and France, respectively. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent sample t-tests. Results showed that there is a difference between two countries based on social class in terms of reference-group influence, Purchase risk reduction, variety seeking, enjoyment of bargain hunting, and class-based consumption. It was not seen a difference between two countries in terms of effort minimization.

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1. Introduction

In the age of international markets, it is essential to understand culture's influences on consumer behaviors. The increasing interest for cross-cultural studies on several aspects of consumer behavior (such as brand preferences, purchase decision making, and post-purchase behavior) is clear evidence. Many of researches have examined few behavioral facets; and paid little attention to the role of consumer intrinsic factors as mediators between cultural and behavioral variables. Besides, studying cultural dimensions at individual-level was neglected in marketing; and is

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mainly studied in psychology or sociology. Knowing the fact that Hofstede (1980) research results are aging and could very well be outdated, it may be a mistake to automatically rely on the rankings and ignore cultural changes; individual-level measurement could be a reliable substitute. There is another reason behind performing this study: although there are numerous researches performed in some countries (e.g. USA, Canada), several nations are still behaviorally unknown for marketers; this may end in financial disasters for brands entering these markets. Iran is among culturally undiscovered markets with an ever-increasing demand; an attractive choice for export-oriented countries (Bathae, 2011). Doing this research and introducing Iranian consumer behavior with cultural approach and compare it with consumer behavior of an European country, we hope to attract foreign investors and illustrate that Iran is a fascinating country in terms of investment for large multinational companies

2. Literature, conceptual foundation, and research hypothesis

Consumer behavior deals to study with all selection and usage processes, product withdrawal, services, experiences, ideas by people, groups, and organizations to meet needs and to study with the effects of these processes on customer and society (Hawkinz, et al., 2006). Have a clear understanding of consumer and consumption process create various advantages. These advantages includes help managers to decide, provide a knowledge basis by analyzing consumers, contribute to the legislation and regulators to establish rules related to buying and selling goods and services and eventually contribute to consumers to make better decision. In addition, studying consumer behavior can help us to understand factors related to social sciences which influence on human behavior (Moon & Minor, 2007). Successful marketing starts with understanding why and how consumer behavior (Venus et al. 2004). Because, consumer behavior is a subtle phenomenon and it is not always obvious and clear; so their function as consumers is not often predictable and even explainable. Observing their purchasing behavior, people will achieve extensive experience in this field, but despite this, not everyone has a lot of insight about their behavior. Most of them, as a consumer, do not know external factors influencing buying as well as their inner processes, which lead to the decision to buy (Samadi, 2003). Therefore, consumer behavior includes various psychological and social processes, which exist before and after activities related to the purchase and consumption (Venus et al. 2004). Institutions should know that recognizing consumer behavior has never been easy, but despite this, an understanding of consumer behavior and timely, optimal meeting their requests and needs is the main and essential tasks of marketing managers (Alodari, 2005). Accordingly, Bathae (2011) in a research entitled "culture affects consumer behavior- theoretical reflections and illustrative example with Germany and Iran" concluded that variety seeking, reference group influence, and purchase risk reduction are different in the culture of both countries but class-based consumption, effort minimization for purchasing are common in the culture of both countries.

2.1. Reference-group influence

As a point of view of Singer (1981), a reference group refers to any group to which an individual tries to make it his guidance, be it a membership group or non-membership group. In a summary of definitions, it can consider reference-group as a group or individuals that a person considers an impression, which has about their expectations and standards, as a guide and model during assessment, orientation, and behavior. All people need to monitor their own behaviors and others. The monitoring needs measures, which will be obtained from the reference-group. In fact, a person always sees himself as a point of view of others during normal and daily behaviors as well as his decisive behaviors; and he continually reviews and corrects what he does. Therefore, first hypothesis is as following:

H1: there is a difference between Iranian consumer behavior and French consumer behavior in terms of reference-group influence.

2.2. Purchase risk reduction

According to Mitchell & Boustani (1994), purchase risk reduction focuses on increasing the amount of certainty that a satisfactory product will be purchased as well as reducing the negative consequences, should the purchase be

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