Chapter 6

Consumption Patterns and Cultural Values in Europe

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ABSTRACT

The chapter focuses on cultural differences in consumption across Europe and describes general attitudes towards consumption and brands, the significance of shopping, and how these are linked to the motives of consumption of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. These topics have been analysed using the Hofstede dimensions, and the evaluation also considers regional differences within the European Union. The main objective of this research is to attempt to understand consumption patterns and national cultural dimensions, general consumption values, and what their connections are to alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinking patterns. The main research question is how cultural styles influence consumption styles within Europe.

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This analysis concluded that some European societies are more adaptable to cross-cultural influence than others in relation to beverage consumption. The authors’ findings suggest that the cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede supported the understanding of cultural differences related to purchasing, brands and beverage consumption both at national and individual levels. However, there is an overlap between some countries in their drinking behaviour, which supports the claim that existing cultural patterns cannot fully explain the new beverage trends, especially in alcohol consumption. This indicates the necessity of a shift toward new dimensions with regard to beverage consumption and/or eventually consumer behaviour.

6.1. OBJECTIVES

The analysis of culture and cultural differences incorporates several sensitive issues, which create a complex and interesting environment for our study. This sensitive nature leads to numerous challenges which academics, executives and managers around the world face on a daily basis. For example, as Europe continues to move toward a more united identity, the differences between border countries may sometimes appear greater than differences between Europe and the US.

This chapter focuses on cultural differences in consumption across Europe and describes general attitudes towards consumption and brands, the significance of shopping, and how these are linked to the motives of consumption of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. These topics have been analysed using the Hofstede dimensions and the evaluation also considers regional differences within the EU (European Union).

The main objective of our research is to attempt to understand consumption patterns and national cultural dimensions, general consumption values and what their connections are to alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinking patterns. The main research question is how cultural styles influence consumption styles within Europe, and the sub-questions to be addressed are the following:

- How do we understand the cultural/regional differences in consumer styles expressed in brand attitudes and shopping experiences?
- How do we understand the cultural/regional differences in alcoholic and non-alcoholic consumption?
- How can we discover the relationship between the Hofstede dimensions and drinking patterns?
- How can we discover the relationship between the Hofstede dimensions, brand relevance and the significance of shopping?
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