Marketing Across Cultures

Few businesses today are owned and operated within one country. Most businesses cross global boundaries in one way or another. Many businesses market their products in other countries besides the country where the goods are produced. Often goods are even produced in more than one country! Cars are a good example of an international product. A Ford may be designed jointly in the **U.S.** and **Japan,** and then built in **Korea** with parts from **Mexico** and **Taiwan**. The finished product is sold throughout the world. Marketing in other countries and/or regions can be disastrous if the company has not properly researched the new ‘market area.

Costly Mistakes

Research prior to marketing a product can save a company from making costly mistakes. Campbell discovered that *Spaghetti Os* don’t sell well in Italy because the thought of canned pasta to Italians is not appetizing! A company which produces cake mixes decided to market the most popular flavors of cake mixes to people in **Great Britain**. They quickly discovered that their cake mixes did not sell. Upon further investigation they realized that **American** tastes and British tastes were quite different. **Britains** liked dry sponge cakes and not the sweet cakes popular in the United States. In **Japan** cake mixes are a hard product to sell because most Japanese do not have ovens to bake them in.

Often even product names and packaging which are accepted in one country, are not accepted in another country. *Coca-Cola* when first translated into **Chinese** read, “bite the wax tadpole.” Another name was found which was much less offensive. A baby food which was sold in **Africa** had a picture of a baby on the label. The baby food company was shocked to find out Africans saw the picture of the baby and assumed they were selling babies in the bottles! *Diet Coke* did not sell in **Japan** because Japanese women don’t like to admit they need to diet. The name was changed to *Coke Light* and began to sell immediately after the name change.

Cultural Differences

The manner in which a product is marketed will also change from culture to culture. In some areas of the world, TV is the most popular way to market. In other areas of the world billboards may be used, or as in the case of **Egypt**, advertising may be painted on sails of sail boats. The medium which is used must be adapted for each culture and market.

In conclusion, marketing in other cultures can be very successful. It is important that research be conducted to find out what aspects of a product to promote in the new market. Market research will also help discover if the product is something that is needed and wanted. Perhaps one of the most important reasons for conducting research before marketing a product in a different culture is to uncover any adaptations which need to be made before marketing worldwide.