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THE IMPACT OF CULTURE
ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR
ACROSS THE CARIBBEAN

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ABSTRACT

The Impact of Culture on Consumer Behaviour Across the Caribbean

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The rapidly increasing importance of international marketing has led marketers to try to improve their understanding of how consumers and markets differ around the globe for the purpose of building more effective marketing strategies. The studies in this area have swung between the need for adaptation and the pragmatics of standardization. Consumer behaviour has, therefore, been influenced by these two questions leading researchers to focus either on revealing differences or similarities within various consumer behaviour domains. This thesis aimed to make a contribution to this discussion by adopting a cultural perspective of consumer behaviour.

The thesis was thus designed as a theoretical study focusing on the examination of structured hypotheses relating the variables of Culture with that of Consumer

Behaviour. A quantitative approach based on a survey was adopted with data being collected in Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados and Trinidad & Tobago. Overall, results lend support to a proposed conceptual framework for understanding Consumer Behaviour that is derived from understanding the consumer through having detailed customer knowledge, which is the fundamental mission of marketing. It further shows that understanding and knowledge of consumer behaviour, in the Caribbean, is arrived at by having a prior understanding of several cultural-relevant variables. The relevance of culture on consumer behaviour and marketing, moreover, is confirmed in this work, thereby answering an often-asked question in international research (for example, Tse et al 1988; Lenartowicz and Roth 2001; Okazaki 2004) concerning whether or not culture plays a shaping role in consumer behaviour in the Caribbean. This work clearly enhances the prior understanding of how cultural dimensions affect consumer behaviour in the Caribbean.

The segmentation literature presented, along with its research results, have produced a new approach aimed at merging the concept of globalization with homogeneous consumer groups. Segmentation, as such, holds the answer to the standardization and/or adaptation dilemma in the Caribbean with evidence being found for the influence of culture on Consumer Behaviour.

These conclusions provide an insightful contribution to an understanding of cross-cultural consumer behaviour, and the impact of culture of consumer behaviour. Support was found to the view that several cultural variables have a significant influence on Consumer Behaviour in the Caribbean.

Keywords: Culture and Consumer Behaviour