



Impact of Stealth Marketing on Sustainable Development with the Mediating Role of Culture in Punjab, Pakistan

Dr. Irfan Sabir

Associate Professor at University of Lahore Gujrat, Pakistan

Muhammad Usman Zakir

MS Student at COMSATS Institute of Information Technology Sahiwal, Pakistan

Muhammad Bilal Majid

PhD Scholar at Superior University Lahore, Pakistan

Email: bilalmajid34@gmail.com

Abstract

The study examines the impact of stealth marketing on sustainable development with the mediating role of culture in Punjab, Pakistan. This research is Quantitative in nature and research approach is explanatory. Data have been collected through stratified random sampling technique from different educational institute of Punjab, Pakistan. Sample size was 292 respondents. Close ended questionnaire was used to collect the data. The findings from SEM and CFA are illustrating the negative impact of stealth marketing on sustainable development. This investigation also sheds light on interrelation between culture and sustainable development. All the variables were found to have impact on sustainable development. This study will help to educate marketers about negative and positive effects of stealth marketing on customers.

Key words: *Stealth marketing, Culture, sustainable development, Educational institutes, Advertisement and unethical Behaviour*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Development is one of the major concerns and hot issues globally both in terms of economic and non-economic aspects. There are some studies which believe that culture is one of the key drivers of sustainable development. Culture shares characteristics and knowledge of

people, habits, language, music, art, religion and social harmony which is important contributor in sustainable development of our society. Nowadays, stealth marketing activities are distorting cultures.

Marketing is one of the major contributors for any business' success. Marketing techniques are used to increase awareness in target market segments about business operations, products, ideas and services. Different marketing techniques are adopted by marketers as per requirements of businesses in order to achieve their stated or unstated goal and sometimes these marketing practices become a reason of damaging societies socially, ethically as well as economically.

According to Zimmermann (2015), no one can deny direct and indirect impact of culture on sustainable development at individual level as well as group or national level. Literature suggested that culture is one of the contributors for achieving sustainable development in any state. Culture is something which transfers from generation to generation and society shares these values. Kolenda (2013) discussed that nowadays educational institutes have some effects on culture as well. In Pakistan, the Western culture is merging in Eastern culture through marketing and educational institutes as medium to give birth to new culture which is commonly known as "modernised culture" which is lesser productive, possessing lack of ethical and social values and having negative results on sustainability of the country. Same case was developed in country like UAE where Islamic culture is replaced by combination of different cultures and believes resulting in harming sustainable development.

As per study of Jahangir (2012), the educational institutes are key to success of any culture and world history is admitting this fact. Less developed countries like Pakistan is far behind in researching culture in the academically and its role in development and what types of changes must be implemented in order to meet economic and non-economic challenges.

Miller (2011) discussed about UAE as rich in cultural diversity. UAE includes Pakistani, Emirati African, Europeans, Indians and large number of other nationalities and different ethnic groups. This region itself is ancient, dating back thirty-five thousand years and well developed having large deposit of oil, tourism, gold, natural resources, good infrastructure, politically stable, safe place for people to live and invest and large number of job opportunities for world but official language is Arabic instead of English because Arabic language is the part of their culture. Secondly, the way of dressing, the way of eating, interacting each other are according to their cultural practices which they used to market through different events and stealth marketing tactics. Hills (2010) conducted a study in UAE that

culture is a major part of individual development as well as development of any nation. In order to survive or thrive in this challenging era, the significance of culture and education in the country can never be denied.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Stealth marketing is distorting the culture and its components (Zimmermann, 2015) by exploiting values and norms of a society (Smith, 2013) and ultimately endangering sustainable development (Francis, 2009; Tabellini, 2010; Kamal, Bloom et al, 2013; Patel, 2014; R&D, 2008). The above studies are going to investigate the relationship status among sustainable development and stealth marketing in the presence of culture as mediator.

1.3 Research Objectives

Research objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To inquire the impact of stealth marketing on sustainable development.
2. To identify the influence of stealth marketing on culture.
3. To explore the mediating role of culture between sustainable development and stealth marketing.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Does stealth marketing adversely influence sustainable development of Punjab, Pakistan?
2. How does stealth marketing distort the culture of Punjab, Pakistan?
3. Does Culture mediate the relationship between stealth marketing and sustainable development?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Stealth Marketing

Stealth marketing is another name of undercover marketing in which marketers are achieving their economic or non economical goals by communicating messages about their products or ideas to desire audience secretly. Kaikati (2005) furtherly redefined the concept of stealth marketing as: "Stealth marketing attempts to catch people at their most vulnerable by identifying the weak spot in their defensive shields. It is considered to be a viable alternative to conventional advertising because it is perceived as softer as and more personal than traditional advertising." It is a set of covert marketing commonly classified as "Stealth Marketing" which has also been referred to as "shill", "undercover" or "masked marketing" (Balter & Butman, 2006; Petty & Andrew, 2008).

Many firms such as Virgin, Unilever, Adidas and Starbucks have started to use innovative ways of advertising to grab the attention of the consumers including awareness generation tactics, wild publicity stunts, creative product placement and emotional branding campaigns (Marsden, 2006). Celebrities, subliminal messages, averaging, pop music, art and different mediums are used by stealth marketers, by media and other digital and non-digital platforms to damage or manipulate culture resulting decline in sustainable development.

Sony Ericsson's "Fake Tourists" promotion; "Tremor" a large teen network founded by P&G in 2001; Wal-Marting Across America campaign; Dr. Pepper's Raging Cow Flogs; and Burger King's hugely popular "Subservient Chicken" website features an actor in a chicken suit who responds to most of the requests typed in a box are some of the prominent examples of stealth marketing at international level (Branscum, 2004; Martin & Smith, 2008).

2.2 Culture

Culture is something which is shared and circulating among the members of society. Word culture is derived from Latin word "colere" means "to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivate and nurture, fostering growth". Culture has shared characteristics and knowledge of people, dressing, habits, language, music, food, art, religion and social harmony (Zimmermann, 2015). Every culture possess unique strengths like wide range of ideas, perspectives, norms and values, analytical skills, solving problems , enrich community life and indigenous knowledge (Okiihiro, 2014). Culture has invisible but prominent effects on development and business.

It is believed that India would never get developed due to Hinduism culture but in this particular culture, there is lack of spark in this Hindu culture to innovate things and develop business on international arena (Zoky, 2007). In some regions, there are multiple cultures (Cultural Diversity) in societies which have negative effects on each other or having negative effect on one particular culture so it can also be assumed that cultures have negative effects on each other by distorting its different components (Nwegbu, Eze, & Asogwa, 2011).

2.3 Stealth Marketing and Sustainable Development

Stealth marketers are not considering overall betterment and welfare of society in the terms of development and besides that, they are just focusing on benefits in their business. This attitude of stealth market is pointing a lot of serious questions about sustainable development especially socio-culture and environmental sustainability around the globe (Heymana, Abendrotha, & Lisa, 2012). T the trend of online marketing is growing and there are number

of complaints nowadays regarding different unethical or anti-social stealth marketing activities in developing and developed countries. Different fake rumors and scam news to attain public attention result in hundreds of thousands of consumer's loss reports from both monitory and non-monitory point of views (Pleyte, 2006). The negative effect of stealth marketing on sustainable development of any country is also supported by another research as "parasite for sustainable development of nations" both in short and long term (Magnini, 2011).

2.4 Stealth Marketing and Culture

Over past couple of decades, the term "stealth marketing" has started to use occasionally. In literature, curveball strategies are referred to as stealth marketing tactics, aimed to target their consumers without their knowledge and consent of being targeted (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). According to Kaikati and Kaikati (2004), "viral marketing, brand pushing, celebrity marketing, bait and tease marketing, marketing video games and marketing in pop and rap music" are the most noticeable six ways of targeting consumers using such strategies. According to code 15.4 of Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice by the Canadian Marketing Association (CMA), "marketers should avoid undercover or word of mouth initiatives that encourage a consumer or business to believe that the marketing' agents are acting independently and without compensation when they are not" (Canadian Marketing Association, 2008).

In current postmodern marketing environment, stealth marketing tactics have subtly been woven in many facets of culture, and have begun to be noticed because they are off their limits (Roy & Satya, 2010). Brands and advertising through undercover marketing techniques and tactics, intensive usage of mass media and internet services, online blogs, subliminal messages, pop and rap music, video games marketing tools deem to be problematic (Jameson, 2010; Johansson, 2004; Klein & Nason, 2001) and tend to have negative effects on quality of life (Ger, 2011; Ger & Belk, 2012; Kilbourne, McDonagh & Prothero, 2009) and indigenous cultures in developing countries like Pakistan as well as developed countries like UAE (Terrece, 2005). Stealth marketing tend to distort the local cultures, lead to unsustainable consumption, and contributes majorly to unhealthy diet and food patterns in developing and developed countries (Terrece, 2005).

Marketing management comprises tactics and strategies for dissemination the prevailing world culture (Johansson, 2004). The inrush of ideas, values, traditions, products, and lifestyles through marketing from western countries highly influence and ultimately demean

the cultures of countries around the globe (Barber, 2003; Jameson, 2010; Tunstall, 2007). Traditional societies and their cultures are in a continuous state of danger of being distorted and destroyed by exterior commercial inspirations (Cowen, 2002). These cultures have not been eradicated simultaneously, native languages are being tainted by English language (Baughan & Buchanan, 2001). The popular cultures are exported to developing world and exploiting them through new ways and tactics of marketing (Watson, 2007). The wide penetration of foreign cultures in developing countries threaten their native culture on the whole and specifically their costumes, language, indigenous knowledge and religious practices (White, 2001).

Stealth marketing psychologically damages all levels of socio-cultural groups because defense mechanism through stealth marketing is creating distrust element in minds of customers about any marketing initiatives which is irreversible. The human interactions are widely commercialised while social relationship satisfaction is getting reduced (Martin, 2008).

All people without the distinction of race, culture or nation hold variety of values and guiding principles which outline their attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and shape their cultural identity (Rokeach, 2012). Advertising plays a significant role in normalisation of extrinsic cultural values that have an influence on cultural identity (WWF-UK & PIRC, 2011). Stealth Marketing through advertisements is not only exacerbating the unethical behaviour, wellbeing and inequality but also increasing the unsustainability in the environment (Burns, 2012). The impact of such marketing may in fact outspread further than specific behavioural changes to cultural identity (Lang, Barling, & Caraher, 2009).

2.5 Culture and Sustainable Development

The relation between culture and development started to be defended by different experts in 1970s but has never been considered by international bodies and development agencies until 1980s and even 1990s. Max Weber was right in making the point that social values and attitudes are pertinent in describing of what economies will succeed and what will fail (Fracis, 2009). Culture is dignified by the indicators of individual values and beliefs including trust, confidence in individual self-determination and respect for others etc. Culture factors including “trust, autonomy, generalised morality and belief in the importance of individual effort” have strong correlation with economic development of any country (Tabellini, 2010).

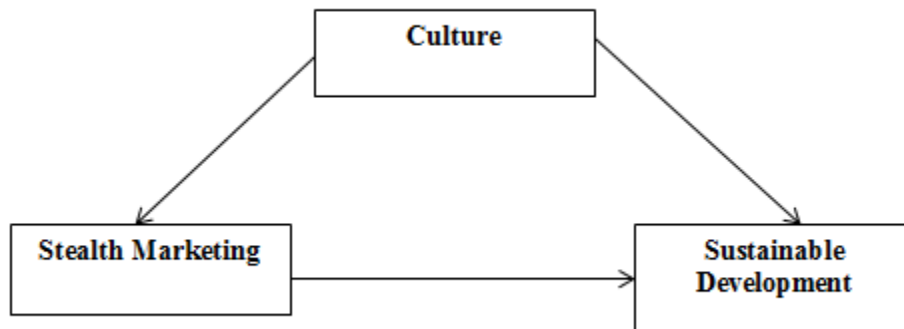
Sustainability is defined as interaction of humans with all aspects of living including environment, social and economic aspects. Cultural sustainability is taking its part in preserving all tangible and intangible cultural elements of every country (Scammon, 2012). Sustainability framework is based on four pillars: cultural, social, economic, and environmental sustainability (Zhang, 2010). The past decade, statistics, indicators and data on the cultural sector as well as operational activities have underscored that culture can be a powerful driver for development, with community-wide social, economic and environmental impacts.

There was a view expressed that culture is enabler and powerful driver with wide social, economic and environmental impact on sustainable development from statistics and data from past decade (Culture, 2012). Culture is one of the economic development growth rate indicators for any country. There are some ethnic groups which are tycoons of businesses; for example, in Pakistan Sheikh Families and Khan who are known well for their smart business minds, likewise in UAE only native Arabs can hold property and among key stockholders in any private firm (Counselor, 2009). Besides the economic development of any country, culture is playing its vital role in personal and moral development of individuals and societies (Pekarsky, 2000).

Fracis (2009) highlighted this point of socio-cultural as important attitude and value as key drivers of ups and downs in economies. Landies (1998) discussed cultural factors as the key success factors of economies of nations in the book “The Wealth and Poverty of Nations” which was written by David Landes. Tabellini (2010) established the relationship among cultural ingredients like trust, autonomy, morality and belief correlated to economic development. Nowadays, marketers are doing some undercover activities (Stealth Marketing) to attain their goals which result in exploitation of culture, social values resulting in a lot of unethical problems in societies (Smith, 2013).

Sustainable development can only be achieved by incorporating cultural factors into the strategies for it (UNESCO, 2010). David Landes has concluded in his book “The Wealth and Poverty of Nations” that culture is the key to success of national economies (Landes, 1998). Culture also influences “lifestyles, consumption patterns, individual behaviours, and values related to environmental stewardship” thus culture makes development more sustainable by playing a transformative role (UNESCO, 2012). The literature has established the relationship among cultural correlated to economic development of developing and developed countries (Tabellini, 2010).

Theoretical Framework



This study is referring following theoretical framework in which stealth marketing as independent variable (Francis, 2009; Tabellini, 2010) while according to study of Zimmermann (2015), sustainable development is depending upon culture which is affected by stealth marketing and performing role of independent variable towards sustainable development. Culture is acting as mediator between stealth marketing and sustainable development (Smith, 2013).

2.6 Research Hypotheses

H1: There exists a significant negative effect of stealth marketing on sustainable development.

H2: There exists a significant negative effect of stealth marketing on culture.

H3: There exists a significant positive effect of culture on sustainable development.

H4: Culture is mediating the relationship of stealth marketing and sustainable development.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy

This study is quantitative and applied in nature (phenomenological research). Quantitative research gets opinions of the people in structured way so hard facts and statistics can be drawn from data.

3.2 Research Approach & Nature

Research approach is deductive which is referred to move from “general to the particular” (Pelissier, 2008) and findings support or modify a theory (Gulati, 2009). The nature of the

research is explanatory which is carried out to comprehend phenomena by discerning and computing causal relations among variables (Gratton & Jones, 2003).

3.3 Unit of Analysis

Unit of analysis in this study is individuals from different age groups both males and females especially associated with educational institutes of Punjab, Pakistan.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The sample size in this study is based upon stratified random sampling including respondents from higher educational institutes both students as well as employees from both genders. The selected educational institutes for sample are from Punjab province Pakistan. 292 complete responses were received out of 560 questionnaires distributed in these institutes.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Questionnaire was adapted from literature in order to get responses of target respondents as per requirement of this study. Descriptive data was analysed through (SPSS 21) software. While inferential analysis, Structural Equation Modeling and Path Analysis were performed by using (AMOS 21) software

4. Data Analysis

Table 1. Demographics Statistics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	149	51.0
Female	143	49.0
Total	292	100.0
Age		
18-25 years	89	30.6
25-31 years	104	35.5
31-38 years	72	24.7
38+ years	27	9.2
Total	292	100.0
Education		

Inter	61	20.9
Graduation	149	51.7
Post-graduation	82	28.4
Total	292	100.0
Employment Status		
Part Time	59	20.6
Full Time	169	57.9
Student	64	21.5
Total	292	100.0
Listening Music		
1-3 hours	288	98.6
3-6 hours	4	1.4
Total	292	100.0
Playing video games		
1-3 hours	292	100.0
Total	292	100.0

The frequency of population was 292 out of which males were 149 (51.0 %) and female respondents were 143 (49 %). Respondents from age group 18 to 25 years were 89 (30.6 %), from age group between 25 to 31 years were 104 (35.6%), 72 respondents (24.7%) from age between 31 to 38 year and 27 respondents (9.2%) above 38 year of age. If one talks about level of education out of total sample from Pakistan; 61 respondents (20.9%) were of intermediate level, 149 (51.7%) were of graduation level respondents and rest of the 82 respondents were post graduated (28.4%). According to employment status of respondents in Pakistan, 49 respondents (20.6%) were working as part time job while 169 respondents (57.9%) were working as full time employees, and 64 (21.5%) were students. 288 (98.6%) were marked as listening to music for 1 to 3 hours and 4 (1.4%) marked 3 to 6 hours. All of the sample marked playing video games for atleast 1 to 3 hours duration.

4.2 Reliability Analysis

As below table indicates that the Cronbach' alpha values are ranged from 0.698 to 0.911, implied that all the constructs are highly reliable. As in social science, the value of Cronbach alpha greater than 0.6 is considered reliable (Field, 2006), and all the variables in the study are approximately equal and greater than 0.7. The independent variable "stealth marketing" proved to be the most reliable factor with $\alpha=0.911$ and 8 number of items, then dependent variable "sustainable development" with $\alpha=0.746$ and 8 number of items, mediator variable "culture" with $\alpha=0.698$ and 9 number of items, and moderator variable "educational institutes" with $\alpha=0.710$ and 5 number of items.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis

Variables in Study	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Stealth Marketing	.911	8
Culture	.698	9
Sustainable Development	.746	8

Table 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Sustainable Development	Factor Loadings
Traditions and customs practices are as much about the generations in the future as it is about what we need today to fulfill developmental needs and wants.	.861
Social values are necessary for wellbeing and development of this generation and future generations.	.775
Protection of cultural traditions is necessary for survival of nations and sustainable development.	.720
Developmental equilibrium will not be possible until wealthier and elite class stop exploiting rights and resources of lower class.	.841
Citizenship education is an important component of education for meeting and maintaining level of sustainable development.	.735
The teaching of sustainability principles (cultural, economic and	.883

environmental development) should be integrated into the curriculum in all disciplines and at all levels of schooling.	
Businesses do not require behaving responsibly.	.630
Considering traditions and customs as a national priority is key to maintaining country's status as one of the most livable countries in the world.	.592
AVE	0.5637
Square Root of AVE	0.7639
Culture	
We need stricter laws and regulations to protect the culture.	.924
We need stricter laws and regulations to protect the culture.	.759
Our national history and knowledge are well protected and promoted in our country.	.821
Our national language is well protected and promoted in our country.	.770
Our religion is well protected and promoted in our country.	.596
Our traditional foods are well protected and promoted in our country.	.734
Our national dressing is well protected and promoted in our country.	.659
AVE	0.5406
Square Root of AVE	0.7921
Stealth Marketing	
Marketing campaigns that do not reveal that you are targeted by marketing are good practices.	.901
Marketing through pop music is a good way to attract consumers.	.757
I like the clothes and products used by characters in video games.	.842
A hidden message is a smart mean of conducting marketing towards consumers.	.789
I prefer to buy products that are marketed by popular personalities (Celebrities).	.949

Companies using hidden marketing can influence my attitude towards a product.	.678
Hidden marketing affects our education system.	.751
AVE	0.5922
Square Root of AVE	0.7463

Table 4. Summary of Model Fit Statistics For Measurement Models

Indices	Recommended values	Obtained values from Pakistan
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	≥ 0.9	0.853
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	≥ 0.9	0.901
CMIN/DF	< 3.0	1.938
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	≥ 0.9	0.953
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	≥ 0.9	0.955
Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)	< 0.10 or closer to zero	0.052
Root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.10	0.063

The error terms of the variables are correlated to obtain the model fit as recommended by model fitness index. The Value for GFI obtained for Pakistan is 0.853. IFI is 0.901 and CMIN/DF is 1.938. NFI value is 0.953 and CFI is 0.955. RMR is 0.052 and RMSEA value is 0.063. All the values of model fit indices lie within the acceptable range of good model fit.

4.3 Structural Model of Mediator

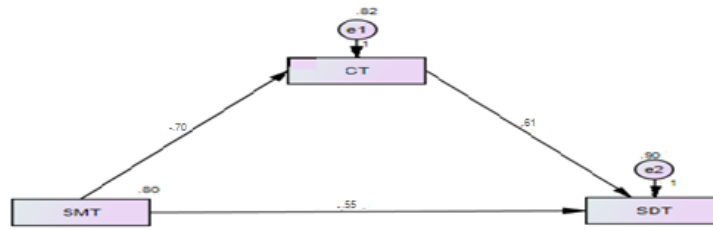


Figure 1. Structural Model

Table 5. Summary of Model Fit Indices

Indices	Recommended values	Obtained values from Pakistan
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	>0.95	0.960
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	>0.95	0.973
CMIN/DF	< 3.0	2.409
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	>0.95	0.995
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	>0.95	0.967
Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)	<0.10 or closer to zero	0.065
Root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA)	<0.10	0.007

The Value for GFI obtained is 0.960 and IFI, the value obtained from Pakistan is 0.973. CMIN/DF is 2.409 and NFI value is 0.995. CFI is 0.967 and RMR values is 0.065. RMSEA value obtained is 0.007. All the values of model fit indices lie within the acceptable range of good model fit for Pakistan. The tables below show the regression weights of mediator variable that is culture in case of Pakistan. In table, “Estimate” is “beta”, “S.E.” is “standard error”, “C.R.” is “t-value” and “P” is “P-value”. On the basis of p-value, the hypotheses in the study are accepted or rejected.

5. Conclusion and Future Research

This study is illustrating the negative impact of stealth marketing on sustainable development. This investigation also sheds light on interrelation between culture and sustainable development. All these variables were found to have impact on sustainable development. Culture is common belief, life style, language, food and way of thinking as well as interacting with each other which has been distorted by subliminal messages, video games, celebrity culture, art and music which are some of the stealth marketing tactics and a giant threat for sustainable development .

In this study, there are some limitations which may be filled by future research:

Sustainable development is a diverse term having a lot of different dimensions and fields. All fields of sustainable development are not investigated in this study.

- Under the umbrella of marketing, there are lots of different tools, tactics and strategies but in this study, only stealth marketing is considered for investigation.
- Results can be more generalised by conducting same study in many other developing and developed countries across the globe including non-Islamic countries also.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

- For data collection purpose, only educational institutes are selected especially higher educational institutes (Colleges and Universities) due to lack of recourses, time and access.
- The study has addressed only stealth marketing while other marketing tools and tactics are also harmful for sustainable development which are ignored due to restricted time parameters.

5.3 Implications

- This study will provide solutions to the common global problem called sustainability in development which is concern of every individual and nation. In other words, there is large gap in existing literature to discuss impact of culture, stealth marketing on sustainable development. So, this study will be a milestone to understand relationships among these variables to solve global concern of sustainable development for common good of every individual and nation around the globe.
- Marketing tactics are indirectly and directly harming the cultures. This study will help to educate marketers about negative and positive effects of stealth marketing on their target customers and at the same time, it will also help society to stay alert about these

undercover marketing strategies which are performing parasitic role in their culture and developmental indicators.

- Culture is also key contributor in sustainable development which will be proved by this study and hence this study will help to understand concept of sustaining endangered cultures which are on the way to extinction from globe every day.

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