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## **A Study of Factors Influencing the Performance of Jeddah City Fashion Managers in International Marketing**

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

By

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### **Abstract:**

Moving from national to international and global marketing activity is a great challenge that encounters managers engaged in international marketing task. The difficulty of the duties involved in international marketing needs awareness of many factors that must be absorbed, understood and adopted by managers and marketers. The urgent question comes to light as whether managers of fashions who travel to do business abroad are well-prepared to cope effectively and efficiently with changeable international marketing environment. In this paper the researcher presents findings from empirical study that has been conducted with five hundred managers (500) who work for fashion companies in Jeddah city, Saudi Arabia.

The purpose of this paper is to identify factors that influence the performance of managers of fashion in the international marketing arena. Factors that will be discussed in this study are: (1) Cross-cultural awareness; (2) Global negotiation skills; (3) Global communication skills; (4) Adoption of Global mindset; (5) Knowing business etiquette of a host country before going there; (6) Respect of social taboos, customs, and traditions of a host country; (7) Adaptation to the conditions in a host country; (8) Building strong relationship abroad and (9) Strategic marketing planning. The study followed a quantitative research method using self-administered survey technique because self-administered survey has the potential for anonymity of the respondent, which can lead to more truthful or *valid* responses. Also, the questionnaire can be filled out at the convenient time of the respondent. Since there is no interviewer, interviewer error or bias is eliminated. The cost of reaching a geographically dispersed sample is more reasonable for most forms of self-administered survey than for personal interview survey.

### **Statement of the case**

The case of this research is to identify the major factors that influence fashion managers in Jeddah city who always travel to carry out their assignment abroad.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this research is to explain the major factors influencing the performance of fashion managers in international marketing. Factors to be examined will include:

1. Cross-cultural awareness.
2. Global negotiation skills.
3. Global communication skills.
4. Adoption of global mindset.
5. Knowing business etiquette of a host country before going there.
6. Respect of social taboos, customs and traditions of a host country
7. Adaptation to the Conditions in a Host Country.
8. Building strong relationship abroad.
9. Strategic marketing planning practices.

### **Value of the Study**

This study will be useful to international marketers as well as international business managers because the findings will:

1. broaden their global knowledge.
2. enlighten them to improve and develop themselves to avoid obstacles and dilemmas abroad.
3. enrich the field of international marketing studies with fruitful and ample knowledge.
4. enlighten them with social taboos of foreign countries that they ignore.
5. be fertile source of knowledge for new global managers who are not knowledgeable about cultural diversity.
6. provide major factors influencing the business performance of Jeddah City fashion managers in their international marketing activities

### **The Research Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

The concentration of this chapter is on the research methodology that will be followed in conducting this study. After the researcher has identified the problem for the study, designed a research questions and defined the aims and objectives for this study, he moved to the essence of the study, which is the research methodology that will be adopted by the researcher.

The research methodology is the most important stage of the research process, because it indicates that how the study will be carried out. The type of design, motivation for choice, the researcher's role, instrumentation, method of data collection and sampling will be discussed. This research started with the collection of secondary data, followed by the gathering of primary data through the use of the survey method.

#### **Research Design**

The study will adopt exploratory quantitative research design method. The reason for choice is that quantitative design will attempt to investigate and explore on the factors that influence managers of fashions performance in the international arena. Also, quantitative research method has useful strengths more than its weaknesses.

#### **The Research Questions**

In order to investigate on the factors that influence the performance of managers of fashion in the international arena, the researcher designed a study to collect data from managers of fashion who had traveled abroad, worked in fashion importation field and carried out assignments for couple of years in many foreign countries. The researcher generated and developed a comprehensive questionnaire based on the previous managers' international work experience in fashion importation activity to gather the

data presented. The questionnaire attached as an appendix. The researcher developed a questionnaire that composed of 91 questions covering personal demographics of fashion managers and a wide range of information about managers of fashion activities abroad and their international marketing assignment which have been grouped into categories: (1) questions about respondents demographics (2) objective questions about the work experience locally and internationally, such as the duration of stay in foreign countries while carrying out their assignment (3) questions about the individuals' use of foreign languages (4) questions about import activity (5) questions about communication skills (6) questions about fashion quality (7) questions about prices of fashions (8) questions about advertising for fashions (9) questions about marketing planning (10) questions about motivations regarding fashion companies reason for importing fashions (11) questions about fashion characteristics (12) questions about import market characteristics (13) questions about the entry mode in fashion importing field (14) questions about imported terms for imported fashions (15) questions about pricing strategy (16) questions about generic competitive strategy (17) questions about import market policy (18) questions about culture diversity (19) Questions about international business etiquette (20) questions about customs and traditions in the host foreign countries (21) questions about adaptation to conditions in the host foreign countries (22) various attitudinal questions such as the importance attached to building strong friendships and relationships with foreigners (23) questions about strategic marketing planning (24) questions about import performance and (25) about global negotiation skills.

### **Data Analysis**

In this chapter the data collected from the sample (fashion managers) will be presented and analyzed. The data are presented in five areas: (1) pretest results; (2) survey response rate; (3) characteristics of the respondents (demographic information regarding the study population and sample; and (4) presentation and analysis of findings.

### **Pre-testing**

Pre-testing the designed questionnaire for survey is important before research can be conducted. Therefore, to determine the effectiveness of the survey questionnaire, it was necessary to pretest it before using it. Because pre-testing can help you to determine the strengths and weaknesses of response items format, wording and order in your questionnaire.

### **Pretest Results**

Before administering the Arabic text of the questionnaire used in this study it was given to 10 of managers of fashion. They were told that the pretest is a practice run, rather than asking the respondents to simply fill out the questionnaire, and they are told to explain their reactions to questions form. They were asked to evaluate: (1) the quality of the translation from English into Arabic; (2) the content; (3) the clarity and arrangement of the response items; (4) any terms or words that unfamiliar for them and grammar mistakes in order to determine whether the questionnaire is understandable and cover the research objectives; (5) the flow of the questionnaire; and (6) the actual time required to complete the questionnaire. Also, they were asked to denote if there were any items that might be difficult for the subject to understand.

All of the managers of fashion, 100 percent, surveyed for this study explained that the translated questionnaire, the content and the arrangement of the response items were useful, understandable and covered the factors that affect fashion import activity. They said that they did not face any difficulties when answering the questionnaire response items.

### **Survey Response Rate**

Data were attained by the researcher from (managers of fashion) working for fashion companies in Jeddah city. A total of 500 questionnaires were administered to the respondents (managers of fashion) in fashion companies in the center of Jeddah city. A total of 495 questionnaire items (99%) were returned. A total of 5 questionnaire items (1%) were not returned. Thus, the survey rate was 99 percent.

\* According to Babbie, a response rate of 50 percent is adequate, 60 percent is good and 70 percent is very good (1). With the achieved response rate of this study (99 percent) there is a high response rate. This means that there is no significant response bias.

### **Conclusions:**

The objective of this study was to explore and know closely the present condition of the literature concerning factors that influencing the performance of Jeddah city managers of fashion in international marketing field. Based on the findings and considering limitations influencing this study, the following conclusions can be drawn. The sample of managers of fashion from which the data was attained was limited to fashion managers who work for fashion companies that located in the center of Jeddah city. Some of these conclusions are as follows:

1. Based on the findings obtained after administering these different questionnaire response items: (multiple-choice questions, Likert scales, semantic differential scales and extent scales) analysis, it could be concluded here that quantitative survey method was adopted to study 500 fashion managers. Additional applications of quantitative survey method can be made on managers of fashions before any generally applicable conclusions can be accepted. However, the liability of applying quantitative method in all fashion managers who work for fashion companies in Jeddah city could be developed after adjusting and familiarizing the method to the fashion managers, their companies and characteristics.
2. The likeness between the findings that obtained from the respondents (managers of fashions) denoted that there is a logical degree of confidence in the findings and the suitability of the instrument used in the study.
3. The great responses item that received from the respondents showed that fashion managers participated extensively in the study and gave positive answers for the response items.
4. The findings pointed that most of the respondents were young and hold high school diploma.
5. Based on the findings of the study, the respondents had these characteristics:
  - a. They work for fashion companies that specialized in women fashions.
  - b. They import most of their fashions from Asian countries, especially from China because Chinese fashions companies offer reasonable prices for importers.
  - c. They are knowledgeable about quality of fashions that they import, fashions import regulations.
6. The findings of this study demonstrate that the survey method (quantitative method) and sample technique (judgmental sampling) that used for selection of the respondents are suitable survey technique from fashion managers because survey feedback was positive. This does not mean that other survey methods and sampling selection techniques are not appropriate and useful. But quantitative survey method can be adapted to fashion managers, their companies and their import activities beyond local borders.
7. The findings denote that the majority of fashion companies that conduct import operations are small in size and also employees who work for them are small in size.

8. The findings pointed that most of fashions that imported by the companies are of high quality. Therefore, most prices of fashion are so high.
9. The findings of the research demonstrate most of fashion companies have 20 years of importing experience in general and (2 to 3 years) of international experience in fashion importing.
10. It found that the majority of fashion companies explained that they are pursuing (profit oriented objective) in their importing activities of fashion in order to increase their companies' profitability. The results show that most of the companies said that they are pursuing (market oriented objective) in their importing activities of fashions to increase the awareness of their companies and the quality of fashions that they import.
11. The results display that most of fashion managers indicated that their companies are pursuing (competitive oriented objective) in their importing activities of fashions in order to set reasonable prices that attract more customers.
12. Based on the findings of the study, the respondents pointed that their companies are pursuing (strategic oriented objective) in their importing activities of fashions to broaden their companies' activities.
13. The findings of the study concerning culture factor show that fashion managers indicated that knowing cultures of other people is so important. Therefore, they pointed that international marketers and those who frequently go abroad and interact with foreigners must be knowledgeable about cultures and lifestyle of individuals who adopt these cultures and be sensitive to other peoples' cultures nuances perceptions of what is right or wrong because cultures are evaluated differently.
14. The findings demonstrate that the respondents showed positive agreement with great role of negotiations in the international arena. The explained that international marketers must arm themselves with effective tool that make them effective negotiators such as communication skills, efficient tactics, understanding negotiation style of every foreign country they want to visit for doing business, be patient when obstacles and problems stem during negotiation in order to cope with them, creating friendly comfortable atmosphere with other for the benefit of the two parts and show interest not difference with counterparts.
15. The findings of global mindset display that managers of fashions denoted that international marketers mindset needs to be given a new emphasis and must be changed from local to global if managers want to succeed and achieve their goals abroad. They must be discreet, flexible and open-minded because an individual global mindset is away one perceives the world and globalization of markets, people who do business and companies.
16. *The findings of business etiquette factor show that* the respondents gave special care to the factor because understanding and knowing how to conduct business with people of foreign countries is the right and suitable way for achieving your assignment successfully. Therefore, managers must know how to deal with business etiquette of every country separately. They must be aware of negotiation style, meeting and entertainment, punctuality and exchange gifts of the hosts to avoid dilemmas.
17. Based on the findings obtained from the responses items concerning (customs and traditions of a host country) factor, the respondents denoted that international marketers must know the basics facts about every foreign country they aim to visit before going for their assignment, and gather enough information about their customs, traditions and social taboos because knowing these important elements about them will help you to avoid mistakes when doing business with foreigners.
18. The results of (adaptation to conditions in a host country) factor demonstrate that the respondents indicated that international marketers who frequently conduct business with foreigners need to adapt to a new environment of host countries and realize everything that can hinder their

assignment and try to be ware that business tools and styles that work successfully in the local culture will not suit foreign cultures. Also they must be patient when they encounter problems that hinder their duties because patience helps them to think thoroughly about the problems that they face and find the right solution for them.

19. The findings of (building relationships) factor show that the respondents indicated that building strong relationships with the hosts in foreign countries helps international marketers learn how foreigners conduct their business and alleviate the environment between the counterparts who do business with each other. They also denoted that fundamental and important for managers to build good wok relationships across cultural borders because trusting and strong relationships are vital for successful business with others. They also denoted that the quick way to build relationships with foreigners is to show real interest in their cultures respect all items that cuddled by their cultures and social taboos.
20. The findings of (strategic marketing planning) factor display that fashion managers indicated that strategic marketing planning is the most urgent factor that international marketers need to adopt and give special care in their companies because defines the way that a company can follow for its future activities. They explained that the success of strategic marketing planning depends on effective team members who understand the strategic marketing planning techniques that contribute to marketing flourish in the company. Also, they pointed that strategic marketing planning will be efficient if managers start by examining the presents situation of the company knowing its weaknesses and strengths and put specific marketing objectives that can be achieved in the future.

#### **Recommendations of Practice:**

1. An exploratory study of this kind commonly presents several questions that cover the topic. Not only must this study be replicated in other fashion companies and fashion managers who work for these companies in other cities of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to see if the same findings arise under different conditions, but also, each of the findings of response items concerning the nine factors should be researched further in order to get more thoroughly explanation, approval or examine the results that were attained.
2. Before replicating this study, it is of extreme importance that some of the response items that translated from English into Arabic concerning the topic be modified and adapted in order to be suitable to managers of fashion, their companies culture and different techniques that they use to market their fashions in Jeddah city.
3. The data obtained from the respondents in this study were treated in accumulated manner. Even though the findings attained from the accumulated data are useful, effective and valuable to managers of fashion and their companies, it is recommended here that each fashion company with the collaboration, reinforcement and encouragement of the researcher should reanalyze the data acquired from its managers who can get useful results form their reanalysis that support its marketing activity. The companies that involved in the study must be scanned and evaluated as having their own style of management, marketing orientation, import operations techniques and the way of treating the obstacles that hinder their activity.
4. The objectives of each company concerning fashion importation, its managers' skills, its value among fashion companies in Jeddah city and the factors that influence its import activity in international arena must be defined, evaluated and analyzed separately, because each company has its own philosophy for conducting its business. Also, strategy, value and demand of the employees and fashion companies, the problems that stem from their competitors both locally and internationally in the environment which the fashion companies exist and operate must be

- considered carefully if they want to flourish and succeed.
5. As international marketing and importing from foreign countries becomes a clue preference for an increasing number of companies that conduct import activity, forming a strategy to compete effectively in international marketing becomes essential to success. It is recommended here that fashion companies must establish a strong competitive position both locally and globally as well as other companies operating on local or regional or global scale. In building a local and global competitive place, it is very important to consider all constraints, obstacles, problems and factors that can impede their task towards success. Fashion companies also need to develop their ability to operate effectively across boundaries in multiple turbulent and diverse markets. In other words, fashion companies must be able at the same time manage and respond to competitive conditions in multiple independent fashion market.
  6. This study can play significance role for enlightening new fashion managers who want to enter the field of importing fashions from foreign countries. The findings of this study should be of extensive interest not only to managers of fashions and their companies in Saudi but to faculties of business in Saudi universities, Chambers of commerce, Ministry of Commerce and colleges that teach business as well. They may use these findings as guidelines for giving students background about such international marketing studies.
  7. In order to increase the readers and make this empirical study more useful for managers of fashions, employees who work in fashion field, international marketers, fashion companies, students of study business and scholars, and this research paper must be translated into Arabic Language.

#### **Recommendations based on Literature Review:**

The researcher specified the following recommendations for future empirical research in response to current accessible literature of the purpose:

1. The researcher noticed that during the literature search concerning factors that influence the performance international marketer assignment, the majority of the empirical studies concentrated on culture, negotiation and communication while studies on other factors are scarce or not attainable. Therefore, the researcher strongly recommended that academic researcher and scholars who involved in international marketing studies should try to concentrate the empirical research on all factors that influence international marketers' performance in order to make these studies obtainable for students.
2. The literature on business etiquette, social taboos, customs and traditions, entertainment and gifts exchange with the hosts in foreign countries need empirical studies because most papers are conceptual and descriptive.
3. The current studies concerning the literature of these factors in international marketing and international business textbooks need to be broaden and revised to include more empirical evidence on the value of the factors to students and managers who involve in international marketing assignment.
4. The current literature on strategic marketing planning in the arena of fashion import need to be adapted and revised in order to be effective for fashion companies and managers.
5. More literature is needed on the value of these factors for fashion managers who involve in import operation in Jeddah markets.

***The resources of this research are 181.***

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