

International Business Communications

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Executive Summary

International business communication refers to communications within and outside of a business organisation that operates in multiple countries. This report focuses on the concept of business communication in an international context. It will be conducted considering Cafepod which is a British coffee company and its choice of expansion will be Bhutan which is a small mountain country in South Asia. It will use theories and models of international and intercultural communication within a business to analyse the cultural scenario of the country. The culture of the country will be evaluated for conducting business and the importance of networking will be provided. Language plays an important role in international business and the advantages and disadvantages of using buyer language have been illustrated. The different barriers businesses may face in the country have been evaluated and some appropriate strategies and recommendations have been given for the company to expand in Bhutan.

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Introduction

Businesses that operate in multiple countries have to develop strategies and communication channels for managing operations. International business communication refers to the exchange of information inside and outside of an organisation which operates internationally across different cultures and areas. This report is based on the concept of international business communication and will be conducted considering Cafepod is a food and beverage company based in the UK which is mainly focused on different flavours and types of coffee. The company was established in 2010 and currently sells coffee beans, pods, gifts and accessories (Cafepod, 2022a). This report will be conducted based on CafePod's expansion interests in Bhutan which is a developing country.

The report will analyse theories of international and intercultural communication in Bhutan. It will also provide the cultural dimensions of the country and evaluate what Cafepod must consider while conducting business in the country. The report will also include the importance of networking and emphasize the language of the buyers. It will portray the importance of languages in intercultural business operations. The different communication barriers that companies may face in Bhutan will be analysed. Furthermore, it will also provide communication strategies and other recommendations for Cafepod to succeed in its expansion in the country.

A brief introduction to the selected developing country

Bhutan is a South Asian country which is landlocked and located between India and China. The country is deep within the Himalayas and is characterised by steep mountains and deep valleys and the population of the country is scattered. The country has a small area of 38,394 square miles and a population of about 770,000 (The World Bank, 2022). Bhutan tries to maintain strong strategic and economic relations with India for foreign aid, finances and selling surplus hydropower. The economy of the country grew by 4.6% between July 2021 and June 2022 (The World Bank, 2022). The country follows the Gross National Happiness index on which its strategies and plans are made.

Application of theories of international and intercultural communication to the selected context/country

Hofstede's model of national culture is used for determining the culture of a country or region and comparing it to another one. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is used by businesses to differentiate between national cultures and to determine their impact on business strategies (CFI, 2022). It will be used to evaluate the culture of Bhutan and prepare the appropriate business setting for Cafepod. There are six dimensions of the theory that define the culture of a country which are power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence (Carolina, 2019). These factors will be explained concerning Bhutan and it will help to analyse the culture of the country.

Power distance: This demonstrates the distance of power in the culture of a country and how people accept the unequal distribution of power. Bhutan has a high score of 94 which indicates that people in the country accept hierarchy and everyone has a position which needs no justification (Hofstede Insights, 2022).

Individualism: The dimension of individualism illustrates the level of interdependence among people in the country. Bhutan has a score of 52 which is in the middle. It does not provide enough references to analyse the category of Bhutan. It states that the country can be both individualist and collectivist.

Masculinity: This category provides the mindset of people regarding what motivates them more. Bhutan has a score of 32 which indicates that the people in the country are more inclined toward

equality and solidarity over competition and success. The people in the country favour compromise and negotiation and are more inclined toward free time and flexibility.

Uncertainty Avoidance: This category will demonstrate how the society of a country will deal with uncertain events and how people plan for the future. Bhutan has a low score of 28 in this category which indicates that the people of the country are not averse to risk-taking and they are willing to try new things.

Long-term Orientation: This dimension portrays how people will plan for their future and deal with changes. Bhutan however is not open to this dimension as no scores have been provided. It demonstrates that the country is not transparent in this category from the view of an observer.

Indulgence: Indulgence can be understood as how much the people in a particular culture try to control their desires and impulses. It portrays the tendency of people in controlling their urges. Bhutan cannot be scored in this category as the country might not be open to observers regarding their desires and impulses.

Intercultural communication can be defined as communication between individuals from different cultures. According to Jandt's study on intercultural communication, people normally do not have direct knowledge or experiences of other cultures (Pandarangga and Kapoe, 2022). It suggests that people need to learn all or some of its elements to facilitate proper communication between people of different cultures. These elements can be learned by interacting with people and indulging in their values, traditions, government or economic systems. According to the concept, the employees and managers of Cafepod must interact with the citizens of Bhutan to learn and get accustomed to their culture before considering expansion in the country.

Critical evaluation of cultural sensitivity when doing business in the selected country

Bhutan is a country that welcomes foreigners and their activities however they are strongly attached to their traditions and culture. The culture of the country puts a strong emphasis on religion and the traditional beliefs of the people. The work and business culture in the country strongly follows the teachings of Lord Buddha. Various factors need to be followed while visiting and conducting business in the country. Some of them have been explained as follows:

- ***Respect*** - The people of the country have a great deal of respect for its kings. While interacting with local people, it is important to not say anything disrespectful to the

monarch of the country. The people of the country do not like to converse on political issues with foreigners (Natural Habitat Adventures, 2022). Any business that would like to operate in the country must instruct its employees or members to not engage in politically sensitive topics with the Bhutanese population to avoid trouble.

- **Traditional believes** - Apart from that, various customs and beliefs have to be considered while conducting business in the country. They include using the right hand to give and accept any objects, pointing at sacred items such as Buddhist statues or monuments, littering in public places, and various others. Using the left hand or both hands are a form of disrespect in the country and have to be avoided. The sacred items or paintings are of great value to the Bhutanese people and one should not point at them while conversing or travelling which is seen as disrespect toward the people. Littering anywhere in Bhutan is seen as a crime and disrespectful as the citizens view their natural environment as a divine gift. These are some of the things Cafepod must consider while conducting business in the country.

There are various rules and regulations in the country which are determined by a highly refined system of etiquette. This system of etiquette is known as “*Driglam Namzha*” and it includes various practices that support the culture of Bhutan (Countries and their Cultures, 2022). These practices include devotion to the culture of marriage and family, civic duties, and respect for people who hold authority and others. They provide a gist of appropriate behaviour in the country. These include the proper way to speak to people in authority, how to send and receive gifts, how to dress, and how to behave in the public. In the country men and women are allowed to converse freely without any restrictions that separate the genders. Businesses that are willing to expand in the country have to follow these rules and traditions to make an impact and succeed in the market.

Importance of networking – research into the relative importance of languages including the extent to which the language of the buyer should be used

Networking can be defined as the process of exchanging information or resources between people. In a business context, networking can be referred to as the process of maintaining connections with clients, employees and other professionals in an industry (Indeed, 2022). Networking is a crucial activity in a business as it helps in staying updated on the latest developments, and allows one to get an insight into business opportunities. Businesses that operate in multiple countries have to

maintain their networks with the citizens of the country. Cafépod is a British company it aims to operate in Bhutan. Hence, the organisation must learn the languages that are spoken in Bhutan and use them for maintaining relationships with professionals in the country. Learning the language of Bhutan will enable Cafepod to develop proper relations with people in the country, and engage its customers in a friendly and comfortable manner.

The languages of the country are important as they will help the members of the organisation to gather valuable information from the population of the country and use it to devise strategies and plans for the business. For instance, Cafépod is a coffee business and the company must know whether the population of the country prefers the drink for which the language will be helpful. Learning the language is also important to address people with respect and understand the emotions of the people while interacting. Languages are used to illustrate cross-cultural communication between different countries or regions (Roshid 2018). However, learning a new language is time taking and a complex action that might not be favourable for adults. Cafepod must be equipped with translators for its expansion in the country as learning the languages of the country may not be possible for the members of the business.

Languages play a crucial role in business communication, especially in the international market. Being able to speak in the language of the buyer demonstrates the dedication of the seller and helps to gain trust. Speaking in the language of the buyer or customer has various benefits which include more sales, better relationships with customers, and fewer chances of miscommunication. Knowing the language of the native buyers of a company allows it to increase sales as the customers will enjoy using their language (Stillman Translations, 2022). Cafepod will be able to achieve higher revenues if they communicate with the people of Bhutan using the local languages. Conversing with the buyers in their language will help businesses to build trust and reduce the chances of miscommunication as the feelings and expressions can be accurately conveyed. However, there are some disadvantages which include the expenses and time taken to learn a completely new language. Apart from that, mastery of a language takes a long time and incomplete knowledge of a language may result in miscommunication.

Discuss and analyse different communication barriers experienced by foreign businesses in the selected country

There are various barriers which may disrupt or cause problems in communication for foreign businesses in a new country. They may include the prevalent language of the country, cultural barriers, gender biases, body language and gestures, and many more (Chron, 2022). International businesses operate in multiple countries and there are multiple barriers to communication which can disrupt efficient communication between individuals or groups. These communication barriers are prevalent in Bhutan and foreign companies face trouble due to these elements which have been explained as follows:

Language barrier

Bhutan is a rich country when it comes to linguistics and dialects. There are over 20 languages in the country which can be attributed to its unique geographical location. Dzongkha is the official language of the country, however, only 24% of the population speaks the language (Facts and Details, 2022). There are many other languages in the country which include Sharchhopka, Nepalese, and other languages of Indian or Tibetan origin. This makes it difficult for businesses to operate as the general population does not speak a unified language making it difficult to convey messages or notices. Cafepod may experience difficulties in advertising its products in the country as language is a huge barrier for foreign businesses.

Cultural barrier

Culture plays an important role in communication. In Bhutan, culture and etiquette are very important as there are government regulations that maintain dress codes, prerequisites for eating, speech, religion, and officials (iExplore, 2022). Foreign businesses have to learn the etiquette and rules of the country to be accepted by the people of the country. Cafepod must align itself to these traditions to enable proper communication with people in the country.

Gender Biases

Gender plays an important role in communication between foreign companies and nationals. Bhutan does not support any discrimination between genders and it is doing better in gender equality than many of its neighbours (Asian Development Bank, 2022). Foreign businesses that

are male-dominated will face problems as women in the country are seen as equal to men. Cafepod must recognise this while fostering communications in the country.

Body language and gestures

Body language is the general expression of a person which can be seen during an interaction and demonstrate the attitude of a person. It can be a huge barrier to communication as people from different countries will have different body languages associated with certain behaviours. For instance, people in Bhutan greet each other with a slight bow with open hands (Go Bhutan Tours, 2020). On the other hand in the UK, a handshake is the most common form of greeting gesture. Foreign companies like Cafepod must learn the proper greeting gesture in Bhutan to avoid any disrespect to the people of the country.

Provide appropriate communication strategies and other relevant recommendations to enable the company to succeed in the selected developing country

Based on the above observations some strategies and recommendations can be made for Cafepod in maintaining communication and business operations in Bhutan.

- Internet connections in Bhutan are sluggish and the service providers are unable to improve them due to the lack of towers, and the increasing demand for internet (The Bhutanese, 2022). Cafepod must encourage its employees and members to consider face-to-face communication as internet communication in the country is faced with numerous challenges.
- Accepting and following the clothing trends of Bhutan will enable Cafepod to get closer to the people of the country and gain their trust. The traditional attire for the male citizens of the country is called Gho which is a knee-length robe-like cloth worn with a belt (Holidify, 2022). Cafepod outlets will be popular if the employees wear these dresses which will impress the natives.
- The language and culture of the country are crucially important for the citizens of the country and they have to be learnt by members of Cafepod while expanding in Bhutan. The official language and two other prevalent languages form the main medium of communication in the country and they have to be learnt for a business to succeed in the nation.

Conclusion

International business communication refers to the process of communication that occurs between people of different countries or cultures in a business that operates in multiple areas. Cafepod is a coffee company in the UK and its ambition of expanding in Bhutan will require various strategies of communication as the languages and cultures in Bhutan are different from those of the UK. The Hofstede analysis has been used to evaluate the cultural landscape of the country. According to Jandt's study of intercultural communication, elements of communication can be learned by interaction which enables effective communication between people of different cultures. Bhutan is a culturally sensitive country and various rules and customs guide the people of the country. These rules have to be known and followed by individuals and organisations to be accepted in the country. Languages play an important role in international business communication. The language of the buyer is crucial as it helps the business to connect with its customers in a better way. It helps to increase sales and build trust however learning a new language takes time. Communication barriers in Bhutan include language barriers, culture barriers, and body language which are different from region to region.

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