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Assignment 1

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Introduction

The report is about the international business communication. International business communication is about the effective communication of multinational companies. For a company doing business in more than one country, this is very important for the company to adopt international business and communication strategy (Schmidt, 2015). The practice of international business and communication leads to success if a company is operating or planning to operate in more than one country. This assignment will include the discussion of a UK-based company that is trying to move its production to a developing country. The selected company for the assignment is Hawthorn international which is one of the UK's leading manufacturers of clothing (Hawthorn, 2022).

And the selected developing country is Nigeria, which has one of the largest economies among the African nations. The assignment will basically shade light on the communication barriers the company might face if it moves its production to the country. The discussion of the report will include international and intercultural communication theories, cultural sensitivity while doing business in overseas, different probable communication barriers in the selected country, and appropriate communication strategies for the company to cope with the culture of Nigeria.

Introduction to Nigeria

Nigeria is an African country, and it is one of the largest economies in Africa. The country has a big population of more than 210 million which is one of the largest population bases in the world. The country is a big country, but it is a developing country with cheap labour. As Hawthorn international is a clothing manufacturing company and it is planning to move production in a developing country, Nigeria would be an ideal choice as the country will provide cheap labour. As a result of getting cheap labour in the country, the company would be able to export its products at a much lower rate than its competitors.

The unemployment rate in the country is more than 33% which will also help the company set up its production and provide employment opportunities to Nigerian people (Niven, 2020). The government of Nigeria also offers various incentives to foreign investors. If Hawthorn international company sets up its production plant in the country, it will get incentives such as tax rebate, easy and good conversion rate, etc. Hence, considering all the factors in the country, it seems Nigeria will be a suitable option for Hawthorn international to set up its production plant in.

Application of international and intercultural communication theories

There are several international and intercultural communication theories such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Samovar's intercultural communication theory, dialectic approach, etc. These theories will be discussed here in detail in respect of Nigeria.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions

This theory consists of 6 important factors. These six factors are power distance index, uncertainty avoidance index, masculinity vs femininity, long and short-term orientation, indulgence vs restraint, and individualism vs collectivism.

- **Power distance index**

This index shows the distribution of power between people. The higher the distance of power between two people, the more the inequality of power distribution (Redding, 2017). Nigeria has a score of 80 in power distance index which means that the country has unequal power distribution.

- **Individualism vs collectivism**

This factor shows how much people are interdependent on each other. More score on individualism means people are self-dependent in a society and can live by themselves. Nigeria has a score of 30 which means people live collectively and take care of each other.

- **Masculinity vs femininity**

This factor shows the power distribution between man and woman. If the score is high, it means men have more success and they are the dominant one in the society whereas the lower score means otherwise. Nigeria scores 60 which indicates means enjoy little more power than woman (Stoitsova, 2020)

- **Uncertainty avoidance index**

The score on this index shows how much people try to avoid uncertain and risky situation and try to play safe. Nigeria has a score of 55 which indicates a slight upper hand of safe play.

- **Long-term vs short-term**

This factor shows how much people are future oriented or not. A low score on this means people want short-term results and are not pragmatic (Stoitsova, 2020). Nigeria has a score of 13 which is very low and means that people are not very pragmatic and want short-term results.

- **Indulgence vs restraint**

This factor shows how much people try to control their desires. A high score means people are indulgent and spend time having fun and enjoying. Nigeria has a score of 84 in it which means people spend a lot of time in unnecessary activities

Dialectic approach

This is another intercultural communication theory that comes in the form of several factors. These factors are static vs dynamic, differences vs similarities, cultural vs individual, present vs future, and privilege vs underprivileged.

- **Static vs dynamic**

This factor shows how dynamic or static a society is. A higher score means the society is dynamic enough to adapt to any situation. Nigeria has a score of 57 which shows a little upper hand in terms of dynamism.

- **Differences vs similarities**

This factor shows how much different or similar people are in terms of behaviour, characteristic, etc. Higher differences mean people have to adjust more which may not be always possible (Shibutani, 2018). But in Nigeria there is lower differences.

- **Cultural vs individual**

This one indicates how much people emphasize cultural norms over individual norms. There is a balanced situation in Nigeria in terms of it.

- **Privilege vs underprivileged**

This one shows the degree of privileged and underprivileged. In Nigeria, there is a big gap which shows that there is unequal distribution of wealth, and the lesser number of people hold the most numbers of wealth (RP, 2019).

- **Present vs future**

This indicates how much people value future over present or the otherwise. In Nigeria, a big portion of the population emphasize on present rather than power. One big reason is the poverty and unemployment rate in the country.

Critical evaluation of cultural sensitivity while operating in Nigeria

Cultural sensitivity means being aware of own culture and other culture, showing respect to other culture, accepting the similarities as well as differences, and most importantly being kind to people irrespective of their cultural background (Galanti, 2012). Cultural sensitivity is important in everywhere but one place where it should be most practiced is workplace. Companies should put extra efforts to make the workplace a sensitive one towards people of different culture. Being sensitive to each other's culture increases the coalition in the workplace and helps create a good working environment. For multinational companies and for companies like Hawthorn international which are thinking of expanding outside of their core market, cultural sensitivity is extremely important.

Hawthorn international is thinking of moving its production in Nigeria which is a developing country. But people are very protective about their culture like most other places in the world (Galanti, 2012). The country is diverse with a huge population and a huge area. Their culture is also very diverse. But in the country value their culture. If anyone tries to disrespect their culture, it will not bear good consequence and this fact should be highly signified by companies like Hawthorn international.

If hawthorn international company is really planning to move to Nigeria, one of the key things to consider is cultural sensitivity. The company will be moving here because of its cheap labour and its export markets. And this is obvious that most of the employees will be from Nigeria and Nigerian culture. So, this is very important for Hawthorn to be sensitive towards the culture of the country and practice it within the company so that people with Nigerian cultural background do not get hurt culturally as it may create disturbance for the company. To do so, the company can hire local experts in this field. As a result, not only the local employees but also the local people and customers will be happy. It will also be a good strategy for Hawthorn international to adapt to this culture and practice cultural sensitivity.

Different communication barriers for businesses in Nigeria

Companies which are operating outside their core market have to face communication barriers to some extent. This case will not be different for Hawthorn international or other foreign companies that have operated here or are operating here. As Nigeria is different from the UK in terms of culture, language, development, infrastructure, etc, Hawthorn international company is likely to face these same barriers that other foreign companies have faced in the country. Some of these communication barriers are discussed here

- **Differences of language**

Most of the foreign companies have to face this issue while doing business in a non-English spoken country. Nigeria's official language is English but most of the people speak in Hausa in that country (Stoitsova, 2020). But foreign companies have to depend on English speaking people to some extent such as if the employees are from foreign countries. For example, in rural areas, people do not know how to speak in English which is a big communication barrier for foreign companies.

- **Effective communication channel**

This is another communication barrier for foreign companies. Companies need right communication channel to send the right message. For example, customers prefer email rather than phone calls from companies while companies are promoting their products. But as Nigeria is a developing country and around 33% people living under the poverty line, not all the people can afford smartphones. Hence, it is difficult for companies to reach everyone through their promotional activities such as customised mail.

- **Cultural differences**

People from different countries have different cultural background and a multinational company has people from different cultures. As a result, there might be conflicting values or ethnocentrism or any other issues arising out of cultural differences (FALLAHCHAY, 2020). These issues have arisen in the past for many foreign companies in the country. Therefore the practice of cultural sensitivity is very important in organisations like Hawthorn international who are operating outside their core market.

- **Psychological barrier**

This is another prevailing communication barrier in international business. Psychological barrier means mental and emotional limitations people have towards their work or any other thing. Psychological perception to work may not be same in different countries. People in Nigeria do not perceive or think about works the way people of the UK do. Hence, if an UK company comes here in Nigeria, they may not get the same efforts they get from the UK people because there is psychological barrier between the people of these two countries.

These are the prevalent communication barriers that international companies have faced in this country. Hawthorn international may have to face these same problems as the country has not changed much. But the country is improving slowly which can result in less communication barriers in the coming years.

Appropriate communication strategies and recommendations for Hawthorn international

Communication strategies play a significant part in international business. To thrive in international business, a company has to cope with the challenges and barriers of communication. If a company can get through these barriers, then there is a good chance that the company will succeed in the foreign markets. Hence, here are some of the communication strategies given for Hawthorn international to thrive in Nigerian market.

Hiring some multilingual people to bridge the communication gaps: When a company is new in a market, the most prevalent issue it has to face is language difference (Chaney and Martin, 2018). Hence, hiring some multilingual experts can help ease the problem for hawthorn company.

Creating different version of website based on language: There are different languages that people speak in Nigeria. Along with English, there are some languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, Fulfulde, and Kanuri. One of the key strategies to cut the communication barrier and attract people of all language is the provide website with access for different language speaking people. As people nowadays search for company website for any kind of information. This strategy will make the people feel included.

Establishing the culture of regular meeting and an environment of cooperation among the employees: As Hawthorn is a foreign company in Nigeria, this is obvious that the company will have employees from different culture and language speaking people (Chaney and Martin, 2018). As a result, this is the duty of the company to establish an environment where employees are cooperative to each other and are sensitive about another people's culture. Regular meeting system in the company can help in this regard. Employees can know about each other better through regular meeting among themselves.

Recommendations for Hawthorn company

Some of the recommendations for Hawthorn international to overcome international communication barriers are

- Reviewing and ensuring that the company has enough and appropriate communication channel to communicate with the people of different cultures and customers of different class
- Ensuring the practice of cultural sensitivity within the organisations and developing good mutual understanding of each other's language and culture.
- Ensuring every employee gets the same treatment and there is no discrimination.

With the implementation of these recommendations and communication strategies, Hawthorn international can overcome all the communication barriers that it might face upon entering the Nigerian market. These will also help understand the sentiment of the people of that country and act accordingly.

Conclusion

International business and intercultural communication are two important things for multinational companies, and both go hand in hand. One of the keys to success in overseas markets is to have adaptability to different cultures. A company, when goes overseas, must deal with different culture. This report is about the international business and intercultural communication. It has presented some important discussions. It has chosen Nigeria as the market for Hawthorn international and analysed cultural sensitivity of the country for doing business in the country. The report has also presented some international and intercultural communication theories along with different communication barriers in cross-cultural and international business and some recommendations to overcome those barriers.

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