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When is a gift not a gift? When itâ€™s unwelcome of course! And thatâ€™s the warning that western marketers should take heed of. In the western commercial world, marketers often use pleasant surprises to influence consumersâ€™ brand evaluations and purchasing decisions, but surprises are not always held to be pleasurable in some cultures.Marketing across cultures is a minefield and anyone in this line of business should be wary of different cultural responses to promotional gifts, especially the unexpected ones.

However nice the gift may be, the surprise element can make some recipients feel uneasy â€“ and itâ€™s nothing to do with thoughts of bribery and corruption.East Asians genuinely feel their emotional balance has been disrupted because an unexpected gift indicates imbalance and prophesizes bad fortune. People in the Nordic countries tend to feel suspicious. Americans, on the other hand, are delighted.

A new cross-cultural study of consumer response has recently been published which suggests that East Asiansâ€™ enjoyment of â€˜surpriseâ€™ gifts is much increased when the gift is attributable to luck. for example, it is far more acceptable to have consumers enter a â€œLucky Gameâ€• to win the gift. Undoubtedly, marketing activities across borders must accommodate cross-cultural differences.

About the study: Ana Valenzuela, Barbara Mellers, and Judi Strebel. â€œPleasurable Surprises: A Cross-Cultural Study of Consumer Responses to Unexpected Incentives.â€• Journal of Consumer Research: February 2010 (published online July 15, 2009).The authors conducted four studies in which participants received a gift as a token of appreciation for participating in a survey. Some of the participants knew about the gifts before participating, while others were surprised.

When working internationally, there are certain principles that are good to remember:

1.Acknowledge differences exist

2.UnderstandÂ andÂ analyze why those differences exist

3.Appreciate the unique values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of different cultures

4.Adapt your behaviour â€” including your cross-cultural communication style â€” to meet the needs of others.

5.Be sensitive to feedback and adapt accordingly.

When things just donâ€™t seem to be going rightâ€¦ Remember. Donâ€™t take things personally! This co from personal experience. When you donâ€™t understand why people are behaving the way they are or people arenâ€™t doing things the way you thought they would, donâ€™t jump to the conclusion that they a doing it to annoy/upset you. The first lesson of intercultural communication is to STOP BEING SELF-CENTRED. Youâ€™ve probably stumbled across a cultural difference which has prompted a form of Culture Shock.

Doing Business across different cultures is not very difficult. We just have to use the appropriate code of conduct. For Instance, Americans like to get straight to the business while in other some cultures, the consumers like to get to know each other first before doing any business deal. Likewise, in many Asian and South American cultures looking down while addressing a customer

reflects your respect while it is considered rude in some cultures. The same applies for your eyes also. Making an eye contact is considered as a sign of respect in a few countries while in certain other cultures avoiding eye contact shows respect towards your customer. Hence, you have to see the cultural norms, acceptable business & communication codes of the culture you are dealing with. Then you can anticipate the things to go in a right direction. If you wish to know more about the concepts of Multi Cultural Marketing, visit http://www.deborahswallow.com/2009/07/30/unwelcome_gifts_cross-cultural-differnce

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Hello, I'm Deborah Swallow and, for the last fifteen years, I've worked in over thirty countries addressing the complexities of people working internationally across multiple cultures . To know more about Cross Culture Differences and a Multi Cultural Marketing, visit us on the web.

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