

RUSSIAN NATIONAL CHARACTER: AN APPLICATION OF CLARK'S COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK

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Russia has a long history of autocracy, collectivism, and complexity that make it a "riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" to most global marketers. Clark's (1990) comprehensive framework for assessing national character is used to develop a series of propositions for understanding strategic and consumer decision-making as these relate to marketing in Russia. The propositions are positioned on a framework similar to Clark's so that a comparison can be made between the "Comprehensive Framework for the Assessment of National Character" and the resulting framework "Russian National Character in the Marketplace."

INTRODUCTION

In order to speed market development in the former Soviet-Bloc nations Czinkota (1997) and Springer and Czinkota (1999) have called for increased levels of market research to be conducted in these countries. Research examining Russian consumer markets is limited in scale and scope (Griffin et al. 2000; Auzan 1995; Shama 1992; Leonidou 1992). This paper addresses that void by examining Russian national character in the context of motivating factors that influence consumer decision-making in the marketplace.

"A huge literature exists about the Russian mind, the Russian heart, and the *mysterious Slavic soul*, yet no consensus exists about the Russian national character" (Mikheyev 1996, p. 206). Understanding the Russian consumer is as difficult as understanding the Russian character. In other research, Kantamneni and Coulson note that consumer assessment of value is both situational and individualistic (Coulson and Kantamneni 2000, Kantamneni and Coulson 2002), while Hofstede (Hofstede 2001, p. 2, emphasis in the original) indicates that humans (consumers) take

"both the *person* and the *situation*" into account when predicting behavior. In assessing Russian national character, the only agreement that experts can reach is that there is contradiction. In his discussion of traditional Russian culture Mikheyev draws upon the somewhat ironic solution to Winston Churchill's "riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" description of Russia - "Contradiction is the very core of Russian national character" (Hingley 1977). Therefore, throughout this paper there may appear to be contradictory conclusions in assessing Russian character, especially as it applies to marketing, but contradiction is the very nature of the Russian marketplace.

The Russian economy has been the subject of much discussion and study, especially in the context of economic and political transformation. Numerous articles address the more striking aspects of the Russian business environment and economy such as hyperinflation, product shortages, mafocracy, New Russians, government inefficiency, and corruption. Although the extremes of the Russian economy are most newsworthy and interesting to discuss, they are not the backbone of the Russian economy. Since Russia abandoned Communism, consumer demand has taken an increasing role in driving exchange in Russia. As the Russian economy grows and exposure to international products increases, the tastes of consumers may change, but the decision-making

behavior will continue in the cultural patterns and habits acquired to date. Since culture is slow to change, the Russian marketplace must be comprehended as it exists today in order to assure success for marketers in the long-term.

This paper employs Clark's (1990) Comprehensive Framework for the Assessment of National Character to diagnose and understand consumer and decision-making behavior in Russia [Reference Figure 1]. The propositions developed in this paper, stemming from both qualitative and quantitative sources, serve as the basis for developing hypotheses and streams of future research. This paper promotes further academic study in Russia and former Soviet states as well as provides practitioners with needed insight into the Russian marketplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The majority of academic literature concerning Russia discusses its culture, history, role in world politics, Communism and its failures, and the cold war, e.g., *The Russian Mind* (Hingley 1977) and *Lenin's Tomb* (Remnick 1993). Since the Soviet Union dissolved, literature addressing political and economic development affecting Russia's future has become popular, e.g., *Cutting the Red Tape: How Western Companies can Profit in the New Russia* (Tourevski and Morgan 1993), *The Coming Russian Boom* (Layard and Parker 1996), and *Russia's Future: Consolidation or Disintegration?* (Blum 1994).

Limited, but useful, publications addressing marketing in Russia are appearing in journals more frequently. In Kostecki's (1988) article, *The Consumer in a Socialist Economy*, he discussed how the consumer was a small and ignored part of the marketing process, bowing to the whims of the socialist planning board. The board determined the choices and availability of consumer products. Quelch, Joachimsthaler, and Nueno (1991) recommended guidelines for marketing in Eastern Europe after the fall of the wall. This is a "how to" approach that employs examples and anecdotes about firms' successes and failures in Eastern Europe but

does not offer an understanding of buyer behavior in this region.

Shama (1992) provided insights of how the transformation to a market economy has affected consumers in Russia and Eastern Europe. Consumers recognize that transformations have brought about greater product choice but feel the need to work harder and longer in order to afford these newly offered products. Consumers also recognize a new social stratification resultant from the economic, social, and political changes that have taken place in Russia. Shama (1994) continued his discussion of the transformation process, recommending that marketing managers view the Russian economic environment and consumers as dynamic. He proposed a model of transformation from a command economy to a market economy based upon three related levels: political, managerial, and social. It is difficult to assess how far Russia has progressed in its transformations on each of these levels.

In her dissertation, Carroll (1998) examines how Russian consumers contextualize American advertising that is used to promote products in Russia. Carroll (1998) recorded individuals' subjective and objective opinions of American advertising shown on Russian television; in some cases the only aspect of the commercial adapted to the Russian market is voiceovers. This research allows global firms to review how Russian consumers interpret messages common in American advertising. She concluded that Russians did not understand American advertising messages or interpreted them differently than Americans and in addition had difficulty identifying with the characters used in adapted messages. This emphasizes the need for international firms to understand Russian national character prior to launching product and advertising campaigns in Russia.

Puffer and Associates (1996) compiled five years of research that addressed the Soviet/Russian manager's mindset, the trials and tribulations of managing through endless transition, and comparisons with Western managers. The research included descriptions and insights into leadership traits and skills needed by managers to succeed under

Figure 1 - Comprehensive Framework for the Assessment of National Character

Level of Analysis	
Consumers	Decision Makers
Characterizing Dimensions • Relations to Authority • Relations to Self • Relations to Risk • Propensity to Change	• Flexibility • Need to Achieve • Locus of Control
Interpretive Framework • Material Culture, Technology, Economic Structure • Social Institutions, Social Organizations, Educational Systems, Political Systems • Belief System • Aesthetic Systems, Graphic & Plastic Art, Folklore, Music/Drama/Dance • Language	

Clark, 1990

Communism, the changes some managers have made to adjust to the new environment, how employees are motivated and managed, and a comparison of Russian and American business ethics. Puffer and Associates' (1996) work is very comprehensive and is useful to any firm or individual doing business in Russia or with Russians.

Ennew et al. (1993) reviewed constraints placed on adopting established marketing concepts to the former Soviet Union. They suggested marketers adjust their attitudes as well as their techniques and methods. Long periods of shortages experienced under the centrally-planned and highly-controlled Soviet system affected consumers' attitudes and buying patterns. Griffin et al. (2000) found hedonic and utilitarian shopping values to be more highly correlated among Russian shoppers than among their American counterparts. Russian shoppers, especially those in the provinces, do not consider the hardships they face to acquire goods as significant- they considered them normal: *ЭТО ЖИЗНЬ* [That's life].

ANALYSIS

The framework used for determining national character is Terry Clark's (1990) comprehensive framework offered in *International Marketing and National Character: A Review and Proposal for an Integrative Theory*. Clark's (1990) framework for assessing national character addresses the characteristics of consumers and decision-makers as they are deeply seated in national culture. [Please reference Figure 1]. This framework provides a comprehensive view of consumer and strategic decision-making behaviors exercised by individuals in the context of their environments. Characterizations of national character are developed by two approaches: personality centered and culture centered. The propositions developed applying Clark's framework to Russia are the initial steps for the development of a culture-centered study of behavior in the Russian marketplace. Clark (1990) proposes that interpretive frameworks allow for the development of descriptive behavior such as "contexts, meanings, and relevancies for observed patterns in statistical data" (p.75). Just as data mining or text mining are research techniques for discovering non-apparent patterns in amassed data, a

comprehensive framework is useful in finding patterns in cultural data that unless organized, are not apparent or employable for future research. Clark (1990), recommends "research designs be comprehensive and flexible to facilitate the gathering of quantitative data as well as qualitative data" (p. 77).

Hofstede's (1983) dimensions of culture have been widely accepted as a tool for understanding culture. Then why is it necessary to develop and apply Clark's framework to Russia instead of parsimoniously using Hofstede's work? It is not enough to know where a country lies on Hofstede's scales in order to develop a marketing plan for that country. In the case of Russia, it lies in the same quadrant as Turkey, Korea, and Guatemala on the Power Distance-Individualism/Collectivism, Power Distance-Uncertainty Avoidance, and Masculinity/Femininity-Uncertainty Avoidance axes (Hofstede 1983). Marketplace behavior in each of these countries is quite different. The comprehensive framework method examines elements of culture and characteristics of decision-makers that affect the marketing process. In addition, Clark's framework examines patterns of behavior that impact national character. Understanding these differences in national character enables marketers to determine which parts of the marketing mix can be standardized across countries, and assist in the making of strategic marketing plans as well as techniques for implementation.

The dimensions of consumer characteristics-"Relations to Authority," "Relations to Self," "Relations to Risk," and the "Propensity to Change"-can be evaluated with a number of tools. Hofstede's four dimensions of character - Individualism/Collectivism, Power Distance, Weak/Strong Uncertainty Avoidance, and Masculinity/Femininity - are referenced along with additional sources (e.g., studies from history, politics and economics), as recommended by Clark, in order to develop propositions.

Individualism/collectivism assesses whether the ties between individuals are very loose or tight. Power Distance is how society accepts inequality among individuals regarding physical abilities, intellect,

power, and wealth. Uncertainty avoidance relates to one's ability to tolerate ambiguity and may be related to risk, but Hofstede indicates that it can lead to what is sometimes quite risky behavior. "Uncertainty Avoidance," as indicated by Hofstede, "is not the same as risk avoidance" (Hofstede 2001 p. 148). Finally, masculinity/femininity addresses whether a society is tolerant of "blurring" between sex roles, and whether the society values strong masculine traits or caring feminine traits (Hofstede 1983). Although Russia was not included in the initial 1980 IBM/Hermes study performed by Hofstede, Bollinger (1994) applied Hofstede's questionnaire to Russia providing scores [listed below] for the four dimensions that can be used for comparison. This, in conjunction with literature from other fields, allows for the interpretation of Characterizing Dimensions of Consumers portion of Clark's framework for assessing national character.

Power Distance	76
Uncertainty Avoidance	92
Individualism	26
Masculinity	28

Between 1988 and 1995 the number of enterprises in Russia increased from 214,000 to 1,038,000 with most being small businesses (Mikheyev 1996 p. 126). Small kiosk owners and entrepreneurs selling homemade products or fruits and vegetables grown on the land around dachas (small country homes) and agarods (small plots of land) characterize the Russian marketplace. Therefore, the characteristics developed by Miller and Toulouse are appropriate when examining strategic decision making in the marketplace. The dimensions of strategy characteristics: "Flexibility," "Need to Achieve," and "Locus of Control" - are adopted from Miller and Toulouse's (1986) research of CEO personality and corporate strategy. Miller and Toulouse define these characteristics: "Flexibility" is associated with niche strategies, simple and informal structures, and intuitive and risk-embracing decision making. "Need for Achievement" is related to broadly focused marketing oriented strategies, formal and

sophisticated strategies, and proactive and analytical decision making; "Locus of Control" is related to product innovation, future orientation, and tailored approaches to circumstances facing firms. Clark suggests the use of McClelland's research (1961) for "Need to Achieve" and Rotter's (1966) for "Locus of Control." Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any research applying these techniques, or that of Miller and Toulouse, to Russia. Therefore, applications of literature from management, history, politics, and sociology are engaged for "Flexibility" to develop propositions addressing "Characterizing Dimensions of Decision Makers." The remaining propositions are developed based upon Herskovits' (1948) elements of culture:

Material Culture: objects people make and use for the purpose of survival.

Social Institutions: institutions that grow kinship and free associations of individuals.

Belief Systems: religions.

Aesthetic: pure and applied art.

Language: reflective of the development of the culture.

Support for propositions concerning elements of culture will originate from literature addressing Russian politics, management, and society. Each proposition is refined employing theory, research, and examples relating it to Russian national culture. The propositions are positioned on a framework similar to Clark's initial framework so that a comparison can be made between the "Comprehensive Framework for the Assessment of National Character" and the resulting framework "Russian National Character in the Marketplace" [Reference Figure 2].

DISCUSSION

Characterizing Dimensions of Consumers

Relations to Authority. Russia places high on the Hofstede's Power Distance Index (Puffer and Associates 1996; Bollinger 1994) indicating an acceptance of inequality within society. This becomes most evident in Russians' relationship with authority. Historically, Russians obey authority without

question and are accustomed to centralized decision-making (Puffer and Associates 1996). Layard and Parker (1996) draw upon the writings of de Custine (1990 reprint of an 1843 translation from 1839) and Gide (1938) to emphasize that Russia has a long history of autocracy. In 1839, Marquis de Custine commented on the dominance of tyranny and autocracy in Russia by stating, "The Empire is the emperor." Almost one hundred years later, de Custine's countryman, Andre Gide, visited the Soviet Union during Stalin's reign and commented that "[no] other country in the world, even in Hitler's Germany, can be thought less free, more bowed down, more fearful, more vassalized" (Layard and Parker 1996). Opponents to this long-standing autocracy have been viewed as [counter] revolutionaries and terrorists and not as reformers and democrats (Layard and Parker 1996).

In Russia, authority is personal. No matter how small the level of control or mundaneness of the task not one opportunity passes to have a person of authority controlling the actions of others. Many offices, hotels, universities, and apartment complexes still have the all powerful and demanding key-lady that sits in the front lobby of a building screening entrants and signing-out keys to employees allowing them to enter their own offices and classrooms. However, those who stay at foreign-owned hotels or do not venture outside of the Moscow/St. Petersburg central districts may never experience this ordeal due to the differences in customer service and market orientation found in various locations of Russia. Throughout Russia it is today possible to recognize three competitive and coexisting cultures in Russia. These three sub-cultures are significantly different with regard to marketplace behavior and economic development. This is further discussed in "Material Culture." This fragmentation within Russia is not a new development and existed during Soviet times - a time of supposed universal equality. A common anecdote during Soviet times was that "communism existed in the Kremlin, socialism within Moscow, and survival in the rest of Russia."

Relating this acceptance of authority to marketing, a firm may be tempted to use authority figures in promoting and distributing products. In the United

Figure 2 - Russian National Character in the Marketplace

	Level of Analysis	
	Consumers	Decision Makers
Characterizing Dimensions	• Authority figures are not positively received in product promotions • Individualism is not appealing for product promotion • Formal agreements are less important than personal relationships • Russian consumers possess high levels of consumer innovativeness. Concern with product availability drives Russian consumers to stockpile needed products.	• Russian managers have [not] adopted a short-term [long-term] planning horizon • Russian managers are unaware of their span and scale of responsibility, power, & control • Russian managers view survival as achievement & that their greatest asset is flexibility
	Interpretive Framework • Different levels of economic development are found in different sub-cultures in Russia • Russians have little faith in their own legal system & as a result will have a tendency to circumvent laws & taxes • Intellectuals have positive influences when used to promote products & rational appeals are more effective than emotional ones • Guilt is not an effective marketing tactic when used to promote product consumption • Literary references in product promotion are viewed favorably in Russia • Formal language is necessary when communicating with Russian customers	

States, former leader of the U.S. Senate and Presidential contender, Bob Dole, has appeared in advertisements for cheese, Pepsi, and Viagra. This would not work well in Russia because, although authority figures are accepted in politics and business, they are unwelcome in personal decision-making. Russians openly state their disapproval of having to deal with powerful authority figures in official capacities. Ironically, they do not feel that they, as individuals, have a right to change the system. Therefore, despite their presence in Russian society, authority figures would serve as product diffusion

inhibitors. Based on this discussion the first proposition is stated as follows:

P₁: Product promotions featuring authority figures are not favorably accepted by consumers. This proposition relates to "Relations to Authority" for "Characterizing Dimensions of Consumers."

Relations to Self. Russians rate high on Hofstede's collectivism (Puffer and Associates 1996; Bollinger 1994) and femininity (Puffer and Associates 1996; Bollinger 1994; Carrol 1998). Recognizing that

Russians have been able to endure much hardship and crisis through personal cooperation and collaboration, only to prepare for the next crisis (Puffer and Associates 1996), it is easy to understand why they place high on collectivism and femininity.

Russians feel secure in themselves and have a high awareness of basic impulses, which they view as natural and acceptable. They possess a high level of emotional aliveness and expressiveness while at other times they openly embrace pessimism, passiveness, and despair. They depend on authority or group influence to compensate for weak self-control (Peabody 1985). Russians are quite capable of wild swings in their emotions, dancing and laughing one moment and crying the next. However, these erratic swings are acceptable as long as the behavior is within boundaries supported by the group. Any behavior that isolates an individual or promotes them above the group is met with effort to bring that individual back to the group's level (Puffer and Associates 1996). In short, individualism is discouraged and punished. DeMooij (1998) indicates that in collectivist cultures, product advertisements showing people together are more accepted and successful than advertisements that show a single individual using a product. Therefore, successful promotion in Russia will emphasize group cohesiveness. Promotion tools that laud individual success to the exclusion of the group, would not be as readily accepted.

It is important to understand how the group is defined to determine how far the concept of collectivism extends. A Russian may have two or three "close friends" and five or six "friends" at most, the rest of the people they know are acquaintances. These relationships of close friend, friend, and acquaintance are well defined and acknowledged. The sense of collectiveness and care for the needy does not extend to society as a whole and only goes as far as the "group" defined by the individual. Russians exhibit collectivism and femininity within their defined groups but as they move further into society as a whole these traits dissipate. This leads to the next proposition that is related to "Relations to Self" for "Characterizing Dimensions of Consumers."

P₂: Product promotions emphasizing individualism are not as effective as product promotions emphasizing group cohesiveness.

Relation to Risk. Russian society places very high on uncertainty avoidance. Traditionally, rules are written and detailed. During Stalin's time, an infraction of a rule could result in exile to Siberia or death (Puffer and Associates 1996). Rules are something that comes from the authoritarian center and serve to keep the group in order.

There exist two different patterns of behavior and ethics [rules] in Russia: one for personal relationships that is based on openness and honesty, and one for business relationships which is based on deception (Puffer and Associates 1996). Businesspeople from Western nations view contracts as the determinant of behavior in a business partnership. However, for their Russian counterparts the most important factor in determining the strength of a business relationship is the level of the personal relationship between individuals representing the respective businesses. Realizing this, the following proposition is posited:

P₃: Russians view strong personal relationships as more dependable than contracts [or formal written agreements]. This proposition is related to "Relations to Risk" for "Characterizing Dimensions of Consumers."

Propensity to Change. Activity and change in Russia take place in quick, intense, and explosive spurts followed by long periods of lethargy. Russia experiences long winters followed by extremely muddy conditions preventing peasants from farming. The growing season is very short, so the work period is brief but extremely intense (Peabody 1985). There are indications that consumer behavior follows a similar pattern in Russia.

For seventy years Soviet planning boards used propaganda and the control of resources to dictate product offerings in the marketplace thus stifling consumer innovativeness (Skurski 1983; Greer 1973). Now that the long Soviet winter is over, Russian consumers are in a period of intense activity and experimentation. Russian consumers are innovative

and willing to try new products but may never develop loyalty to particular ones. In one survey, 31 percent of the respondents indicated that they were always looking for new products. This exceeded 33 percent for women overall and 50 percent for women under the age of 24 ("Russia: Trying to Succeed in the Land of Brand Disloyalty," *Emerging European Markets* 1997). It is unclear if Russians exhibit high levels of consumer innovativeness due to curiosity or the concern that products may not be available resultant from poor supply chain development. Therefore, the following research propositions are offered:

- P_{4a}: Curiosity and the desire to experience new products drives Russian consumers to purchase them.
- P_{4b}: Concern with product availability motivates Russians to purchase products when first encountered as opposed to waiting until they are needed. These propositions are related to "Propensity to Change" and "Characterizing Dimensions of Consumers."

Characterizing Dimensions of Decision Makers

Flexibility, Need to Achieve, and Locus of Control.

These dimensions are addressed simultaneously inasmuch as they overlap in the decision making process. A system that guaranteed everyone a job and promoted workers based upon their social or political affiliation made it difficult for managers to exert control. In addition, the whole supply and distribution system was designed to be slow and inefficient in order to curb consumer demand (Tongren et al. 1995). This, in conjunction with the fact that product designs and demand originated from the center, left managers with the task of solving problems and fulfilling the plan. Soviet managers had a relatively clear-cut understanding of their responsibilities at the political, managerial, and social levels (Shama 1994). This is certainly not true today. The average Russian manager is presently trapped in limbo between a command and market-economy and is unsure in which direction it is moving.

Flexibility and the need to achieve were key to success in the Soviet system and this has extended to present times. During Soviet times, the struggle was to accomplish the ordinary; the struggle today is to accomplish the "unknown." The Russian manager under Communism was rewarded for loyalty to the party and absolute adherence to the rules but they met plan by practicing "behind the scenes" creativity to overcome problems. The communist manager had a clear understanding of expectancy, instrumentality and rewards, thus greater motivation and desire to perform. The manager today has to show the same creativity by overcoming the lack of legal, financial, and economic infrastructure (Puffer and Associates 1996). However, the difficulty is that the Russian manager today is unclear as to what is expected, how to achieve goals, and what rewards will be provided for their efforts. There is no expectancy that working harder will increase performance since the dimensions of capitalistic performance are not well understood in today's Russian economy even though there is likely some vague understanding (instrumentality) of a relationship between improved performance and the attainment of a particular reward. Since the collapse of communism, Russia has experienced product shortages, hyperinflation, multiple debt crises, currency revaluations, instability in the government, two wars in Chechnya, and various other forms of social, economic, and political instability. This extreme volatility in both society and the marketplace has made mere survival, not achievement, the reward of Russian businesses. The following propositions are offered for "Characterizing Dimensions of Decision Makers."

- P₅: Due to the tumultuous environment Russians have [not] adopted a short-term [long-term] planning horizon.
- P₆: Russian managers do not have a clear understanding of their span and scale of responsibility, power, and control.
- P₇: Due to the extreme business environment in Russia, Russian businesspersons view survival as achievement.

P_{7a}: The greatest asset that a Russian manager feels that he or she needs to survive is flexibility. These propositions are related to "Flexibility," "Need to Achieve," and "Locus of Control."

Elements of Culture

Material Culture. Russia's culture has been a subject of extensive study, much of it concluding in contradiction. An examination of Russian material culture yields the same quandary. Russians emphasize education and achievement but simultaneously possess a belief that by suffering and enduring inconvenience/discomfort (both these English words are translated into the Russian *neudobno*) they have been lifted above the "petty materialism" of other nations (Layard and Parker 1996). Russians are also more accepting of living at a lower, secure level as opposed to taking a risk to live at a higher standard (Goersjch 1991). However, it has been observed that Russians have a tendency to spend money when they have it and do not save for a "rainy day." It is unclear if this is due to concern about the short-term value of the Ruble or if it is rooted in the Russian tendency to act hastily after long periods of inactivity (Peabody 1985).

It has been proposed that there are competitive and coexisting cultures in Russia today (Mikheyev 1996). They are distinct in their acceptance of foreign goods, level of commercialism, and view of Russia's place in the world. They are the "Technocratic Russia," which is flourishing in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the "Industrial Sub-culture" left by the Soviet legacy in about two-dozen large cities, and the "Traditional Russia" which exists in the rural/agricultural areas of Russia (Mikheyev 1996). These three sub-cultures are significantly different with regard to economic development, behavior, and outlook.

This is made evident by the regional differences in developing a viable middle-class. The recent recovery in the economy has perpetuated the reemergence of the middle-class that was virtually wiped-out during the 1998 financial crisis. The middle-class is estimated to comprise eight percent to twenty percent of Russia's population (Starobin and Krabvchenko

2000a) with the largest concentration of middle-class consumers located in Moscow and St. Petersburg (Starobin and Krabvchenko 2000b). Recent reports from Moscow indicate that consumer expenditures there have returned to levels comparable to those prior to the 1998 crisis ("Sales of Imported Goods Up as Living Standards Increase," *Concise Consumer* 2000).

This position is further supported by economic data. In an analysis of real income by region in Russia, it was determined that "inequality within regions nonetheless greatly exceeded inequality between regions" (Hanson and Bradshaw 2000, p.73). The richest regions were identified as Moscow, Tyumen' and St. Petersburg with the poorest existing in numerous smaller regions. Marketers must view Russia as three separate segments since these three subcultures have such radical differences. That is:

P₈: Russia consists of three co-existing segments that possess differing levels of market development. This proposition is related to "Material Culture" for "Herskovits' Elements of Culture."

Social Institutions. Russia did not experience three major events that influenced development of society in Western Europe. Russia was never part of the Roman Empire, it did not experience a Renaissance, nor did it experience serfdom in the same manner as in Western Europe. Serfdom in Western Europe paved the way for mutual dependency between the ruled and the ruler. The Russian form of serfdom experienced a ruler and everyone else was a slave to his or her wishes (Layard and Parker 1996).

The Renaissance in Western Europe led to the granting of individual rights and responsibilities. Nicholas I's chief of the secret police, Count Beckendorff, was quoted saying, "laws are written for subordinates, not for those in authority." This has led to a long suspicion of authority and little respect for the law (Layard and Parker 1996). This is evident today by the level of corruption and disregard for the legal system. However, this may also be because of the draconian legal and tax systems [federal, oblast, and local] and/or their contradictory and ever-

changeable nature. Therefore, Russians do not believe that a coherent legal or tax system exists in their country. The following proposition is offered:

P₉: Russians have little faith in their own legal system.

P_{9a}: As a result of the limited faith in the Russian legal system Russians will tend to circumvent existing laws.

It is difficult to reconcile Russia's lack of strong legal and political structures considering the general population's high level of education. Russia has a literacy rate of 99 percent (Mikheyev 1996) and there is strong emphasis on literature, mathematics, and the sciences. Russians strongly emphasize education and value intellectual prowess. Marketers need to ask how this strong education system and value of intellect affects their efforts to distribute products in Russia. Given this setting, this means:

P₁₀: The use of intellectuals or credentialed spokespeople positively influences purchase intentions in Russia. This proposition is related to "Social Institutions" for "Herskovits' Elements of Culture."

Beliefs. Orthodox Christianity was/is the dominant religion in Russia. Initially the Tsar was the leader of the Church. Tsar Vladimir the Red Sun interviewed representatives of various religions but selected Orthodox Christianity as the religion for Russia. The beauty and complexity of the Orthodox ceremony is what impressed him the most. Examining Orthodox Christianity's influence on Russian society re-emphasizes the theme of group over the individual. This is made evident by such practices as group confession and the belief that the Holy Spirit descends upon the whole congregation simultaneously as opposed to individual communions (Peabody 1985). This offers additional support for second proposition.

Despite the strong influence of conservative Orthodoxy in Russia, Russians look to the group for their spirituality and seem to lack the tendency for individual guilt and shame about ineptness (Peabody

1985). If you are part of the collective then there is no reason for guilt or shame. Consequently, based on this value system it is impossible to use psychologically fear-based appeals ["ring around the collar"] in motivating consumers to purchase products. Therefore:

P₁₁: Psychologically fear-based appeals are not effective methods of motivating purchases with Russian consumers. This proposition is related to "Belief System" for "Herskovits' Elements of Culture."

Aesthetic Systems. Russians are exceptionally proud of their contributions to music, art, dance, and literature. They can cite major contributions to each of these fields by famous artists, ballerinas, writers, and composers. Throughout society, regardless of the education, economic, or social level, artistic culture is appreciated. The only exception to this observation is the perception among many in Russia that the "New Russians" are uncultured and unappreciative of higher forms of art. This may help explain why, in a city as rich as Moscow, the Bolshoi Theatre stands in disrepair and cannot raise local money for repairs. UNESCO stepped-in to repair the Bolshoi Theatre -- where are the wealthy Muscovites?

Russian art and literature can be as cheerful and uplifting as the long, gray, cold winters. Russian literature is renowned for its great tragedies. The exception to this is children's fables (Carroll 1998) that characteristically have the weak and unfortunate overcoming the strong and dominant, which reinforces the dimension of femininity in the Russian culture. Throughout Russian literature and art, there is an overpowering awe of nature, reverence for the soil, extreme fatalism, and the existence of ominous undefined forces (Tongren et al. 1995). Russians' knowledge, love, and appreciation for artistic culture suggest that:

P₁₂: Literary/artistic references are effective methods for promoting products in Russia. This proposition is related to "Aesthetic Systems" for "Herskovits' Elements of Culture."

Language. The Russian language is complex, formal, and eloquent. It is often debated whether language is reflective of culture or culture is reflective of language. It may be more appropriate to accept both statements as truth. In some cultures, it is acceptable to send marketing and sales correspondence using the consumer's first name or the term "friend" in the address of the letter. In written Russian "i" and the informal "you" are not capitalized, whereas the formal "You" is capitalized. Russians when speaking with those outside the close-knit circle of good friends [maybe 2-3 people] and *znakomie* [very limited number of friends] use the individual's first and patronymic name in conjunction. This and the capitalization of the formal "You" are indicative of the strong formality found when addressing individuals throughout Russian culture. This same formalism needs to be applied in communication with consumers and suggests that:

P₁₃: Informal language structure is considered inappropriate in direct [written/oral] communication with customers. This proposition is related to "Language" for "Herskovits' Elements of Culture."

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper applies Clark's comprehensive framework and cites Russian national character, cultural attributes, and environmental factors that businesses need to analyze prior to entering the Russian market. Russia and Russians are not easily rationalized and this is especially true in today's environment. Firms operating in the Russia will have to be conscientious in understanding their customers, evaluating the business environment, and dealing with Russian business partners. Global firms need to be patient and exhaustive in their efforts to assure success in Russia.

This research provides insight into the Russian market but should not be considered conclusive. There are no set formulas to understanding culture.

The developed propositions have been summarized in a framework titled "Russian National Character in the Marketplace" [Reference Figures 1 and 2 positioned

together] allowing an overview of the data gathered in this research. This paper provides insight however will not completely prepare firms for operating in Russia.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research uses Clark's comprehensive framework to develop a national character for Russia. Consequently, Russian culture is decomposed and explanations offered are for different components associated with the various dimensions of consumer and decision-maker characteristics. This is not the first effort to make Russians more understandable and it is surely not the last. This research is an additional step in the context of synthesizing papers from such disciplines as sociology, psychology, management, and political science in an attempt to capture the Russian national character as it applies to marketing.

Greater examination needs to be made of the cross relationship between the different components in the framework. It is necessary to empirically test the propositions and, based upon their results, refine and redefine the variables tested. This paper should be viewed for exactly what it is: a first step in organizing research concerning Russian consumers, decision makers, and behavior in the marketplace.

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Figure 1 - Comprehensive Framework for the Assessment of National Character

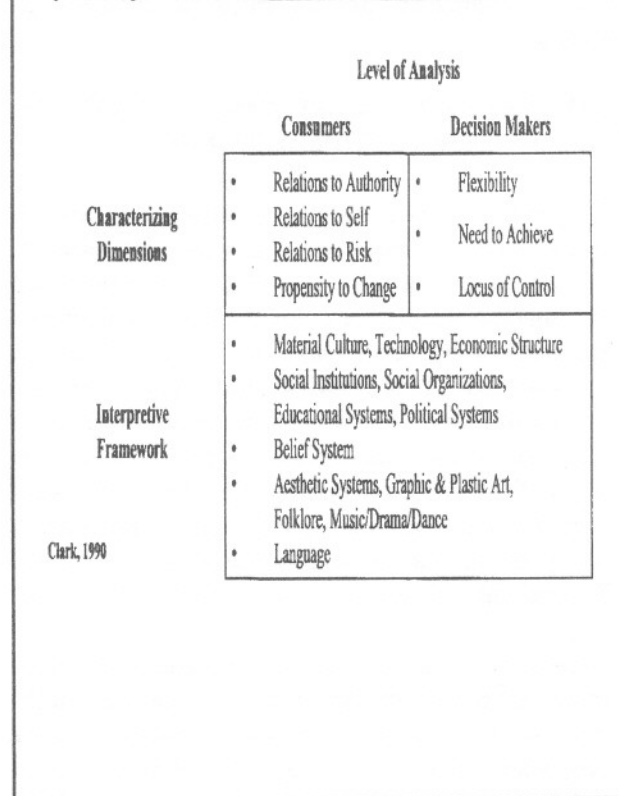
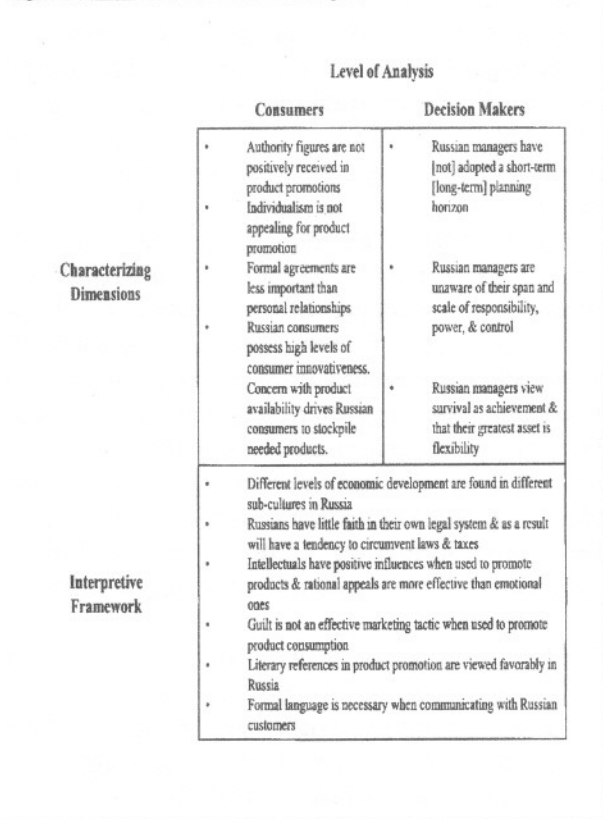


Figure 2 - Russian National Character in the Marketplace



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