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| INTERCULTURAL ASPECTS OF PERCEPTION OF CHOSEN FASTFOOD RESTAURANT IN SELECTED WORLD COUNTRIES |
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| 2011 | Gabriel Blcháč |

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| Slovak university of agriculture in nitra fACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT |
| INTERCULTURAL ASPECTS OF PERCEPTION OF CHOSEN FASTFOOD RESTAURANT IN SELECTED WORLD COUNTRIES Bachelor’s thesis |
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**Declaration** **of** **Originality**

 I, the undersigned Gabriel Blcháč, solemnly declare that the thesis „Online advertisements and their influence on the consumers“ is a result of my own independent research and was written solely by me using the literature and resources listed in Bibliography.

 I am aware of legal consequences in case the data are not true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

May 9, 2011 Gabriel Blcháč

**Acknowledgments**

 I would like to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to Ing. Patrik Rovný, PhD. who was my supervisor ann helped me substantioanlly with elaboration of my thesis. I would like to also thank SUBWAY® franchisee ,Dimuth Nambuge, MSc. for his willingness to answer all my questions about SUBWAY® and help with data seeking.

Nitra, May 12, 2011 Gabriel Blcháč

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|  Abstrakt (Slovak language) |
|  Cieľom bakalárskej práce je analyzovať interkulturálne aspekty vnímania reštaurácií rýchleho občerstvenia SUBWAY® so zreteľom na zhodnotenie postojov zákazníkov k tejto spoločnosti v  USA, Číne, Francúzsku a Slovensku. Čiastkové ciele sú nasledovné: (1) Zadefinovanie profilov krajín z pohľadu kultúry, stravovacích návykov a postavenia spoločnosti SUBWAY® na trhu. (2) Analyzovanie vnímania spoločnosti SUBWAY® z pohľadu zákazníkov v USA, Číne, vo Francúzsku a na Slovensku. (3) Vypracovanie návrhov pre SUBWAY® a vypracovanie záveru. Význam bakalárskej práce spočíva v poskytnutí informácií ohľadom vnímania reštaurácií rýchleho občerstvenia SUBWAY® a ich miestnych produktov a zákazníckych služieb z pohľadu zákazníkov v USA, Číne, vo Francúzsku a na Slovensku, krajín s viditeľnými kultúrnymi rozdielmi. Popri prínose práce sú poskytnuté odporúčania smerujúce k zlepšeniu vnímania spoločnosti SUBWAY® z pohľadu zákazníkov v USA, Číne, vo Francúzsku a na Slovensku. Práca je rozdelená do štyroch hlavných kapitol. Prvá časť je orientovaná na teoretickú znalosť  interkulturálnych tém v marketingu a obchode. Následne, ďalšie dve kapitoly popisujú hlavný ciel, vedľajšie ciele a použité metódy. Štvrtá časť obsahuje údaje o firme a krajinách ako aj návrhy a výsledky, kde sú na základe vykonanej analýzy poskytnuté návrhy na zlepšenie vnímania spoločnosti SUBWAY® z pohľadu zákazníkov v USA, Číne, vo Francúzsku a na Slovensku |
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Kľúčové slová: SUBWAY®, inetrkulturálne aspekty,, vnímanie spoločnosti, miestne produkty, zákaznícke služby

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| Abstract (English language) |
| Aim of bachelor thesis is to analyze the intercultural aspects of perception of SUBWAY® fastfood restaurants with the emphasis on the customers’ opinion on SUBWAY® restaurants in USA, China, France and Slovakia. Partial aims of the thesis are: (1) Define the basis of each country’s cultural background, eating habits together with defining the current SUBWAY® position in the market, (2) Analyze customer perception of SUBWAY® in USA, China, France and Slovakia, (3) Formation of recommendations and conclusion for SUBWAY®. The importance of bachelor thesis is in providing information on customer perception of SUBWAY® restaurants, its localized products and customer services in USA, China, France and Slovakia, four countries with evident cultural differences. Alongside contribution the recommendations are provided with the best intentions to improve consumer perception of company in USA, China, France and Slovakia. The work is divided into four main chapters. The first part is centered around theoretical knowledge on intercultural issues in marketing and business. Consequently, next two key chapters describe the main and partial aims, and methods used. Fourth chapter contains company’s and countries’ background as well as results and recommendations where the research analysis is performed leading to recommendations to improve the perception of SUBWAY® company in USA, China, France and Slovakia.Key words: SUBWAY®, intercultural aspects, company perception, localized products, customer services,  |

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Introduction

The motto ‘the best customer is satisfied customer’ is very true for every business in the world, especially even more so for business like SUBWAY® where one bad experience may discourage a customer to that extent that he will not ever come back again, moreover he may even make his family and friends stop from eating at SUBWAY.

 I have had my first experienced with SUBWAY restaurants in 2005 in the United States of America. I was very impressed by the whole concept of SUBWAY offers for until that moment my only experience with fast food restaurants were very few McDonald’s visits. After the first my entire image of fast food restaurants was crushed.

 SUBWAY was offering very tasty, healthy and belly-filling products, mainly sandwiches. First I had to get used the selection procedure but the fact that the whole preparation of food happened there, in front me fascinated me. Ever since then, I have been very fond of SUBWAY and have enjoyed visiting its restaurants anywhere I go.

 SUBWAY has been experiencing phenomenal worldwide expansion, for this past decade of its franchisee restaurants, reaching more than 90 countries overall. That is closely interrelated with the topic of this bachelor thesis which is Intercultural Aspects of Perception of SUBWAY Restaurants in selected countries: USA, China, France and Slovakia. It is extremely essential to a posses a sufficient knowledge of intercultural aspects of customer behavior when carrying out business and marketing activities in a foreign country.

 Aim of bachelor thesis is to analyze the intercultural aspects of perception of SUBWAY® restaurants with the emphasis on the customers’ opinion on SUBWAY® restaurants in USA, China, France and Slovakia.

 The contribution of bachelor thesis is in providing information on customer perception of SUBWAY® restaurants, its localized products and customer services in USA, China, France and Slovakia, countries with evident cultural differences.

 Core of the work is divided into four main chapters. The first chapter called “Theoretical background” gives details on the theoretical knowledge on intercultural issues in marketing and business. Foreign publication sources were mainly used for collaboration of this part.

 Second chapter proposes the aims of thesis. In this chapter it is possible to find clear, straightforward characteristics of the purpose of this work. Here are also the partial aims that contribute to describe the main aim.

 Third chapter is called” Materials and methods” and it is dedicated to describe the methods used. The steps that were taken to create and distribute the questionnaire are exemplified in this part.

 Fourth chapter contains results and recommendations concerning company background, vision, mission, target market, marketing goal and companies international adaptation of products. Additionally, it contains each country’s brief cultural background, eating habits and SUBWAY® market position. Analysis of marketing research and interpretation of results are carried out along with recommendations.

Theoretical background

Marketing

Definition of Marketing

 The most recent definition of marketing was formulated by American Marketing Association [AMA] in 2007 meeting reads:"Marketing is the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large."(AMA,2008)

 The new definition, above, substituted the older version from 1995 that read:” Marketing is the process of planning and executing conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives” Ying Pan (2005) states that marketing, out all business functions, is most down-to-earth in terms of dealing with customers. Everyone already knows about marketing. After all, it is all around us. Many people may be under the impression that marketing is o just selling and advertising what we can see. Conversely, Armstrong and Kotler (2009) argue that selling and advertising is only the very tip of the marketing iceberg. There exists a massive network of people and activities, competing for customers’ attention and purchases. In today’s marketplace, marketing must be understood in the new sense of satisfying customer needs. Their definition of marketing stands for “ process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from customers in return.“

Steps in marketing process

 On the ground of the definition of marketing by Armstrong and Kotler (2009) they move on to portray the marketing process in detail and divide it into five main steps. Four first steps create value for customers and build customer relationships.

 Firstly, company needs to understand the marketplace and customer wants and needs. For this reason, company must work on a research of its customers and the market place in order to gather and manage marketing data and customer information. The next, second, step is to design a customer-driven marketing strategy, being carried out after the market place and customers are fully understood. Company selects which customers to serve through market segmentation and targeting. A value proposition also has to be determined through differentiation and positioning. Once the overall marketing strategy was approved, in the third step, company is prepared to create a marketing program, which transforms abstract strategies into real value for customers. The program is also known as the marketing mix which is composed of 4 elements (the 4Ps) - product, price, place and promotion. Step number four, which should take place throughout the whole marketing process, is to build profitable relationships and create customer delight. To achieve this goal, company must also establish strong relations with marketing partners. The last step number five is when company may at last harvest the fruits of its strong customer relationships by capturing value from customers in return.

 Once company has formed satisfied and loyal customers, it is possible to capture customer lifetime value with the effect of greater share of market than before. Nonetheless, with the aim of succeeding in today’s fast pace marketplace full of competitors, company must take into consideration the new features of the marketing landscape: advanced technology, globalization and social responsibility.

International Marketing

Onkvisit, S.& Shaw,J.J., (2004) explained what international marketing means by citing AMA: "International marketing is the multinational process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives."

Supporting the previous definition the principle aims of International marketing suggested by Usunier, J.C.,& Lee, L.(2009) is to identify, categorize, evaluate , and finally select market segments. Country or it could be nation-states are frequently the primary segmentation basis, due to the simplicity of implementation. While nation-stated are continuing reality not all national regions hold homogenous ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. The cultural variable is more compound and the way in which it affects behavior is always easy to analyze..

 International marketing at its most basic level involves the firm in making one or more marketing mix decisions across national boundaries. International marketing at its most complex level involves the firm in establishing manufacturing facilities abroad and coordinating marketing strategies across the globe. (Doole,I.,& Lowe,L., 2008)

Global Marketing

We define Global Marketing on the basis of definition by Hollensen, S.,(2007) as :“firm’s commitment to coordinate its marketing activities across national boundaries in order to find and satisfy global customer needs better than the competition”.

This means that the firm is capable of:

* Developing a global marketing strategy based on similarities and differences between markets;
* Exploiting the knowledge of the headquarters (home organization) through worldwide diffusion (learning) and adaptations;
* Transferring knowledge and ‘best practices’ from any of its markets and use them in other international markets

For a better understanding of some key terms we offer their wider explanation:

* Coordinating its marketing activities: coordinating and integrating marketing strategies and implementing them across global markets, which involves centralization, delegation, standardization and local responsiveness.
* Finding global customer needs: this involves carrying out international marketing research and analyzing market segments, as well as seeking to understands similarities and differences in customer groups across countries;
* Satisfying global customer: adapting products, services and elements of marketing mix to satisfy different customer needs across countries and regions;
* Being better than the competition: assessing, monitoring and responding to global competition by offering better value, low prices, high quality, superior distribution great advertising strategies or superior brand image

 Hollensen, S.,(2007) goes on when he claims that global marketing strategy such as the one above attempts to achieve slogan: ‘think globally but act locally’ called glocalization, through active interdependence between headquarters and subsidiaries. Organizations working according to such a strategy coordinate their effort, making sure of the presence of local flexibility while exploiting the benefits of global integration and efficiencies, as well as ensuring worldwide diffusion of innovation.

Marketing research

 To set the basic definition of marketing research we employ the AMA’s definition which describes marketing research as:” the function that links the consumer, customer, and public to the marketer through information--information used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems; generate, refine, and evaluate marketing actions; monitor marketing performance; and improve understanding of marketing as a process. Marketing research specifies the information required to address these issues, designs the method for collecting information, manages and implements the data collection process, analyzes the results, and communicates the findings and their.” (AMA, 2008)

Primary data - Surveys and questionnaires

 We distinguish between three basics ways of gathering primary data in marketing research: survey/ questionnaire, observation and experiment. Surveys are the most broadly used method of primary data collection in commercial marketing research. In comparison to observation or other qualitative methods, survey methods enable the collection of significant amount of data an economical and efficient manner. (Schmidt, M.J., & Hollensen, S.,2006)

Culture

 Classical anthropological definition of culture by Kluckhohn (1951) states that: “Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected ) ideas and especially their attached values.”

 Moreover Geert H. Hofstede (2003) treats culture as: “the collective programming of mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.”

 In this definition “mind” has the meaning of head, heart and hands, i.e. thinking, feeling and acting, with consequences for believes attitudes and skills.

System of Values in culture

 Culture contains Values and system of values is core element of culture. *Values* are always invisible until they become obvious in behavior, but culture manifests itself in visible elements too. Symbols, Heroes and Rituals together with Values cover total concept.

 *Symbols* stand for words, gestures, pictures and objects that often bear complex meaning known to those who share the culture. Old symbols vanish and the new symbols occurs. Symbols are often copied by other culture/cultures. Therefore they are in the outer, most superficial layer of the “onion diagram” (see figure X).

 *Heroes* are persons dead or alive, real or imaginary who possess characteristics that are highly priced in a culture and serve as role models.

 *Rituals* are communal activities that are in principle unnecessary to achievement of desired ends, but that within a culture are considered socially indispensable, keeping the individual bound within the norms of collectivity.

 *Practices* penetrate all of the aspects of this model.

**Figure 1: Cultural Values, Rituals, Heroes, Symbols, Practices**

**Source: (Hofstede, 2003)**

****Cultural Dimensions****

 Geert Hofstede (2003) analyzed a large data base of employee values scores collected by IBM. Scores of 74 countries can be found. From the initial results, and later additions, Hofstede developed a model that identifies four primary Dimensions to assist in differentiating cultures: *Power Distance (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)*and later the fifth dimension *Long Term Orientation (LTO)* was added.

 ***Power Distance Index (PDI)*** that is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality, but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders.

  ***Individualism (IDV)*** on the one side versus its opposite, collectivism, that is the degree to which individuals are intergrated into groups. On the individualist side we find societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. On the collectivist side, we find societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

*Masculinity (MAS)* versus its opposite, femininity, refers to the distribution of roles between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found. The IBM studies revealed that (a) women's values differ less among societies than men's values; (b) men's values from one country to another contain a dimension from very assertive and competitive and maximally different from women's values on the one side, to modest and caring and similar to women's values on the other. The assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine'. The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values.

 ***Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)*** deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity; it ultimately refers to man's search for Truth. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, and different from usual. Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict laws and rules, safety and security measures, and on the philosophical and religious level by a belief in absolute Truth; 'there can only be one Truth and we have it'. People in uncertainty avoiding countries are also more emotional, and motivated by inner nervous energy. The opposite type, uncertainty accepting cultures, are more tolerant of opinions different from what they are used to; they try to have as few rules as possible, and on the philosophical and religious level they are relativist and allow many currents to flow side by side. People within these cultures are more phlegmatic and contemplative, and not expected by their environment to express emotions.

 ***Long-Term Orientation (LTO)*** versus short-term orientation: this fifth dimension was found in a study among students in 23 countries around the world, using a questionnaire designed by Chinese scholars It can be said to deal with Virtue regardless of Truth. Values associated with Long Term Orientation are thrift and perseverance. Values associated with Short Term Orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's 'face'.

Consumer Behavior

We define consumer behavior as a study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. In this definition Consumer Behavior is viewed as a process that includes the issues that influence the consumer before, during and after a purchase*.* (Solomon M.,Bammosy, G., & Askegaard, S.,1999).

Hoyer, W.D. & Macinnis, D.J.(2009) support the previous definition by averring that consumer behavior reflects the entirety of consumers choices with regard to the acquisition, consumption and disposition of goods, services, activities, experiences, people and ideas by decision-making units.

For better comprehension we clarify the key terms:

* Acquisition: means receiving, finding, inheriting, producing or purchasing
* Consumption: means collecting, nurturing, cleaning, preparing, displaying and storing, wearing and sharing
* Disposal: means giving, throwing away, recycling and depleting.

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Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior

 In this part we look at how Mooij,M.K. & Mooij, M., (2010) discuss the central factors of cross-cultural consumer behavior, providing practical examples.

* Differences in languages and meanings of words with the implication that words or concepts do not mean the same in different countries,
* Differences in consumption patterns causing diverse level of consumption or use of products or services in different countries,
* Differences in the perceived benefits of products and services suggesting two nations may use or consume the same product in dissimilar manner,
* Differences in the criteria of evaluating products leading to contrasting benefits required from a product in different countries,
* Differences in economic and social conditions as well as the family structure influence consumers when purchasing products.

How Consumer Behavior changes in relations within cultural dimensions

 Hofstede (2003) outlined changes in consumer behavior with respect to his cultural dimensions of ***Uncertainty Avoidance*, Individualism** and Masculinity.

High ***Uncertainty* *Avoidance* Index results in:**

* **Higher consumption of** “purity” products, i.e. mineral water, and fresh fruits,
* Less reading books and newspapers.

Low***Uncertainty Avoidance* Index results in:**

* Consumption of convenience products (inexpensive frequent [purchase](http://en.mimi.hu/marketingweb/purchase.html)s, there is little effort needed for a purchase if convenience f product, e.g. fast food and confectionery [product](http://en.mimi.hu/marketingweb/product.html)s).
* Reading books and newspapers

High ***Individualism* Index leads to:**

* More books, use PC more use answering machine,
* Media & Online social network main source of information.

Low ***Individualism* Index leads to:**

* Read fewer books, use fewer home computers enjoy TV more,
* Social network main source of information.

High ***Masculinity* Index causes:**

* Men make main buying decisions and women the between partners,
* Purchase for showing off,
* More confidence in advertised products
* More appeal of foreign goods.

High ***Masculinity* Index causes:**

* Buying decision and shopping shared,
* Purchase for use,
* Less confidence in advertised products
* Less appeal of foreign goods

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Advertising

 There are numerous ways for companies to communicate their messages where advertising is perhaps the most common of them. Advertising is a type of mass communication, which according to Gripsrud.J. & Weibull, L. (2010) is defined as “impersonal and simultaneous one- way communication. This mean that there is no instant feedback and that you are able to reach out to a large audience, but you do not know exactly who you will reach out to. “

 Fletcher,R. et al. (2004*)*  states that: ”Advertising which can include, television, newspapers, radio, outdoor and transit advertising etcetera, is the most powerful tool when positioning a service or product on the market. According to Fletcher,R. et al. (2004*)*  it is the most expensive type of promotion.” They argue that a need can be created by advertising and especially when the ads are adapted to the culture.

 Herbig (1998) summarize this by defining advertising as:”a non personal, paid presentation or message that is placed in mass media, he also adds that, from the ad, the receiver should be able to identify the person or organization behind the message.”

Product

 We define product as anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that can satisfy a want or need. “Products include more than just a tangible objects, such as cars, computers or cell phones. Broadly defined “products” also include services, events, persons, places, organizations, ideas or mixes of these.“(Kotler, P.& Armstrong.,G.,2010)

AMA defines product as: “A bundle of attributes (features, functions, benefits, and uses) capable of exchange or use; usually a mix of tangible and intangible forms. Thus a product may be an idea, a physical entity (a good), or a service, or any combination of the three. It exists for the purpose of exchange in the satisfaction of individual and organizational objectives.” (AMA,2008)

Standardization versus Adaptation of products

 Product adaption by AMA: “The strategy of developing new products by modifying or improving on the product innovations of others. This contrasts with the strategies of pioneering and imitation.” Product standardization is the opposite when company sells one product internationally without adjustments to the local market saving the company production and marketing costs.

 The issue of standardisation versus adaptation in international marketing activities has been prominent in the international literature following the publication of Levitt’s (1983) article on the globalisation of markets. He argued that there has been an increase in the similarity of markets across the globe due to much improved communications, travel and the emergence of demographically similar segments in different countries. This suggestion is based on a view that the world market is made up of a number of standardized markets rather than a large number of customized markets.

Aim of the work

Aim of bachelor thesis is to analyze the intercultural aspects of perception of SUBWAY® restaurants with the emphasis on the customers’ opinion on SUBWAY® restaurants in USA, China, France and Slovakia.

Partial aims of bachelor thesis are the following:

* Define the basis of each country’s cultural background and eating habits together with the current SUBWAY® position in the market.

 In the first partial aim the aim is to clarify the cultural aspect of each country as defined by Geert Hofstede in his Cultural dimensions. Then ,to examine what are countrys’ eating habits and traditional meal. Lastly, to briefly explain SUBWAY®’s position in each market.

* Second partial aim is focused on the customer perception of SUBWAY® in USA, China, France and Slovakia.

 To gain first hand information from customers a questionnaire concerning perception of SUBWAY® restaurants is created. The questions in this questionnaire are aimed at achieving the suitable results for the purpose of bachelor thesis.

* The last partial aim of thesis is formation of conclusion and recommendations for SUBWAY®.

 The conclusion and recommendation of the thesis are to help SUBWAY® satisfy its customer USA, China, France and Slovakia. These recommendations are derived from the obtained results from research work.

 The contribution of bachelor thesis is in providing information on customer perception of SUBWAY® restaurants, its localized products and customer services in USA, China, France and Slovakia, four countries with evident cultural differences. Alongside of contribution the recommendations are provided with the best intentions to improve consumer perception of company in USA, China, France and Slovakia.

Materials and Methods

 Methods of formation of bachelor thesis derive mainly from its purpose, which is the analysis of intercultural aspects of perception of SUBWAY® restaurants among customers from USA, China, France and Slovakia.

 Following methods were used for writing of bachelor thesis:

 The first step in realization of the bachelor thesis was appropriate selection of primary theoretical and practical information based on studied literature sources. We selected mostly foreign sources due to a lack of domestic appropriate sources discussing the topic out of which the complex theoretical preview of examined problem was formed.

 The second step is selection of company, where SUBWAY® restaurant chain is chosen and foundation for practical background was laid. Information in practical background is obtained mainly through prepared questionnaire as well as from a SUBWAY® franchisee. From attained data the company’s position in the market and the analysis of questionnaire outcomes and recommendations for SUBWAY® are written.

 To gain proper information from the questionnaire, at first, four general informational questions were asked followed by seven alternative and concrete informational questions mounting up to a total of eleven questions. Great attention was paid to the right selection of respondents to receive useful data therefore the majority of respondents are students and young professionals since these are the target market for SUBWAY®. Questionnaire was send out to respondents mainly via facebook® and email. The time span of conducting the questionnaire was 3 weeks ensuring the wide spread and sufficient number of respondents from each country.

 The last step are recommendation and conclusion where the information for conclusion and recommendation come from questionnaire analysis to help SUBWAY® meet its customers’ needs across USA, China, France and Slovakia . These recommendations are derived from the obtained results from research work.

 In the processing of bachelor thesis these methods were utilized:

* Information gathering method
* Primary data method - questionnaire data

 - personally obtained data from SUBWAY® franchisee

* Selection method – categorization of gathered data and information
* Analysis method – analyzing of gathered data and information
* Comparison method – comparing, comparison
* Synthesis method – summary of gathered data and information
* Deduction method – formulation of recommendation and conclusion on customer perception towards SUBWAY® restaurants in USA, China, France and Slovakia, countries with evident cultural differences.

Results

Company bacground

 Fred DeLuca and Dr.Peter Buck opened the first shop in 1965 in Bridgeport, Connecticut,USA. The store was initially "Pete's Submarines" . As the store grew and other locations were added, the name was shortened simply to SUBWAY®

 By 1974, the number of restaurants was 16 throughout Connecticut. In 1975 they decided to find franchisees to open SUBWAY® restaurants for them.

 SUBWAY® franchises expanded nationwide throughout the 1970s and 80s, altering the menu to invite a new customer base. While SUBWAY®sandwiches were originally only sold in foot length sizes, the restaurant began serving six-inch sandwiches in 1977. In the 1990s, SUBWAY®began developing its brand as a healthier alternative to traditional fast food, advertising a selection of sandwiches with six grams of fat or less. Over the years, SUBWAY®’s menu evolved to include breakfast items, wraps, soups and pizza.

 The chain's advertising spokesman, Jared Fogle, became famous in 2000 for the drastic weight loss he experienced while eating low-fat SUBWAY® sandwiches every day. Fogle, along with the introduction of the $5-Dollar Footlong sandwich in 2008, helped cement SUBWAY®'s reputation for providing healthy and affordable fast food.

* *Company Vision*

 Be the #1 Quick Service Restaurant chain in the world.

* Company Mission

 To provide the tools and knowledge to allow entrepreneurs to compete successfully in the Quick Service Restaurant (fast food restaurant) industry worldwide, by consistently offering value to consumers through providing great tasting food that is good for them and made the way they want it.

* Company Taret Market

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 The general target market are adults between the ages of 18 and 34 consisting of young profesionalls and students searching for healthy substitute for traditional fast food meals.

* Company Marketing goal

 To bring customers into the stores and keep them coming back! In other words, the SUBWAY® chain wants to make all potential customers aware of its products, convince them to try it, and by providing good value, and great fresh food, turn them into regular satisfied customers.

Brand framework - three pillars of SUBWAY®'s

1. **Value** is thefoundation that enables the other platforms to stand firm. Value is expressed in the equation:

Value = Quantity + Quality + Customer Service/ Price

1. **Health & Indulgence** are seen as the primary reasons for visitors along with the food product innovations and great taste
2. **Freshness** generates the reason to trust the brand because of its quality, honesty and competitive differentiation.

SUBWAY®’s International adaption of products

 When SUBWAY® first enters a market, the first issues it faces are building brand awareness and learning about potential customers’s eating prefferences and customs. SUBWAY® attempts to adapt quickly to a new restaurants’s immediate service area. In order to meet the needs of local customers, while maintaining consistency from restaurant to restaurant and streamlining the number of products in distribution centers; SUBWAY® designated optional menu items. For certain countries, the Country ption Product (COP) had been added to the existing Market Option Product (MOP). COP itemsare chosen by the country branch and become required items for all stores within that country wheras MOP items are chosen by local stores and can vary within the country making these items more adapted to local market needs.

 *Categories with COP options are:*

* Sub Sandwiches
* Mini sub sandwiches
* Kids Pak
* Breads – Flavor & variety (wraps etc.)
* Cheeses
* Sauces
* Toppings for sandwiches (including added sauces)
* Cookies
* Beverages
* Breakfast

SUBWAY® became the world's largest faastfood restaurant chain

 SUBWAY® had 33,749 shops by the end year 2010,in 98 countries while McDonald's had 32,737 in 119 countries. That makes SUBWAY® the largest restaurant chain in the world, yet with the annual revenue of only $15.2 billion (2010) in comparison to McDonald's $ 24.075 billion (2010) it has a long way to pass McDonald's in the company revenue rankings.

 In next table it is possible to see the rising number of SUBWAY® units and its percentage change over past years.

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| **SUBWAY® FRANCHISE UNITS** |
| **Year** | **U.S. Franchises** | **Canadian Franchises** | **The rest of the world**  | **World total** |
| 2007 | 21006 | 2264 | 4659 | 27929 |
| 2008 | 21685 | 2355 | 5572 | 29612 |
| 2009 | 22525 | 2436 | 6484 | 31445 |
| 2010 | 23411 | 2542 | 7235 | 33188 |
| 2011 | 24211 | 2556 | 7337 | 34104 |
| Change % 11/07 | 13% | 11% | 36% | 18% |

**Table 1: SUBWAY® franchise units**

**Ssource : http://www.entrepreneur.com/franchises/subway/282839-0.html**

Selected world countries

The United States of America

* Cultural background

 USA has *Individualism* *[IDV]* as its highest dimension with ranking of 91. In fact, it is the highest among all countries and the world’s average of 43 indicating a society with a more individualistic attitude and relatively loose bonds with others. The population is more self-reliant and looks out for themselves and their close family members *Masculinity* *[MAS]* dimension with a ranking of 62, in comparison to the world’s average of 50 being a sign of a higher degree of gender differentiation of roles.

Figure : 5 Dimensional model USA

 **Source: http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede\_dimensions.php.**

 The male dominates a significant portion of the society and power structure.Low *Long-term orientation [LTO](*29),world (45), ranking is indicative of the societies' belief in meeting its obligations and tends to reflect an appreciation for cultural traditions.

 The next lowest ranking Dimension for the United States is *Power Distance [PDI]* at 40, compared to the world Average of 55 suggests of a greater equality between societal levels, including government, organizations, and even within families. *Uncertainty* *Avoidance[UAI]* (46),world (64),dimension is indicative of a society that has fewer rules and does not attempt to control all outcomes and results. It also has a greater level of tolerance for a variety of ideas, thoughts, and beliefs. (5 dimensions ,n.d.)

* **Food and eating habits**

I n reality, the idea of a fast restaurant meal has completely changed eating habits in USA and referred to as McDonaldization. Almost a generation ago, approximately three quarters of meals eaten by Americans were homemade, but these days more and more number of people prefer fast food restaurants to homemade food; mainly because it is quick, cheap and tasty.

 The fact is that Americans are not used to one typical single cuisine. Modern American cuisine consists of a mix of variety of foods from around the world. It is easily possible to come across Mexican, Italian and Chinese restaurants all across America and situated next to one another. Americans do not have any deep-rooted cooking culture. We could define Modern American cuisine by the terms barbeque, fast food, and mixture of cuisines from all around the world.

China

* **Cultural background**

 For SUBWAY®’s marketing purposes most significant difference in comparison to USA dimensions is *Individualism [IDV]*where China scores only 20 whereas USA scores 91. Geert Hofstede suggests it is because of high level of emphasis on a Collectivist society by the Communist rule and close, committed member 'group' (family, extended family, or extended relationships). He goes on stating that:”Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group.”

 Chinese *Long term orientation [LTO]* Geert Hofstede analyzed as highest-ranking factor (118). This Dimension indicates a society's time perspective and an attitude of persevering; that is, overcoming obstacles with time, if not with will and strength.

Figure 2: 5 Dimensional model China vs USA

 Source: http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede\_dimensions.php.

* **Food and eating habits**

 Confucius once said: "Eating is the utmost important part of life." Chinese believe that delightful and delicious meal creates happiness, harmony, mental and physical well-beingand surprisingly they eat until they are full three without worrying about gaining weight but only three times a day .Traditional way of eating is with chopsticks that work as arm expansion because Chinese do not like to touch the food they eat. There is a vast variety of cuisines throughout China but three most common Chinese cuisines are the Beijing cuisine, the Cantonese cuisine and the Sichuan cuisine.

* Beijing region - northern part of China has a cold climate unsuitable to grow rice, so wheat is the primary grain consumed. Northern Chinese eat more breads than those in the south, where rice predominates.
* Cantonese region - food is typically steamed, boiled or stir-fried. It is a very healthy food since it uses minimum of oil. The main ingredients of this type of Chinese food are seafood, pork, chicken and vegetables, but could include almost anything.  You need white rice to accompany the mea
* Sichuan region - the typical trait of this southwestern province of China is the spicy taste of its food.
* Soup - Chinese make their soups with chicken, meat or vegetable stock

**SUBWAY®**  **- 赛百味 in China**

 It's a phonetically translation, so not much meaning can be derived from it. You may still intepret 百味 as meaning a "hundred tastes" though. Otherwise, putting 赛 infront doesn't mean anything.

 SUBWAY® (百味 –meaning hundred tastes) opened its first restaurant in China in 1995 seeking to penetrate a very large and quickly growing market. In its beginnings it was warmly welcomed mostly by foreigners living in China but not exactly by the domestic customers. Since then SUBWAY® has improved its attractiveness to domestic consumers by introducing locally adapted offers, being consistent in promoting its core sandwiches and salads making the domestic consumers more familiar with their offer and being consistent in teaching its customers how to select and order what they want. There is a total of 199 SUBWAY® restaurants in China but in order to grow professor Cui of Central University of Finance and Marketing, argues that SUBWAY® in China still needs to localize its offer more and boost advertisements of its meal value that reflects the equation Value = (Quantity + Quality + Customer Experience)/ Price. (Guangwang, Z.,March 8, 2010) Morever, eating in China at Western style places is perceived as an high class behavior.

France

* **Cultural background**

 For SUBWAY®’s marketing purposes most significant difference in comparison to USA dimensions is *Uncertainty avoidance [UAI]*in which France scores 86 whereas USA scores 46 situating

French people are generally more emotional, and motivated by inner energy.

Figure 3: 5 Dimensional model France vs USA

 Source: http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede\_dimensions.php

* **Food and eating habits**

 People in France start their day with breakfast that is known as “*le petit déjeuner*”. Their breakfast is consists of coffee and hot chocolate. Lunch is considered a leisurely affair by French people but several meal courses are included in their lunch menu. Broadly popular is to serve salad in lunch in summer season and in winter they like to eat hot soup. “*Le gouter*” is known as afternoon snack after which the evening meal comes, they come. Wine is served as after meal drink. French

 French people always focus on eating healthy food but over the last decades their eating habits tend to be changed. With introduction of fast food, their eating habits change frequently and they now eat steadfast. French also enjoy “*escargots”* (snails) cooked with garlic and butter, roast duck, and rabbit.

 The baguette, a long, thin loaf of crusty bread, is the most important part of any French meal. It is eaten in a variety of ways, including being used to make sandwiches. Melted cheese spread on a baguette is often presented as part of a meal. French also enjoy “*escargots”* (snails) cooked with garlic and butter, roast duck, and rabbit.

* **The regions of France have varying cuisine:**
* Brittany (northwestern France) - the main dish is *crêpes* (thin pancakes) with cider,
* Alsace region (eastern France near Germany) - popular dish is cabbage with pieces of sausage, called “*la choucroute”,*
* Loire River Valley - special dish is made of the Lotte fish that can only be found in the Loire River.
* On the coasts of France – dishes from seafood including mussels, clams, oysters, shrimp, and squid.
* **SUBWAY® in France**

 France became the 23rd European country to have SUBWAY® restaurant in 2001. French passion about food and health-conscious food choices are making them very suitable potential SUBWAY® sandwiches consumers. In [France](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/France) , the number was more than 200 SUBWAY® restaurants in May [2010](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010) . The chain plans to have opened a total of 1 400 restaurants by [2015](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015). Marc Kreder, Director of SUBWAY® France confirmed for Franchise-Magazine that:"French consumers respond well to our concept of sandwiches." ( Pompougnac, V ,2008)

Slovakia

* **Food and eating habits**

 Eating habits in Slovakia are undergoing a constant change on account of American influence that changes the traditional view of eating habits in Slovakia but generally people tend to eat smaller breakfast of lower nutrition value, after couple of hours it is a snack time called “desiata”. The main meal of the day is lunch consisting first course, usually soup followed by main course, usually some kind of meat and a side dish, ending with a piece of desert that may be served with coffee or tea. Between lunch and dinner people eat second snack, known as ”olovrant” and the last meal of the day is dinner that should not be richer in nutrition value than lunch.

 Slovak traditional cuisine differs mostly among the northern regions and southern region because of diverse geographical conditions.

* Northern region – cuisine consists mainly of pork meat, lamb meat, flour, potatoes, cabbage, dairy products made from cow milk or sheep milk and most commonly found fruit are apples.
* Southern region - cuisine consists of wider range of selection composed of different kinds of paltry meat, beef meat, carp fish, homemade pasta and broad choice of fruits and fruit products such as jelly/jam, sterilized and dried fruits.

* **Cultural background**

 As shown in figure n. # the largest difference in between Slovakia and USA dimensions is ***Power distance [PDI]*** in which Slovakia gets high value of 104 unlike USA with ranking of 40 putting in plain words that less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequallySecondly the next substantial difference issues from ***Masculinity***

Figure 4: 5 Dimensional model Slovakia vs USA

Source: http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede\_dimensions.php

***[MAS]*** dimension where ranking of 110 for Slovakia is much higher from the ranking of 62 for USA resulting in the unequal distribution of roles between the genders.

(Hofstede,2009 )

* **SUBWAY® in Slovakia**

 SUBWAY® **entered Slovak market in 2009 as the last one from the observed countries hoping to become a key player in the fast food industry over time. SUBWAY franchisees are operating 7 restaurants located in Slovakia though the plans are to open 3 more stores in near future.**

Analysis of marketing research and interpretation of results

Demographic inforamtional data

 Due to the international character of our questionnaire we conducted it in 4 countries and these were United States of America, China, France and Slovakia .The overall number of questionnaire respondents equals 103. Men count for 42% of the total sample size which represent 43 males. Women count for 58% of the total sample size that represents 60 females.

 Firstly, we analyze the obtained demographic data in order in which they occur in the questionnaire starting with the results collected in United States of America followed by China, France and Slovakia.

* **USA**

Graph1: Gender & Age , USA

Source: Own research

Source: Own research

 Men count for 35% of the sample size which represent 13 males. Women count for 35% of the sample size which represents 7 females.

 Classification of respondents according to age reveals that people from the dominant category of [responder](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/responder)s are in between 19 and 24 years of age. This age group forms 85% of the sample. It is mainly composed of university students because I am an university student myself and majority of my American friends are studying in university. The other categories (15-18) and (25-30) and (41-60) represent 5% each. Number zero occurred in the column for the age category between 31 to 40 year.

 Most of the asked American responders answered that they belong among students, more precisely 80% of the sample, proving my previous statement about the majority of asked people to be studying in university. 14% of the sample consists of those working in the private sector and just 3% were people either employed in the public sector or being self-employed. The unemployed do not occur in this sample.

Graph 2: Occupation , USA

Source: Own research

* **China**

Graph 3 : Gender & Age , China

Source: Own research

 Men count for 26% of the sample size which represent 7 males. Women count for 74% of the sample size which represents 20 females.

Classification of respondents according to age reveals that the dominant category of [responder](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/responder)s ,is as in the case of USA , in between 19 and 24 years of age. This age group forms 63% of the sample. However, the category 25-30 accounts for 22% and other categories (15-18) and and (31-40) represent 7% each. Number zero occurred in the column for the age category between 41 to 60 year.

Graph 4 :Occupation , China

Source: Own research

 Percentage of students equals to 59% being the most prevailing followed by the answerers employed in the private sector at 26% and 7% of the Chinese sample is employed in the public sector as well as 7% being self-employed. 0% of asked Chinese are unemployed.

* **France**

Graph 5 : Gender & Age , France

Source: Own research

 In the French sample percentage of men is 29% of the sample size which represent 6 males. French women account for 71% of the sample size which represents 15 females.

Classification of respondents according to age shows similar results as in the precious cases yet in case of France’s percentage of answerers between 19 to 24 years old soar to 95% leaving only 5% for the 25-30 category. The rest of the age categories are not present.

 Percentage of students equals to 71% being the most prevailing followed by the answerers employed in the private sector at 19% and 5% of the French sample responders are employed in the public sector as well as other 5% being self-employed. 0% of asked French are unemployed.

Graph 6 : Occupation, France

Source: Own research

* **Slovakia**

Graph 7 : Gender & Age, Slovakia

Source: Own research

 In case of Slovak responders the percentage of men equals to 49% of the sample size which represents 17 males. Women account for 51% of the sample size which amount to 18 females.

 Student category is predominant with 86% of the Slovak responders..This age group forms 63% of the sample. Two categories (25-30) (31-40) share 12% (6%) (6%) of the sample. 3% of the Slovak sample is formed by people between 15 to 18 years old.

Graph 8: Occupation, Slovakia

Source: Own research

 The greatest part from the Slovak respondents is made of students (80%). Second biggest group are people employed in the private sector (14%). 3% claim to be employed in the public sector as well as the rest 3% being self-employed. 0% of asked Slovaks are unemployed.

All four countries are mostly composed of students hence making the consequential comparisons highly reliable and trustworthy.

Concrete data

 We now proceed to the actual comparison of observed countries. In this part of our paper we would like to demonstrate the differences among consumers from USA, China, France and Slovakia, more precisely the aspects of their perception of SUBWAY® restaurants in their home countries.

The fifth question in the questionnaire is centered at the general public awareness of SUBWAY® restaurants:”***Are you familiar with SUBWAY® restaurants?*** By this particular question we intended to find out to what extent the brand awareness of SUBWAY®is scattered among the public.

Graph 9 : Familiarity with SUBWAY®

Source: Own research

 It is of no surprise that in the US sample the percentage of high familiarity reaches 100%. The cause for such a result is the fact that United Stated of America is the home country of SUBWAY® sandwiches with most of its shops located in USA. In the other three countries we can come a to a conclusion that public high familiarity with SUBWAY® restaurant is considerably low, reaching only 15% in China, 24% in France and 20% in Slovakia. This numbers indicate insufficient marketing efforts by the regional divisions of SUBWAY® in the selected countries. On the other hand SUBWAY®’s global expansion is an ongoing process that will lead to increase of regional SUBWAY® brand awareness.

The aim of question n.6: ***How often do you visit SUBWAY® restaurants per month?*** was to find out the frequency of respondents’ eating in SUBWAY® restaurants per month (0-3 visits /month, 3-11 visits /month, 12+ visits/month). The frequency reveals the actual popularity and consuming behavior of answerers from USA, China, France and Slovakia.

Graph 10 : Frequency of SUBWAY® visits/month

Source: Own research

 Most frequent SUBWAY® sandwiches eaters are the respondents from USA with the lowest percentage of 0-3 visits per month leaving the 3-11 and 12+ visits per month undoubtedly the highest among the four studied countries. In question n.5 24% of the French sample stated to be very familiar with SUBWAY® restaurants placing France second behind USA and in this figure we can see that French respondents tend to visit SUBWAY® most frequently (5% visit SUBWAY® 12+ times/month) from the three non-American countries. Nevertheless, Chinese result (4 visit SUBWAY® 12+ times/month) suggests that despite the lowest brand awareness Chinese consumers visit SUBWAY® more often than Slovaks (3% visit SUBWAY® 12+ times/month).
 With our next question (n.7) ***Have you noticed SUBWAY®'s localized meals/menus?*** our intention was to study the attentiveness of repliers to SUBWAY®’s meal/menu offer, moreover to find out whether consumers in USA, China, France and Slovakia seek specifically localized meals/menus when eating out in fast food restaurant SUBWAY®.

Graph 11 : Awarenss of localized menus/meals in SUBWAY®

Source: Own research

 As it seen in the figures, Chinese consumers have noticed the localized meals/menus the most with combined percentage (1 + 2) of 74% and only 26% have not notice the adapted offers. Slovak consumers combined for 71% (1+2) and 29% said that they have not recognizes the adapted offers. French answerers who state that they recognize SUBWAY®’s localized meals/menus combined for 57% (1+2) but 43% answered that have not they have not noticed the localized offer. In case of USA the percentage of people stating to recognize the adapted meals/menus is at the lowest of 50% (1+2) and percentage of those who have noticed the adapted offers is 50%.

 Next question (n.8) was formulated in specific way to analyze customer behavior towards purchasing SUBWAY®’s localized meals/menus. The question was ***Do you buy SUBWAY® localized meals/menus ?***

Graph 12 : Frequency of SUBWAY® localized menus/meals purhcase

Source: Own research

 This type of question is very vital for SUBWAY® regional branches because it indicates whether offering locally adapted meals/menus meets with customers’ demand. Respondents from France reacted to this question in following manner: 57% stated that they never buy SUBWAY® localized meals/menus which is the highest percentage from these four examined countries, 14% buy such a meals/menus often and 29% orders localized meals/menus sometimes.

French scores are nicely demonstrating the interrelationship with question n.7 where 43% of French respondents have not noticed any locally adapted offers in SUBWAY® restaurants and therefore we could not expect high frequency of ordering locally adapted menus.

Half of USA consumers who undertaken this survey claimed that they do not order such localized meals/menus (50%) , 40% stated that they sometimes order these meals/menus, 5% said they often order and 5% said they always order such meals/menus. We need to have in mind that in case of USA, localized meals/menus stand for MOP.

Slovak respondents answered as follows: 51% buys sometimes 34% never buys, 9% buys often and 6%alwayus buys such localized meals/menus. Chinese sample shows that 33% always buys, 30%buys sometimes, 26% never buys and 11% buys often such localized meals/menus. French scores may be explained by the fact that French SUBWAY® branch chose to offer Veggie Patty sandwich (vegetarian sandwich) as the localized meal for its restaurants. This choice is not as evident example of adaptation to the local market as Chinese Seafood Sensation sandwich (seafood meat sandwich). In Slovakia it has been the Gordon Blue sandwich (fried chicken breast filled with cheese and ham) a very common combination is Slovakia.

On the other hand SUBWAY® believes it can spread their sandwich eating culture across the world therefore always offering regular sandwiches as the core of their menu backed by one or two localized products.

Question n.9: ***How would you rate the customer services at your local SUBWAY® restaurant ?*** focuses on the answerers perception of customer services at their local SUBWAY® they visit the most often. The answers could vary from very good (1) to very poor (5) satisfaction with customer service at local SUBWAY®.

Graph 13: Customer service at SUBWAY®

Source: Own research

In countries with the highest familiarity with SUBWAY® brand the highest customer services satisfaction takes place as well. If we combine very good (1) and good (2) ratings of SUBWAY® customer service at local restaurant French sample scores 61% (5%+57%=61%) and USA scores 60% (30%+30%=60%) what indicates that more than half of the sample size has had a good or very good experience with customer services. Slovak sample recorded 51%(17%+45%=51%) of all answerers to be satisfied and China as the only country that did not pass the 50% mark and the total satisfaction with customer services at local SUBWAY® is 48% of all respondents. We proceed to question n.10: ***How was your last visit at SUBWAY® restaurant?*** Here we were searching for the answers about customers’ satisfaction with their last visit at SUBWAY® restaurant where 1 stands for very satisfying, 2 stands for satisfying, 3 stands for neutral, 4 stands for disappointing and 5 stands for very disappointing . Last visit is the most recent visit and for that reason the memory of this experience is the most fresh and the most detailed.

Graph 14: Last SUBWAY® visit satisfaction

Source: Own research

 The most satisfied customers are in USA with score of 30%+40%=70% making the rest of the 30% examined people divide into categories neutral (25%) and disappointed (5%). China and Slovakia scored identical overall satisfaction results of 63%, for Slovakia it is 14%+49% and for China 11%+52% making Slovak respondents little bit more satisfied because the percentage of very satisfy customers is bigger by 3% (14% Slovakia and 11% China). The spare 37% of asked Slovaks answered by neutral experience whereas 26% of Chinese respondents gave the neutral answer and 11% were disappointed by their last visit. The worst customer satisfaction was recorded in France where barely half of the respondents were overall satisfied (19%+33%=52%), 29% had no positive or negative experience, 10% were disappointed and the last 10% were very disappointed by their last SUBWAY® restaurant visit.

 The last question (n.11) in our questionnaire was: ***What factors do you consider important when visiting SUBWAY® restaurants?*** We divided this question into 10 sub questions where we asked how important particular factor are to respondents. Among these factor were:

Product assortment, Price, Food Quality, Discounts/special offers, Nutrition, Waiting time, Distance to SUBWAY®, Service, Convenience, Localized meals/menus.

 For *American* respondents the very important factor is Food quality with 85% of sample votes followed by Price (70%) and Nutrition value (65%). On the other side, Localized meals/menus factor ended up being the least important (55%) along with Waiting time (20%).

 Food quality and Nutrition value are the main pillars of SUBWAY®’s strategy, because SUBWAY® offers healthy and fresh alternatives to its major fast food competitors such as McDonald’s or KFC.

 Pricing strategy need to be well prepared, taking into account not only the cost of running a SUBWAY® business but also competition prices need to be examined leading to final price of meals/menus. Here the marketing efforts need to put a stress on the high standard of SUBWAY®’s food and attract customers on the prospect of great quality food for reasonable price.

Graph 15: Important factors when visitng SUBWAY® SLOVAKIA

Source: Own research

 It is understandable that Americans do not consider Localized meals/menus very important because the core menu offer was created according to the US standards and only some SUBWAY® restaurants offer MOP as a kind of adapted meal/menu to the local market.

 In *China* respondents value Food quality (70%) along with Convenience (70%) the most. On the contrary, the least important factors are Localized meals/menus (33%) and Distance to SUBWAY® (30%).

 Again, Food quality was placed 1st which is the way SUBWAY® wants to go. It is the main slogan of SUBWAY®: Eat fresh. Ever since SUBWAY® has opened its first shop in China the great challenge has been to convert Chinese consumers into sandwich eaters due to the cultural phenomenon that Chinese usually do not like to eat their food with bare hands, the way sandwiches are consumed. nonetheless SUBWAY® has achieved a partial victory when its tuna salad that was being regarded as unsuitable for Chinese market after some time, its sales began soar and became one of the most well-liked customer choices. Convenience as co-number 1 factor suggest that SUBWAY® restaurants need to always be located near colleges, universities, offices, dense residential area and factories near or inside of shopping centers.

Graph 16: Important factors when visitng SUBWAY® CHINA

Source: Own research

 Interestingly enough, Chinese respondents declared Localized meals/menus factor as the least important when visiting SUBWAY® restaurant. The grounds for this is that majority of respondents are between 19 to 30 years old. Explanation could be given here in way that these young people are more affected by the American influence and are not as strict in following the cultural customs and habits as the older part of the population. That’s why they seek the healthy, fresh and American styled food. Additionally Chinese respondents are willing to travel a bit longer to their local SUBWAY® sandwich shop since they named this factor as not as important.

 For *French* repliers the very important factor is Food quality (86%) and the second very mportant factor is Price (67%) and also important factor is Convenience (76%). On the opposite site we can find Localized meals/menus as the least important factor (67%) continuing with the second least important factor to French respondents Distance to SUBWAY® (38%).

Graph 17: Important factors when visitng SUBWAY® FRANCE

Source: Own research

 Food quality is one more time claimed as the number one factor when visiting SUBWAY® restaurant. French consumers are generally known as very passionate and selective eaters who pay great attention to the freshness, healthiness and tastefulness of what they consume. SUBWAY® meets all these requirements and therefore should attract French consumers who appear to be very suitable market for sandwiches and salads by promotions on the local level as well as on the national level. Pricing strategy need to be well prepared, taking into account not only the cost of running a SUBWAY® business but also competition prices need to be examined leading to a final price of meals/menus. Here the marketing efforts need to put a stress on the high standard of SUBWAY®’s food and attract customers on the prospect of great quality food for reasonable price. Selection of Convenient location is very vital for being successful restaurant in France. SUBWAY® restaurants should be situated close to or straight on the university campus, near offices, dense residential area, factories and near or inside of shopping centers.

 French respondents reached the highest percentage in Localized meals/menus, though making it the least important factor. The regulars, standard SUBWAY® sandwiches and salads, are selling well among French consumers suggesting that the minor adjustments in terms of toppings, sauces and types of bread that were undertaken to accustom SUBWAY® meals to French market are sufficient enough. Positive sign for SUBWAY® may be that in French sample the Distance to SUBWAY® was the second least important factor implying that customers do not perceive the distance to be very crucial thus are prepared travel even to more distant SUBWAY® restaurant.

 In *Slovak* sample we find Food quality (83%) the top very important factor after that Price (57%) is the second very important factor. Among the important we find two equally important factors: Waiting time (69%). The least important factors perceived by Slovaks is Localized meals/menus (51%) and the second least important factor is Discount/special offers (23%).

 As we can clearly see Food quality places as the top very important factor in Slovak sample, becoming the top very important factor in all four examined countries. As we have mentioned earlier SUBWAY® fast food concept is built upon the fresh, low-grease and healthy sandwiches and salads. If the franchisees keep their meals/menus according to this standard they will meet consumers demand. Slovaks

As in the previous case of USA and France Prices of SUBWAY® meals/menus are higher than their main competition but by promoting campaigns explaining how eating SUBWAY® contributes to its customers health and physical condition this disadvantage is turned into an advantage. Promotional campaign of Jared, the great success story of loosing 240 pounds just by eating SUBWAY® low-fat sandwiches and walking more often, deepens the “Eat fresh” image of SUBWAY®.

Graph 18: Important factors when visitng SUBWAY® SLOVAKIA

Source: Own research

 Among Slovak respondents we discover that Waiting time places first among the important which was not the case in the previous three countries. To eliminate long lines and slow preparation of food, franchisees must ensure that the preparation time of food is as short as possible by instructing his/her employees with all necessary information and descend training.

 Presence of a American influence in Slovakia and higher frequency of Slovak citizens travelling to United States of American results in the demand for SUBWAY® regular sandwiches and salads. As seen in the Slovak figure half of the respondents do not regard Localized meals/menus as important. Franchisees need to keep in mind that there still are customers search for localized offers on their SUBWAY® menus. As we discussed in question n.8 Gordon blue sandwich is offered to Slovak customers as the localized meal/menu and due to the customer high familiarity with Gordon blue sandwich it sells well.

Recommendation

 In realized marketing research, customer perception of SUBWAY® restaurants was analyzed in USA, China, France and Slovakia. Based on the marketing research results and recommendations, the marketing department of SUBWAY® in the European central region can adjust their strategy in order to increase its sales in selected markets.

 The marketing research revealed differences in the perception of SUBWAY® by its customers based on diverse cultural dimensions even when we tried to have a very balances composition of respondents from each country, in terms of age (majority of respondent from 19 to 24 years old),occupation (student majority of respondents plus young professionals).The recommendations that we make are for each country separately starting with United States of America, then China, France and at last Slovakia.

 Respondents from **United States of America** were the most familiar with SUBWAY® restaurants and the most frequent customers of SUBWAY®, emphasizing the fact that SUWBAY has got almost two thirds of its stores opened in USA. However, knowing this piece of information, SUBWAY® should not become satisfied with the situation on focus on those customers that visit its franchisees least often (0-3 visits/month) composed of 40% of all respondents. With a very solid base of quite frequent visitors eating at SUBWAY® more often (3-12 visits/month,12+ visits/month) advertising via the word out mouth is the most desired for SUBWAY® in USA because it is acknowledged as the most trustworthy kind of advertising for customers. Improvement in customer service and following the Brand framework (value, health&indulgence and freshness) are the right tools to achieve it. This statement is supported by the sample research outcome where the top one very import factor for visiting SUWBAY is Food quality. Price being the second of the very important factors brings about solution when the Value of meals must be presented as a sum of quality,quantity and customer service through nationwide TV commercials and increased attention need to be paid to social network advertising (facebook, twitter).

 In case of USA it would be illogical to look for Americanized SUBWAY® offer in USA, SUBWAY® call it Country optional product [COP], however it is ossible to distinguish what SUBWAY® calls Market optional product [MOP] due to different spectrum of customers in different regions of USA.

 SUBWAY® market position in **China** is only a fraction of its potential market share. Massive promotion investment by the Chinese SUBWAY® Advertising Fund is required in order to broaden the familiarity and popularity of SUBWAY® restaurants in China. Due to high collectivistic cultural dimension ranking of China customers are relatively loyal to the brand meaning if one respected member of the group introduces SUBWAY® products to others they tend to follow his/her behavior and stay persistent in it. Great way to promote local SUBWAY® restaurants is to establish a cross promotion with a nearby business that people trust.

 In order to gain new customers, only advertising and promotions as short term luring tools ,is not enough and to maintain the newcomers, SUBWAY® needs to widen its localized product offer also because 74% of all Chinese repliers claimed to buy localized meals/menus more or less often. Besides adapting its offer and serving more localized COPs SUBWAY® must make the ordering procedure easy and clear for new customers and make them used to eat with their bare hands that is in contrast to Chinese traditions and customs. The fact that 33% of respondents said that localized meals are not an important factor when eating at SUBWAY®, is because of the sample composition was mainly of young Chinese people but if SUBWAY wants to reach the full potential of the market it open up also for middle generation with higher income. SUBWAY® is in China considered more of an up-scale restaurant than just regular fast food. Convenience as co-number 1 factor suggesting that SUBWAY® restaurants need to always be located near colleges, universities, offices, dense residential area and factories near or inside of shopping centers.

 **France** had the highest percentage of brand awareness results among countries (with an exception of USA). French and American cultures are also the most similar which gives a reasonable explanation for the first the percentage of brand awareness.

In contrast, from the research it is obvious that French are the least regular consumers of SUBWAY®. To change this SUBWAY® in France ought to stress the similarity of cultures and its close resemblance to French cuisine serving banquettes with almost every meal. The promotion campaign of local stores consisting of:

* Distribution of flyers within a walking distance of the restaurant to passing pedestrians,
* Placement of a highly visible car sign in different locations within a one kilometer distance of the store,
* Placement of banners in the front of the store to increase visibility and within the store,
* Establishment of a cross promotion with a nearby business.

must make it clear French, passionate eaters, are offered only the highest quality food and customer service by SUBWAY®. Since SUBWAY® does not offer many French-way localized meals/menu only few customers are not given the choice of ordering such a meal/menu. SUBWAY® has to introduce more COPs to its offer and present it to the public.

 **Slovak** marketas a new market for SUBWAY® has not gotten enough time to spread the SUBWAY® message around and it is still only planning only launching a a major advertising campaign. This marketing research is therefore very fitting for SUBWAY® marketing purposes in Slovakia.

 In Slovakia, most of the SUBWAY® customers consider SUBWAY® sandwiches or salads more like a snack food than a main therefore most of visitors come order meals between lunch and dinner as “olovrant” or later after dinner. course (Nambuge,D., 22 March, 2011)

 Solution is possible to be found in the Power Distance dimension, that implies that the brand in the market with the highest market share possess the status quo, the “proper place” of power brand. Being big automatically provides trust, this trust builds a brand loyalty and for any newcomers to the market it is very difficult to gain market share. SUBWAY® must overcome the position of the newcomer by maintain its high standard of all Brand Framework pillars, and according to the research results, provide a great and most importantly fast customer service to eliminate the waiting time for food preparation. As it has been in the market only since 2009 a great selection of 3 new upcoming stores locations must be done. For example, inside of shopping malls, on the pedestrian zone area or very close to business offices or university campuses.

 At the end I would like to recommend SUBW SUBWAY® AY and its international marketing division that realization of marketing researches is vital for satisfying SUBWAY®’s customers who demand high food and service quality across USA, China, France and Slovakia.

**Conclusion**

 Fast Food Restaurant Industry has turned into one of the biggest segments of the food industry. With millions of all different types of meals served every day all the fast food chains of restaurants are competing for customers’ dollars, yuans or euros all around the world.

 SUBWAY® with its biggest number of restaurants in the world it is one of the key players in over 90 markets and still looking to expand even further. All the success comes from the core framework composed of offering fresh, healthy yet still very delicious variety of products and exceptional customer services.

 However successful SUBWAY® might be at the moment the top management and marketing divisions need to be open to new innovations and maintain the elements that paved its path towards a very strong global expansion.

 By out research we were determined to meet the aims that we outlined in the beginning of our work. The Main aim of the bachelor thesis was to analyze the intercultural aspects of perception of SUBWAY® restaurants with the emphasis on the customers’ opinion on SUBWAY® restaurants in USA, China, France and Slovakia. The partial aims were defined as follows: 1) Define the basis of each country’s cultural background, eating habits together with defining the current SUBWAY® position in the market, 2) Analyze customer perception of SUBWAY® in USA, China, France and Slovakia, 3) Formation of conclusion and recommendations for SUBWAY®.

 Bachelor thesis has complied with all the defined aims. In order to fulfill all the aims of the work marketing research was conducted. The results of research show that American consumers are most familiar with SUBWAY® restaurants and are most satisfied customers with SUBWAY®’s customer services among all of the asked nationalities. Chinese are buying the localized meals/menus most out of all nationalities. On the other hand French respondents are the worst localized meals/menus buyers and Slovak reoliers tend to be the least frequent SUBWAY® visitors. Good news for SUBWAY® is that all four groups of respondents declared Food quality the most important factor when visiting SUBWAY® restaurant. Localized meals/menus placed as the least important factor when visiting SUBWAY® suggesting that the localization of SUBWAY® does not have to be that strong mainly in USA and France.

 We hope the undertaken marketing research provides valuable information on the examined topic and will be helpful in the subject of intercultural aspects of customer perception analyzes.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questioner

Appendix A: Questioner

Hallo,

 My name is Gabriel Blchac and I am a student of the Slovak Agricultural University in Nitra, Slovakia. I am conducting a questionnaire on **SUBWAY**® restaurants and how this franchise chain offers different meals/menus in different countries across the world. This questionnaire forms the practical part of my Bachelor thesis which is on the subject of Inter-cultural marketing and consumer behavior.

The questioner is anonymous. The personal data will be solely used for my research and will not be provided to third party.

 Thank you very much for helping to make my Bachelor thesis more accurate. I appreciate it.

Gabrile Blchac

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1. Gender \*  (Male/Female)
2. Age \*for example: 21
3. Nationality \*      (US/Chinese/French/Slovak)
4. Occupation \*
*  employed in private sector
*  employed in public sector
*  self-employed
*  unempoloyed
*  student
1. Are you familiar with SUBWAY® restaurants ? \*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  1 |  2 |  |  |
| Very familiar with |   |  |  | familiar with |

1. How often do you visit  SUBWAY® restaurants? \*
*  12+ visits/month
*  3-11 visits/month
*  0-3 visits/month
1. Have you noticed that  SUBWAY®  restaurants are focusing on local customers by offering localized meals/menus ? \*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 |  |
| I strongly agree |  |  |  | I disagree |

1. Do you buy such a localized meals/menus ? \*   

No, never buy them

Yes, I buy them sometimes

Yes, I often buy them

Yes, I always buy them

1. How would you rate the customer services at your local SUBW  SUBWAY® AY restaurant ? \*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| very good |  |  |  |  |  | very poor |

1. How was your last visit at  SUBWAY®  restaurant? \*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| very satisfying |  |  |  |  |  | very disappointing |

1. What factors do you consider important when visiting  SUBWAY®  restaurants? \*

|  |  | Very Important | Important | Not Important |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Product assortment |  |  |  |  |  |
| Price |  |  |  |  |  |
| Food Quality |  |  |  |  |  |
| Discounts/Special offers |  |  |  |  |  |
| Nutrition |  |  |  |  |  |
| Waiting time |  |  |  |  |  |
| Distance to local  SUBWAY®  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Service |  |  |  |  |  |
| Convenience |  |  |  |  |  |
| Locally oriented meals/menus |  |  |  |  |  |