

# Book review

*“Sociopolitical Aspects of International Marketing”*, by Erdener Kaynak (editor). New York: The Haworth Press, 1991. 394 pages, hardback. \$89.95, ISBN 0-86656-951-0.

The title of the book (and its price!) raises the readers' expectations and enthusiasm. The sociopolitical aspects of international marketing is a very important and interesting topic. However, the title is more restricted than the contents, which include a broad variety of international marketing applications and topics. Focal area interests are variously served by the authors. The focus of the book and the reason for putting the chapters together do not seem to be very clear. Although one does not expect smooth cohesion in edited books, this one in particular would have benefitted from improved linkage and integration.

On a different dimension, the reader who might want to know who works in the area sees a nice page devoted to the prolific Kaynak as editor, but is surprised by the lack of information (even their affiliations) about the chapter authors.

The book consists of five parts starting with the editor's introduction. The second part, “Macro International Marketing Issues”, includes an essay on trade barriers and studies on joint venture relationships and export market entry problems. The third part is titled “Sociopolitical International Marketing Issues”. It provides studies on managerial learning and the effect of social

linkages in product perception, as well as country essays on the sociopolitical processes in Egypt, political and legal changes related to foreign participation in Poland, and the political environment in Grenada. The fourth part, “International Marketing Strategies”, contains three essays on distribution channels in Nova Scotia, Nigeria, and Romania, respectively, and one on pricing. “Special International Marketing Topics” is the final part, which treats a broad range of topics from ethics to family decision making to tourism. Cohesion within and among these parts would have been improved if a few integrative pages introduced each part.

The editor's introduction is titled “Environmental Issues in International Marketing: Integrative Statement”. Kaynak suggests that a pattern of marketing practice emerges under the influence of environmental factors, the most significant of which are social and political. He provides a previously published figure showing the interaction between the environment and the marketing systems. In a section titled “Marketing Systems in Foreign Markets” he lists separate summaries of the chapters to follow. This chapter alerts the reader to the eclectic topical coverage of the book.

In the second part, “Macro International Marketing Issues”, Duffy provides a broad discussion of trade barriers and protectionism, referring to Pacific Asia. She argues for lifting trade barriers, mostly by cooperative ventures and cultural understanding. Seringhaus reports a study about the problems Canadian exporters face in entering new markets. He suggests that experience in other markets may not be applicable—each new entry requires being thorough in preparation and implementation. Hyder and Ghauri's chapter provides one of the most relevant

and elaborate discussion of sociopolitics in the book. They consider technology transfer through joint ventures as a historical process, and present a longitudinal case study of Swedish and Indian partners. They examine the stages the partners go through, exercise of control, and the emergence and resolution of conflict, based on a model which consists of partners' expectations, resource exchange, control, cooperation/conflict, and performance. Although the conceptualization could be more highly developed, this is an interesting study with practical implications.

The "Sociopolitical International Marketing Issues" part starts with another noteworthy chapter. Vink raises a very important issue—action—and argues that traditional marketing theory does not explain how to fill in the specifics to make things work, and is not implementation oriented. He examines managerial learning in Philips Company during mid 1960s through early 1980s. This exposé of the sociocultural development of international management interactions points to the role of information, culture, and power in managerial responsiveness. A better developed link to marketing would have made this interesting chapter more relevant for the book.

Mahmoud and Rice discuss three frameworks ("coalition cycle", "bargaining power", and "political risk forecasting") in the context of Egypt's economic liberalization during the 1970s and early 1980s. They suggest that these frameworks provide a systematic basis for evaluating foreign environments. At a more micro level, Renwick and Renwick report a study on Caribbean importers' perceptions of the attributes of foreign products. Even after purchasing experience with a country, the perceived quality of the products from that country were higher if social linkages (friendships) existed with nationals of that country.

The next two chapters are broad country studies. Lis and Sterniczuk present the

changes in legal regulations regarding foreign participation, and the difficulty of bringing in market elements into the communist economy of Poland of the late 1970s and 1980s. Mitchell evaluates the importance of the political element in Grenada's marketing during 1979–1986, before and after the US intervention. He suggests that the business environment of developing countries includes many contradictory and co-existing forces without any discernible pattern. This conclusion is critical because it is contrary to the orientation of international organizations and policy makers, who usually consider broad and generalized patterns instead of such specific forces.

The fourth part, "International Marketing Strategies", starts with Kaynak and Rice's application of the Political Economy framework to fish distribution channels in Nova Scotia. They provide examples of interactions between polity and economy, and suggest possible future developments in that channel. Fubara's country study describes the grain marketing activities of a state-owned enterprise in the socialist-oriented economy of one of the states of Nigeria. He concludes that unless producers are motivated (with pricing and credits), socialization of grain distribution for local or international markets would be short-lived and self-defeating. Martenson provides an interesting and focused exposé of the environment–pricing relationship. She examines the pricing decisions of IKEA, which pursues a global cost leadership strategy. The parent company, competition, product, distribution channels, customers, and government are discussed as they relate to IKEA's globally low prices and price differences in local markets. Naor provides another country study: the development of distribution in Romania during the late 1970s and 1980s. He suggests that although rapid structural changes in distribution may effectively and efficiently be implemented with centralized planning, overbu-

reaucratization and diseconomies of scale accompany the process. And, “scientifically determined” consumer needs being different than actual needs, the latter are left unsatisfied.

The final part titled “Special International Marketing Topics” covers broad ground. Onah provides an examination of the ethical issues and social responsibilities of marketing with illustrations from Nigeria. He argues that producers and consumers should cooperate to protect the interests of each group and of the society, with or without governmental intervention. Yau and Sin report an investigation of husband–wife influence at different stages of the purchasing decision process, of the similarity of the spouses’ perceptions, and the differences between working and non-working wives in Hong Kong. This managerially useful piece would have been more interesting from an international sociopolitics perspective if the results were compared or related to those of other cultures. In the most interesting chapter of this part, Leibold suggests a strategic stakeholder approach to the marketing of tourism and recreation facilities, based upon the Political Economy paradigm. Referring in particular to South Africa, he argues for the optimum reconciliation of the aims, interests and actions of all tourism stakeholders of a local community. A more elaborate examination of this important issue, which is relevant not only for tourism but for implementation in marketing in general, would have increased the contribution of this chapter.

The last two chapters are about tourism. Weber and Telisman-Kosuta report an application-oriented segmentation and attitude study conducted among foreign tourists in Yugoslavia. Yücelt and Isley’s examination of the demand (1958–1985 time series) for travel to Turkey indicates that neither the political disruption nor the stated policy to develop tourism has altered tourists’ demand.

Chapters vary in their quality and innovativeness. Whether one or another is of particular interest will depend on the reader. The ones I found particularly intriguing are by Vink, Leibold, and Hyder and Ghauri. Vink and Leibold draw attention to culture, power, and stakeholder issues, which are crucial in marketing implementation. Action orientation in marketing, which is critical to make things work, is a neglected topic. Hyder and Ghauri’s investigation of the sociopolitics of a joint venture relationship is both well-focused and elaborated, and their longitudinal case study approach is useful. Some of the other chapters also use historical or case analysis approaches, which is to be commended. Such approaches (especially when accompanied with more developed conceptualizations, depth, focus and rigour) can enhance the much-needed sensitivity to the cultural and temporal context in International Marketing, and may lead to theory development.

I also found reading the essays on the now outdated central planning issues in Pacific Asia, Poland, Grenada, Nigeria, and Romania interesting from a reflective and historical perspective. These essays may make the reader realize how fallible accepted views can be, how quickly and unexpectedly things change, and the need for retrospective thinking and historical analysis. This realization also raises caution against too one-sided evaluations at any time, for example, against the current single-minded marketization/privatization arguments.

One of the weaker aspects of the book is with respect to what it excludes. A more balanced marketing and *socio*politics scope, rather than a distribution and government policy emphasis, would be more consistent with the title. Furthermore, it neglects perhaps one area of emerging interest: alternative perspectives in marketing (Dholakia and Arndt, 1985; Firat et al., 1987; Sherry, 1989). “Marketing is both an applied managerial

technology and a social process, ... [but] social process aspects ... are largely neglected" (Firat et al., 1987, p. 382).

The audience of the book can be scholars, economists, business people and policy makers concerned with international marketing. Selective reading, depending on interest will be instructive. Motivated browsers will discover a number of points of departure for more systematic investigation of the nature of sociopolitical aspects.

Overall, this book is to be commended for pointing to the importance of, and encouraging inquiry into, the sociopolitical frame. It provides a contribution to a seldom-treated aspect of international marketing. The geographical and sector coverage of the chapters is noteworthy. The book is at its best in its treatment of distribution and the influence of political/legal factors. However, it omits some relevant topics, and it consists of a

selection of broad topics rather than an integrated treatment of the sociopolitical frame. The contents are suggestive of the breadth of scope and depth of detail required of scholarship in international marketing in general, if the discipline is to achieve maturity.

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## References

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