Comparative Student Life Style Analysis of a Private University

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Abstract

A consumer lifestyles study was conducted at a private university in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Some activities, interest and opinions (AIO) and Values, Attitudes, and Lifestyle (VALS) statements were obtained from marketing literature, and Stanford Research Institute Consulting Business Intelligence Research Programs (SRIC-BI) were used to identify lifestyle indicators of target groups.
Key words: Lifestyle, VALS, Kyrgyzstan, higher education

1. Introduction

The buying behaviour of the consumer is a quite complex process. This complex process forces the consumer to develop a style. This style explains the attitudes of the consumer's behaviours on buying decisions. The values, which are one of the most important sources leading the behaviours of the individual in all life periods and dimensions, shape his daily life. Furthermore, these values establish the decision-making process of the consumer. Because of these properties, values and life styles are stated as important variables which affect consumer behaviour (Ünal & Erciş, 2006).

Psychographics is the science of using psychology and demographics to better understand consumers (Kotler, 2003). It groups customers based on their attitudes, values and lifestyle. The latter may be defined as the consumer behaviour which the target group displays, and the values and attitudes, which lead to this particular behaviour (Keegan & Schlegenmilch, 2001).

Lifestyle is people's decisions about how to live their daily lives, including family, job, social, and consumer activities (Boone & Kurtz, 1998). As life styles offer a more comprehensive view of behaviour and the motivations that underlie many of the purchases made by consumers, they are regarded as advantageous for market segmentation.

This is particularly so when comparing them to demographic bases for segmentation, which is still the most commonly applied method (Todd et al).

Generally speaking, VALS is one of the most popular tools used in life style studies. VALS method was developed by SRIC-BI. SRIC-BI conducted a survey of over 1600 randomly selected American consumers in 1983. More than 800 questions of survey about attitudes, spending, earnings, media habits, product consumption, and activities were asked. Based on the results of the survey, a typology of American consumers, called VALS, was created. The VALS method provides a typology of three basic categories of consumers' values and lifestyles, with nine defined types (Mitchell 1983).

Consequently, SRIC-BI published a second version called VALS II. It divides Americans into eight segments on the basis of their self-identity orientations and their wealth (Kwon et al, 1999).

2. Study Objective

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In this cross national/cultural study, lifestyles of local students and international students were identified and compared. Nearly one hundred thousand, %10 of city population, university students are there in the city. Also totally in Kyrgyzstan, there are 200.000 university students and 20.000 of them are international students (Osmanaliev, 2006). This number forces us to focus on this market. Identifying and comparing these consumer groups would help marketing people to create appropriate marketing strategies. This study aims to make a contribution as a first step for them.

3. Methodology

Bishkek is the capital city of Kyrgyzstan, with a population of one million. Despite this population number, there are more than thirty higher education institutes, and also, living costs are cheap in the city. This makes city a "free education market." The current situation attracts international students to study in Bishkek. Additionally, as a result of the ex-USSR system, there is a diversity of nationalities in the city that makes the student demographics of universities like a rainbow. This multinational environment forms a field study area for comparing life styles of different nations and cultures. In this study, citizens of Republic of Kyrgyzstan are referred to as "local students." All other students are referred as "international students".

The data for this study was collected at a private university in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, International Atatürk Alatoo University (IAAU) during December of 2006. It has a total population of 886, with 12%, international students from neighbour countries like China, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and other countries like Russian Federation, Turkey, Nigeria, etc (IAAU web page, Sagbansua and Keles 2006). Table 8.1 represents the student profile of International Ataturk Alatoo University

The survey consisted of two sections. The first section was based on Erdener Kaynak's survey. He conducted this survey for cross national/cultural life style analyses sucessfully with American, Canadian (2004), Kyrgyz and Azeri consumers (2001). So that, this survey is a suitable tool for analysing cross national/cultural lifestyles of consumers like IAAU students. Of course, some modifications were done. For example, the original survey had some questions directed to housewives. But nearly all students of IAAU are single. Instead of those questions, some AIO and VALS statements were obtained from marketing literature, and SRIC-BI were used to identify life-style indicators of IAAU students (Kwon et al 1999, Kaynak and Kara 2001, Harcar et al 2004, SRIC-BI 2006). The question regarding credit cards was omitted, because credit cards were not in service at that time, although now there are more than thirty thousand credit card users in Kyrgystan.

The second section of the survey consists of questions for identifying demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

Totally, there are 56 AIO and VALS statements for identifying life styles, and 5 questions for identifying demographic and socio-economic characteristics in the survey.

A five-point Likert scale was used, "1" being "strongly disagree" and "5" being "strongly agree."

Previously, the survey was used in Kyrgyzstan successfully, so that a pre-test was not made.

The data used for this research was collected through class visits. Randomly, some of the classes were visited; surveys distributed to students, and in approximately in twenty minutes they gave surveys back. 250 surveys were distributed, yet due to incompleteness, only 228 usable

questionnaires were obtained. Table 8.2 shows demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the students responding to the survey.

4. RESULTS

To understand the differences and similarities between local and international students' purchasing and consumption related behaviours, means on respondents' reactions to survey questions were compared. Table 8.3 shows that there are statistical differences between local and international students' lifestyles. The major differences between the two groups of students are shown below.

Local students think that they will be in a better economic condition in the future. In this area, the greatest variance between local and international students occurs. But anyway both students groups are "Economically Conscious". They have similar levels. Perhaps this is the result of being student.

Local students have a greater willingness to spend a year in a foreign country. Surprisingly, they also define themselves as homebodies. Perhaps they want to go abroad, but temporarily. They want to come home again. Paradoxically, international students have a lower level of willingness to go abroad. They are already abroad. They also don't define themselves as homebodies. Perhaps they miss their homes.

Local students have more optimistic opinions than their foreign counterparts. But credit cards are somewhat unfamiliar local students. It is a new payment tool for the country. Also, international students don't like to pay cash everything they buy. Perhaps they have some habits like credit cards or credit sales in their home countries.

In comparing all lifestyle types, local students got higher points except for being "fashion oriented". International students placed more importance on the latest hairstyles and dressing smartly.

Local students gave importance to family than the international students. Additionally, they give more importance to house cleaning. Both of the groups have similar grades for seeing their life as a definite routine. And both students groups gave equal importance to the advice of their friends regarding which brand to buy.

Monthly spending levels of local students are approximately 2500 KG Som (65.8 US $) and international students spend more than 3438 KG Som (90.5 US $). International students are spending 28% more than their counterparts.

5. Conclusions And Implications

Consumer lifestyle analysis provides a greater understanding of consumers' buying and consumption behaviors. Also, in a university, the students (consumers) must be satisfied. Nearly one hundred thousand, 10% of cities population, are university students. iIn Kyrgyzstan, there are 200.000 university students, and 20.000 of them are international students (Osmanaliev, 2006). This number forces to focus on this market. Identifying and comparing these consumer groups would help marketing people to create appropriate marketing strategies. In addition, multinational environments are hard places to manage. These studies can be used to identify common points among local and international students and also differentiate points. This study may be a helpful tool for creaying harmony at the university.

6. Future Research Avenues

The data presented here are static and limited in nature. There are many universities with international students in Bishkek. So wider research may be useful in better identifying those international students' lifestyles. By these kinds of studies, the answer to the question of "is there any difference between life styles of local students with different ethnic identities or among Kyrgyz people?" can be found.

Additionally, by these studies, the effects of different education systems on students can be understood if comparative studies with the students of Kyrgyz Turkish Manas University (to see the effects of private and state educational systems on students' lifestyles) or with the students of American University of Central Asia, Kyrgyz Russian Slavic University, East University (to see the effects of Turkish, American, Russian and Arabic educational systems on students' lifestyles) or with the students of International University of Kyrgyzstan or Chui University (to see the effects of local and foreign private educational systems on students' lif styles) will be done.

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8. Appendixes

TABLE 8.1 STUDENT PROFILE OF IAAU

	Frequency	Percent
Local Students		
Male	460	59
Female	313	41
Total	**773**	**87.24**
International students		
Male	81	72
Female	32	28
Total	**113**	**12.76**
Grand Total	**886**	**100.00**

TABLE 8.2 DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

	Local Students	Local Students	International Students	International Students	Total	Total
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender						
Male	97	58.78	55	87.30	152	66.67
Female	68	41.22	8	12.70	76	33.33
Monthly Spending						
<1000 Som	36	21.81	5	7.94	41	17.98
1000-2000 Som	56	33.94	13	20.63	69	30.26
2001-3000 Som	36	21.81	12	19.05	48	21.05
3001-4000 Som	24	14.55	17	26.98	41	17.98
>4001 Som	13	7.89	16	25.40	29	12.72
Age						
<19	35	21.21	18	28.57	53	23.25
19	48	29.09	16	25.40	64	28.07
20	55	33.33	11	17.46	66	28.95
21	18	10.91	8	12.70	26	11.40
22+>	9	5.45	10	15.87	19	8.33
Total	165	72.37	63	27.63	228	100.00
Sample Size Calculations (CRS, 2006)						
Population	886	**Confidence Level**		95%		
Sample Size	228	**Confidence Interval**		4.89		

TABLE 8.3 STUDENT TYPES AT IAAU

LIFE STYLES	LOCAL	FOREIGN
Outgoing	4.75	4.22
Family Oriented	4.03	3.80
Economically Conscious	3.46	3.43
Independent	3.60	3.36
Socially Conscious	3.40	3.28
Health Conscious and Leading Active Daily Life	3.37	3.20
Home Oriented	3.34	3.01
Fashion Oriented	3.11	3.16

TABLE 8.4

STUDENT TYPES DESCRIPTIONS

Fashion Oriented	I usually have one or more outfits that are of the very latest style	**Independent**	I think I have more self-confidence than most people
	I must admit that I like to show off		I am more independent than most people
	An important part of my life and activities is dressing smartly		I think I have a lot of personal ability
	I often try the latest hairdo styles when they change		I like to be considered a leader
	I like parties where there is lots of music and talk		My friends or neighbors often come to me for advice
	I will probably have more money to spend next year than I have now		I sometimes influence what my friends buy
Outgoing	Five years from now the family income will probably be a lot higher	**Health Conscious and Leading Active Daily Life**	I would rather go to a sporting event than a dance
	I would like to take a trip around the world		People come to me more often than I go to them for information about brands
	I'd like to spend a year in a foreign country		I spend a lot of time talking with my friends about products and brands.
Socially Conscious	I like being in charge of a group		Things just don't taste right if they come out of a can
	I do volunteer work for a hospital or service organization on a fairly regular basis		During the warm weather I drink low calorie soft drinks several times a week
	I like to work on community projects		I buy more low calorie foods than the average housewife
	I have personally worked in a political campaign or for a candidate or an issue		I have used diet foods at least one meal a day
	I often seek out the advice of my friends regarding which brand to buy		I often try new stores before my friends and neighbors do
	I enjoy most forms of homework		I participate in sports activities regularly
	I like to make things with my hands.		I like to watch or listen to sport activities
	I often make my own or my children's clothes		I like to pay cash for everything I buy

	You can save a lot of money by making your own clothes	**Home Oriented**	I would rather spend a quiet evening at home than go out to a party
	I would like to know how to sew like an expert		I am a homebody
	It is good to have credit cards		I like household chores
Family Oriented	Family members should stand by one another though life's ups and downs		I do not find cleaning my house an unpleasant task
	Family love makes a person feel appreciated and treasured		My idea of housekeeping is not "once over lightly"
	One should honour one's parents and grandparents		I do not depend on canned food
	I listen to the advices of my elders		I could get along without canned foods
	I don't like to see children's toys lying around	**Economically Conscious**	I shop for specials
	I usually keep my house very neat and clean		I find myself checking the prices in the grocery store even for small items
	I am uncomfortable when my house is not completely clean		I usually watch the advertisements for announcements of sales
	Our days seem to follow a definite routine such as eating meals at a regular time		