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International segmentation and product positioning

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Title: **INTERNATIONAL SEGMENTATION AND PRODUCT POSITIONING**

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INTERNATIONAL SEGMENTATION AND PRODUCT POSITIONING

World markets are changing and therefore the concept of international marketing in general and of markets across borders in particular must be redefined.

Target groups cannot only be specified in terms of regional or national characteristics. Segmentation of markets across borders must be done based on similarities in behavior, in product uses or in values.

Market segmentation is the division of a market in homogeneous subgroups (segments) with different patterns of behavior.

Usually segmentation approaches are based on geographic, demographic and psychographic variables. The base for traditional comparisons of persons' typologies, has mainly been based on the VALS and Rokeach values.

The approach presented in this paper is a domain-specific segmentation are.

A domain can be described as an area of behavior aimed at the same goal, f.e. vacation or cooking.

Values and attitudes with regard to the behavioral domain give a better explanation of specific behavior than general personal values or background variables.(e.g. Verhallen, van Onbenoord, Baszilay 1989 and van Raay and Verhallen 1990)

The goal of this paper is to define the content, methodology and marketing applications of international segmentation and product positioning.

First the 'domain' area of the present research is defined,' cooking behavior', and more specifically,'food preparation and eating habits' in European countries.

The second aspect is related to the segmentation methodology which can be subdivided in the following aspects:

- a. Definition and analysis of segments within the country.
- b. Comparisson of the segments found across countries.
- c. Discussion of methodological problems involved such as language and meaning barriers, comparison methods and their implications.

The last aspect concerns the marketing decision that must be made based on the similarities and/or differences found, whether strategies related to product development and communication can be standarised or be different for the segments within and between countries.

Method:

An international research studying cooking behavior, meal preparation and eating habits, was carried out in four European countries: Italy, Greece, France and Belgium.

The study comprises 2 phases:

- a. A qualitative phase
- b. A quantitative phase.

Ad a. Data were collected by observing subjects during cooking and meal preparation using video cameras.

A camara team observed in each country during a couple of days the above mentioned 'kitchen' related behavior. The samples were 30 à 60 families per country.

Ad b. A sample of 600 families per country, representative for the national population took part in the study. During a period of 8 days special developed diaries

about food preparation habits were completed.

Additionally four questionnaires were completed. The questions refer to the next aspects:

- brand usage per application
- food buying behavior
- personal value questions
- demographics
- brand evaluations

These data-bases will be used for domain-specific segment construction within each country. The present paper focuses on segment development and cross-national segment comparisons, discussing methodological problems involved. Next to it, evaluations of different segments about existing products across applications will be analysed. Finally implications for new product development and international branding and advertising will be discussed.