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INTERNATIONALIZATION OF LARGE RETAILERS AND CROSS-CULTURAL DETERMINANTS – THE SINGULAR TRAJECTORY OF CARREFOUR IN ROMANIA

François CASSIERE *
Gilles PACHÉ **

This article discusses the large retailers' internationalization strategy. It deals more particularly with the way in which international expansion proceeds on the level of operations management and the application of strategies used on the domestic market: does the retailer choose a universalistic perspective, thanks to the export of a well-managed retail format (the superstore format, the supermarket format), or does it opt for an adjustment to the cultural conditions of the target country, and this, even in the operational dimensions of management? To answer this question and to take part in the current debates about the stakes of international marketing, a case study was conducted on the Carrefour Group in Romania, while using a structural analysis of narrative. The research associates, for the first time, three theoretical frameworks: the internationalization of the retailer, the management of relationships in the marketing channel and the management of the cross-cultural variable. The authors bring to light a three-stage managerial cycle around a double-cultural filtration phenomenon which questions the usually used dichotomous approach to analyze the internationalization of the large retailer: universalism vs. culturalism.

Key Words:

Carrefour Group,
cultural filtration,
internationalization,
retailing industry,
Romania,
structural analysis
of narrative.

JEL Classification: **M12, M16, M31.**

1. Introduction

For many years, French large retailers have been careful in their development by limiting the expansion of their stores to the national borders. Entering the Belgian, Spanish or Portuguese markets was regarded as a large-scale internationalization process, which had to be well prepared, and besides considered to be particularly risky according to economic, political and social uncertainties. This ethnocentric vision, focused on the domestic market, has been since challenged. French large retailers are widely settled in four geographical areas in the world: Mediterranean Europe, South America, Central Europe and Asia. In 2009, the sales turnover of Carrefour in France was only 43 percent, against 35.5 percent in Europe (outside France), 14 percent in America and 7.5

percent in Asia. Casino Group is settled in Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, Uruguay, the Netherlands, Thailand, Vietnam, Mauritius and Madagascar, where it carries out a third of its sales turnover. Internationalization is thus an undeniable reality, which raises many questions in terms of operations management and marketing strategy.

To be able to manage in an effective way its process of development on the domestic market, the large retailer is naturally driven to set up its business strategy which is declined at several levels: marketing management, purchasing management, logistical management and human resources management. The coherence between these various levels of management is essential to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage. For example, the widening of the product assortment in the store forces

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the large retailer to reorganize logistical operations considering a more important division of the deliveries. Also, the standardization of the modes of consumption will doubtless drive to a high level of centralization of the suppliers' selection procedures, and, at the same time, drive to set up global marketing strategies rather than local ones. In brief, any large retailer is equipped step by step with material and human means to conquer a territory in the best conditions. As time goes by, it benefits from an organizational learning in which formalization is one of the keys of its success on the domestic market.

The aim of this article is to examine the influence of the values, tools and techniques developed on the domestic market by a large retailer on its singular mode of international expansion. In other words, it is question of knowing if the management procedures and the strategies used on the domestic market have universalistic objectives, for example thanks to the export of a well-managed retail format (the superstore format, the supermarket format), or if, on the contrary, a necessary adjustment to the cultural conditions, including in the most operational dimensions of management, is taken into account. To deal with this set of themes, a field study was conducted in Romania on the case of the Carrefour Group, whose internationalization has become a major axis of its growth strategy over the past twenty years (Kim, 2009). We thus wish to contribute to the debate on the stakes of international marketing in the context of the retailing industry by underlining how current trends consolidate certain former results but also simply a more nuanced vision of the models developed until now.

2. LARGE RETAILER INTERNATIONALIZATION: MANAGERIAL DILEMMA AND STRATEGIC CHOICES

A modern large retailer is nowadays forced to move away from its national market to find sources of development, especially when its market has become mature. The growth of sales turnover requires a more or less thorough internationalization in countries which are at first sight hostile and in which it does not necessarily possess the same key factors of success it deals with on its domestic market (Porter, 1980, 1985). The large retailer has to face an uneasy dilemma. On one hand, it concerns the choice of the internationalization form to be retained, and on the other hand, the most adapted approach to the market it needs to achieve its goals. This last point is essential because the retailing industry has a high level of idiosyncrasy related to cultural diversities which one finds in various countries. The research of Meskeh (2009) shows for example how the superstore format had been very adaptive when it was established in Muslim countries, both as regards the presentation of the assortment and the management of the promotional operations and opening hours.

2.1. Strategy and Internationalization Modes

If the "*raison d'être*" of internationalization of larger retailers is easy to understand with the reading of academic work which is devoted to the question, namely research of new layers of profitability (Dawson, 2001; Hanf & Dautzenberg, 2009), better profitability of the assets (Burt, 1993; Doherty, 2000) or the creation of value for the shareholders (Filsler, 2004), the question of "how?" remains often difficult to solve. The major constraint for the "retail giants" such as Wal-Mart, Carrefour, Tesco or Metro, is to make their investments profitable as soon as possible because if there exists a kind of "reward" for the first one who enters the market, the price of entry is sometimes rather heavy, in particular due to variable degree of maturity in the targeted market. The speed of execution of the strategic operation reveals a critical dimension, and a deployment delayed only for a few months versus a competitor can have dramatic effects on the conquest of a market.

If one analyzes the organizational form used by the large retailer, this form answers requirements of control, speed of installation and endogenous or exogenous methods of growth (Picot-Coupey, 2006; Pederzoli, 2008), or of store development facilities (Burt, 1993; Picot-Coupey & Cliquet, 2004). It is indeed a question of developing on the basis of managerial principle tested on the domestic market of origin (Lehmann-Ortega & Schoettl, 2004), but also of finding the ideal formula, which makes it possible to duplicate certain procedures of management, as soon as possible and with lower costs (Anderson & Gatignon, 1986). Little academic works connecting the motivations and the procedures retained by the large retailer has been carried out, except for those of Mayrhofer (2004) and Picot-Coupey (2006). The reasons are twofold: on one hand, because of the idiosyncrasy of the retailing industry, on the other hand, because of the difficulty of transposing the existing models without change.

The large retailer decides the question of its retail format to establish: whether it wishes to be based on a strong concept of stores already developed on the domestic market (Salmon & Tordjman, 1989), or does it prefer to choose an adaptation to local particularisms (Prime, 2001)? In addition, the large retailer will have to choose between organizational forms allowing a maximum of control of activity or, on the contrary, less control (Macquin, 1998), but also the organizational forms which offer a possibility of faster development abroad, for example thanks to licensing, franchising or international joint-venture (Quinn & Alexander, 2002; Picot-Coupey & Cliquet, 2004; Meschi & Riccio, 2008). Finally, internationalization has put stress on the question of the relevance of a universalistic development through the replication (or not) of a powerful retail format, and the synergies, which are associated with it (Lehmann-Ortega & Schoettl, 2004). In all cases, the selected strategy will condition more or less the modes of management.

It is vital that the large retailer manages to stay sustainably on its new market to develop not only its strategy there, but to benefit from its key factors of success. Mayrhofer (2009) explains the internationalization of the large retailer according to a four stage cycle: saturation of the national market, opening of markets, homogenization of markets and increase of competition. This "forced march" towards the internationalization puts the question of the best managerial model to be exported. Ghemawat (2007) retains three useful formulas (called the AAA triangle): *adaptation* (taken into account by the local particularities, decentralization, flexibility and partnerships), *aggregation* (realization of economies of scale by standardization, homogeneity of the strategy) and *arbitrage* (cost cutting by international specialization). They make it possible to reflect about the configuration, coordination, control, blocking factors of and the strategy of the company according to what is looked for by the top management. Therefore, it is possible to argue in terms of cultural, administrative, geographical or economic distance, to explain, not only the reasons of the internationalization of large retailers (Ghemawat, 2001), but also usable managerial frames.

2.2. Implications for the Management of Marketing Channel

The selected mode of internationalization directly impacts the type of management, which the large retailer will set up. In the behaviorist academic works carried out in the marketing channel, the retailing industry usually offers a binary perception of the relationships exchange: the conflict or cooperation between channel members directly inspired by the transactional versus relational paradigms. The multiplicity of links between channel members, at the same time concerning marketing and logistics plans, illustrates the importance of a reflection based on the forms of governance (Filser, 2002). The governance of the exchange relationships conditions at the same time the mutual adjustment between channel members, but also the way of sharing the value, in particular in reference to power regimes, in reference to Cox's (2001) analysis.

The seminal contribution of French & Raven (1959) clarified certain dimensions of power between coercive and non-coercive sources. Power relationships' impact both on the nature of exchange relationships and on the degree of conflict or cooperation, which emerges among channel members. The retail formats chosen in the framework of internationalization, the temporal requirement of profitability for the shareholders and the cultural distances between actors make this variable that is particularly difficult to manage. The large retailer, often the leader of the marketing channel, can then try to impose its power and to diffuse its values (Lusch & Brown, 1982). How will the local partners, for example the suppliers, react towards the threat of "cultural imperialism" from the large retailer? Despite its legitimacy on its domestic market the large retailer on overseas

markets can risk generating vertical conflicts with disastrous economic consequences, by seeming to set "vassal reactions" with its partners as regard Donada & Nogatchewsky (2008).

For many years, the academic literature has underlined the importance of collaboration between firms and the introduction of a relational climate in order to lead to a mutual satisfaction, a source of performance for the whole marketing channel (Anderson & Narus, 1990; Ganesan, 1994; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In the case of the large retailer having a powerful leadership in the marketing channel, like Wal-Mart or Carrefour for example, the strategic dilemma is the following: does it have to impose a universal standard for its partners, for example on the level of the logistical procedures or merchandising technologies or, on the contrary, must it seek to adapt to each particular context through a completely specific relational stage (Rochette, 2005), from a "mass-customization" concern? This question is central in cross-cultural context insofar as the large retailer's values must be articulated harmoniously or opposed values already present in the host country.

3. INTERCULTURAL PROBLEMS IN THE RETAILING INDUSTRY

Internationalization invariably means the necessity of dealing with a cultural prism among the channel members. It can be a great asset when entering a new market if it is taken into account and well managed. To underestimate it or to ignore it is risk of more or less violent crises between partners. This ambivalence is due to diffuse contours of the cultural variable as well as to the absence of consensus among the authors, because there are nearly 164 definitions of culture (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). The cultural variable influences the strategy of adaptation of the retail format to export.

3.1. National Culture and Organizational Culture

The introduction of a cultural variable into the retailing industry analysis makes approaching a market difficult, particularly because of the semantic halation around this variable. To be clear, it is necessary to differentiate between national culture and organizational culture. Anthropologists see national culture as the result of a multi-level social heritage of standards and values (Hall, 1969; Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2003), like a mental programming (Hofstede, 2001), or like a mechanism allowing for quick reaction to unforeseen situations (Prime, 2001). The variety of the keys of entry associated with the cultural variable make its management delicate when it is confronted with the organizational culture (Trabelsi, 2008; Usunier & Lee, 2009). This organizational culture, built around standards, values and symbols, joins the fundamentals of the national culture (Lemaître, 1984), but in an organizational learning sense. This

means to developing common practices in which the actors will be able to draw the variables allowing a mutual intercultural adjustment (Rabasso & Rabasso, 2007) or the development of a common framework (Meier, 2010) and to avoid conflicts (Lebaron & Pillay, 2006).

3.2. The Cultural Adaptation of Retail Format

The large retailer must learn how to manage a retail format, not only effectively from a marketing point of view to satisfy the final request (Lehmann-Ortega & Schoettl, 2004), but also in performing from a managerial point of view according to the selected organizational culture (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). This means that managing a network of superstores requires the assimilation of organizational procedures and logistical monitoring very different from those necessary to manage a network of convenience stores in which products such as candy, ice creams, lottery tickets, newspapers and magazines, beside a selection of grocery products are sold. The major large retailer's level of expertise in the internationalization process conditions its ability to manage both its adaptability to the target country and its own cultural diversity (Meier, 2010). It joins the questions concerning the nature of the cultural stage carried out by the large French food retailers in Portugal (Crespo de Carvalho & Paché, 2002).

The strategic reflection concerns the articulation between a purely universalist way of thinking and a determinedly culturalist one. Perlmutter & Heenan (1979) suggested four manners to approach an overseas market: *ethnocentrism* (which aims at imposing the culture of origin, at unifying management systems), *polycentrism* (which generates locally adapted decisions to justify their legitimacy in every country), *regiocentrism* (which tries to hesitate between the viability and legitimacy of multinationals at the regional level) and *geocentrism* (which integrates subsidiaries into a global system of decision-making). This demonstrates that the dynamics of internationalization is two-tier and goes through two generic strategies, universalism or culturalism. This duality of the approaches will be analyzed and discussed in a singular context of emergent economy, which wasn't a detailed research field at the moment.

4. METHODOLOGY

The article deals with the way in which the international expansion proceeds, on the level of the operations management and the application of the strategies used on the domestic market: does the large retailer choose a universalistic perspective, thanks to the export of a well-managed selling technique, or does it choose for an adjustment to the cultural conditions of the host country, even in the operational dimensions of management? To answer this question, a case study was conducted on the Carrefour Group in Romania. We will justify, first, the

qualitative protocol chosen, to describe the collecting tools and the results obtained.

4.1. Justification of the Qualitative Protocol

Analyzed mainly in a sequential and isolated way, the large retailer's development, the marketing channel management and the cross-cultural variable have been joined together in a qualitative protocol. We wished to highlight the cross-cultural variable in order to see what its impact was on the channel members in an internationalization frame. If the first two fields, the internationalization and the marketing channel management, were analyzed in a quantitative way, then in a qualitative one in the academic literature thanks to the behaviorists, the intercultural variable was first modeled through a quantitative perspective. The first mixed study dates only from the end of the 1990s (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). The choice of a qualitative method based on a structural analysis of narrative was dictated by the selected topic of analysis: the description of a cross-cultural process upon the entry of a large retailer on an emerging market.

4.2. Sampling and Data Collection

The selected country is Romania, because of its youth as regards modern age distribution in a liberal economy since 1989, and of its statute of emerging nation (Cassière, 2008). The second worldwide largest retailer selected is the Carrefour Group, behind Wal-Mart and the European leader in retailing industry, established in Romania since June 2001. A sample of 33 people (8 women and 25 men) was chosen. It consisted of 11 French and 22 Romanians; all were middle managers, top managers or experts in retailing industry (see Table 1). We used as protocol an embedded case study with the Carrefour Group and its partners in Romania and France. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and by phone calls from May to June 2009, helped by an interview guideline. The total verbatim (341 pages) was analyzed using the software Tropes 7.0, first in only one file, then separately, by the functions occupied by the interviewees.

5. MAIN RESULTS AND MANAGERIAL STAKES

The duality of the culturalist and universalist approaches was analyzed in the Romanian context. The choice of this country to make an exploratory study is not neutral. It is a mosaic of cultures and it followed a very particular "cultural trajectory". Indeed, Romania is a Balkan country which for about forty years was under the yoke of the Eastern European culture (mainly Russian culture), but which remains nevertheless the most Latin country among the ECEC (East and Continental Eastern Countries). It seemed interesting to analyze how a large French retailer managed its entry on the territory, and which managerial and cultural choices it made. After having detailed the

Table 1

The interviewed people: gender, function and company

G	Function in the company	Company and activity	N
M	Supermarkets franchising manager	Carrefour Romania	FR
M	Project manager	Stores and malls developer	FR
M	Consultant and entrepreneur	Consultant	RO
F	Training vice-director	Carrefour Romania	RO
M	Purchasing manager	Carrefour Romania	FR
F	Superstore manager	Carrefour Romania	RO
M	C.E.O.	Foreign distributor in Romania	FR
F	Superstore manager	Carrefour Romania	RO
M	Buyer manager	Carrefour Romania	RO
F	Buyer manager	Carrefour Romania	RO
F	Buyer manager	Carrefour Romania	RO
F	Reporting audit & consolidation manager	Carrefour Romania	RO
F	Customer marketing manager	Carrefour Romania	RO
M	C.E.O.	Cross-docking company	RO
M	Commercial manager	Supplier key account manager	RO
M	C.E.O.	Industrial delicatessen company	RO
M	Logistics manager	Carrefour Romania	RO
M	C.E.O.	Importer and distributor of food	RO
M	Regional C.E.O.	Carrefour Romania	FR
M	Superstore manager	Carrefour Romania	RO
M	C.E.O.	Importer and distributor of organics and natural products	RO
M	C.E.O.	Cattle farm of poultry	RO
M	Quality and training controller	Carrefour Romania	FR
M	Marketing manager	Importer and distributor of deep-frozen food in Romania	RO
M	C.E.O.	Former purchasing manager, non-food department for Carrefour in Romania	FR
F	Assistant commercial manager	Waters, soft drinks and coffees supplier	RO
M	Marketing manager	Supplier of edible oils	RO
M	Project manager	International logistics company	FR
M	Production manager	Chocolate and biscuits producer	RO
M	Marketing manager	Cans of food, delicatessen, transformed meat-based producer	RO
M	Site manager	International logistics company	FR
M	Buyer manager	Carrefour France	FR
M	Purchasing manager	Bonduelle Group	FR

Legend: Gender (G): male (M) or female (F)
Nationality (N): Romanian (RO) or French (FR)

main results, we will indicate a certain number of managerial stakes.

5.1. Main Results

The narrative highlighted that the strategy used by the Carrefour Group could not be definitely classified into one of the two common prisms of analysis: universalism and

culturalism. Rather if it is a mixed contingent approach with several factors: the rising Romanian economy, the innovative concept of the hypermarket (superstore) versus a small and under performing local trade, the ignorance of the business rules and the culture of the modern distribution. In order to optimize its choices the Carrefour Group adopted a “teaching” step towards its partners. It consists in explaining the economic issues of doing

business with hypermarkets, while maintaining a universalistic stage in the development and the management of its stores. The stage is strongly related to the strategy of entry chosen by the Carrefour Group: initially a mixed formula of franchise with Hyparlo, then a bought back with capital from the Carrefour Group. It showed a two-stage strategic approach:

- First, the approach is relational between the large retailer and its local partners, with a flexible and decentralized management mode, as regards Filser's (1985) model. The low number of stores makes it possible to develop a culturalist approach based on a climate of usual trust and a strong involvement among the suppliers, especially in the improvement of their product line and the respect of the logistical requirements.
- During the second period when the Carrefour Group bought back its franchisee, the store network was multiplied by 3.5 in five years. The management ratios became the managerial standards, according to a consolidated model. The company gradually loses the initial "emotional spirit" which prevailed in the former phase. The universalism is binding to the actors internally as well as externally and as it was summarized by one of the interviewees: "Here we are! The steam roller is moving!"

The structural analysis of narrative showed that the cultural approach is very fuzzy for the questioned individuals; they had a lot of difficulties to put words on it. There is confusion between the various aspects of the culture. This is undoubtedly due to the proximity of national and organizational cultures, which overlap. If one refers to the development cycle of the Carrefour Group in Romania, two distinct stages appear: the first one is related to a "human-sized" group in which culturalism is the main way; the second one is related to a multinational group where standards are essential according to a universalistic vision. One can conclude that the organizational culture is stronger than the national culture as the stores of the host country are able to force the local partners to submit to the global project of the large retailer.

We suggest the existence of a *progressive cultural filtration* which puts the national culture under the controls of the organizational culture thanks to the technical and logistical requirements enacted by the large retailer and whose end-results is paradoxically to gradually introduce "vassal relationships" into the marketing channel after having taken a relational stage. It is what we will call the double cultural filtration. This progressive filtration is the consequence of the interaction of the respective cultural heritages of the stakeholders. In our exploratory study, we identified a *technical filtration* (synonym for organizational culture) which puts in relation the values of the one to those of the other one in a clearly

defined context. This allows each partner to be aware of his own culture. So, the entry of the large retailer on the market places firstly the contents of relationships between partners under a technical angle, in particular in the logistics domain. These practices emanate from the cultural filter of the large retailer which, by the imposed links of subordination with the others, conveys its culture, via commercial norms (specifications) and relational norms (manager attitudes), to respect or to reproduce. The technical filtration involves for partners a phenomenon of *porosity* emanating from capacities of individuals to absorb all or any of the cultural constituents of the other one, and to re-use common cultural experiences.

We are then in the presence of a substratum, in other words of a base stemming from the harmonization by the partners of a part of their national cultural variables, either by a phenomenon of adaptation, or by the creation of a new common cultural heritage. This substratum is comparable to foundations which carry the seeds of the second level of filtration concerning the national culture. The *cultural filtration* involves the same requirements as the technical filtration. It is based on the control of methods of work on behalf of the partners and on their involvement in a cultural dimension admitted by all. The second substratum is based either on the cultural domination of one of the stakeholders, or on the creation of a third possible culture. Following the double filtration, it is also possible to verify if the organizational culture (said technical) is stronger than the national culture (Liu *et al.*, 2009). The cultural filtration is thus imperative and entails an interchangeability of filters, which can be applied several times, every substratum being the base of the following filtration. It is however necessary to consider the stakeholders' cultures as being at the same level before every pooling of new cultural dimensions.

5.2. Managerial Stakes

These preliminary results are surprising; they are opposite course to the academic literature, which tends to evoke the irresistible evolution of a transactional marketing towards a relational marketing (Grönroos, 1994; Möller & Halinen, 2000; Gummesson, 2002). The investigation must go on to check if the cultural filtration, as it had been identified, brings new lighting for the governance of marketing channels or if, on the contrary, the specific context studied introduced a underestimated "cultural" skew. The obtained results bring to light the existence of a universalist-culturalist-universalist internationalization cycle which enriches the classical binary approach universalism vs. culturalism. The first contributions can be mobilized in the daily management of relationships between the large retailer and its partners.

We can define the interlacing of cultures as a set of *knowledges and/or of behavior as organizational as well as cultural which can be transmitted to the other*

members of the organization, to the current or future partners. The phenomenon of double cultural filtration offers partners the possibilities of round trips in search of a better homogeneity between their cultures, to generate positive effects on the relation and to perpetuate it. It is a market-based marketing approach that intervenes at two levels, the one of the partners and the one of its internal human resources. Today, a culturalist way of thinking can be validated even if it contains mainly marketing contents. It also gives the large retailer a more local identity which does not miss to convey a positive feeling both for the final consumer and its partners. This imposes to the large retailer to integrate the cross-cultural parameter at the beginning of the internationalization decision process. The large retailer has to initiate narrow contacts with logistical partners and local producers from the phase of pre-entry to secure its commercial management (supply) and human resources management (cultural homogeneity and efficiency).

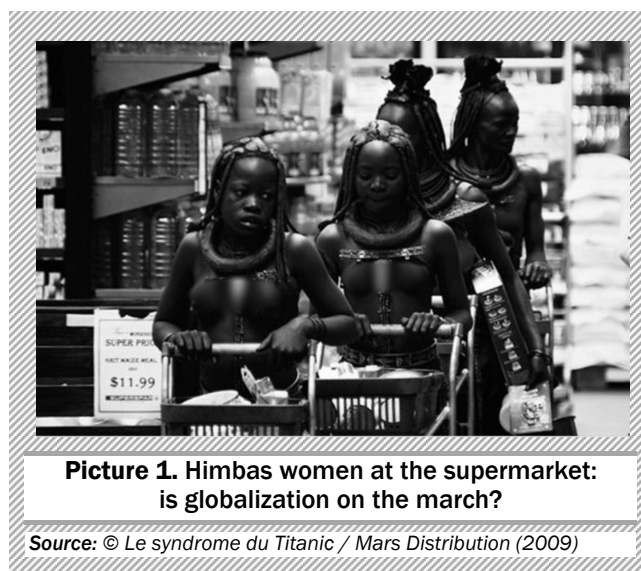
This reflection underlines the central stakes inherent to any internationalization: to guarantee a managerial continuity and avoid breaks. The choice of people to send in the target country is crucial. Expatriates have a vital task which the nature of their status can make contradictory because they are affected for a determined duration in a foreign country. They are set for international mobility and have no particular reasons to stay in the country longer than mentioned in their contract once the large retailer has settled abroad. This is not reproducible in the same way for all the countries. One of their missions is thus to set the bases of the managerial continuity which will follow their departure. Their transfer on other territories does not have to generate breaks in terms of behaviors and practices. It is thus vital for the large retailer to train local managers in the practices of the company or to make sure that the expatriates can do it, so as to guarantee the managerial continuity if a long-term stay in the country is not possible.

6. CONCLUSION

The internationalization of large retailers is a powerful economic phenomenon today which deeply transforms the commercial landscape of numerous countries so far dominated by small shops and informal businesses. It is often a violent cultural shock for companies which are formatted by ancestral traditions. Meskeh (2009) notes how the "French-style" superstore collides, in Middle East countries, with cultural habits and religious slowness which impact on the functioning of stores, as much at the level of the offer of products as the opening hours. The article wished to indicate that beyond the management of

the retailing mix, the internationalization also raises problems in management of the operations. The large retailers lean on an important experience from their domestic market (Wal-Mart in the USA or Carrefour in France for example), which enabled them to develop a sustainable competitive advantage, in logistics and in supply in particular, before setting out to conquer overseas markets. How do they re-use this accumulated experience in radically different cultural contexts? The question is essential as much from an academic as from a managerial point of view.

The case of Carrefour in Romania is interesting in many respects. It underlines how a large retailer succeeded first in adapting itself to a local context in its relations with the suppliers to then better impose its universal standards. Any fast generalization from the studied case must be avoided; it could lead to formulate the hypothesis of an inevitable globalization of the practices of management independently of cultural factors, relegated for the occasion in a kind of folklore without a future. One of the perfect expressions of it is a strong image used by Nicolas Hulot in his famous movie *Le syndrome du Titanic* (2009). In a supermarket of Otjiwarongo, in Namibia, Himbas women are shopping in traditional dress, before returning to their village (see Picture 1). This image strongly shows that globalization is a reality on the march. It would however be misleading to conclude that the large retailer can act without any obstacle to impose its "cultural way of life". In the same way as modernity is partially rejected in certain Western countries, for a return to more traditional values, we can eventually fear an identical movement on emerging markets which could question the business models used until now.



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