

# COMMUNICATING BRAND IMAGE THROUGH EVENTS IN DIFFERENT CULTURAL CONTEXT

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EVENT MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY  
OF SOFTEX PAPER PRODUCTS CURACAO, SOFTEX PRODUCTS INC. PUERTO RICO &  
CAREX ARUBA



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

SoftexGroup is the sole hygienic paper manufacturer established in Curacao and has expanded the reach of its business to include Aruba and Puerto Rico. The organization has been successful in the past three decades however, while it continues to thrive in its current operations, Softex has reached a position in its existence where it needs to extend itself to continue to grow and prosper as a leading firm in the Caribbean. Softex is in the optimal position to take advantage of market opportunities due to its strong financial position and operational foundation.

This report was commissioned to elucidate how an event marketing communication strategy should be designed for Softex and how this strategy can contribute to establishing and communicating a positive brand image. The report will further expound on describing the impact of culture on the event marketing communication strategy as Western cultural assumptions are at the root of marketing communication philosophies.

In examining the efficiency of an event marketing communication strategy for communicating a positive brand image and penetrating a new market segment, this study integrated an interpretivism case study approach. Academic literature and preliminary research also contributed to the examination of the strategy and the impact of culture on efficiency and productivity of this strategy.

The empirical findings illustrate that Aruba, Curacao and Puerto Rico have one collectivistic trait in common which explains the need for events as promotional tool to enhance brand image, engage with customers and build trust. However, it is observed that the cultures of the three islands differ, mandating Softex to be sensitive to different cultural aspects and adopt their brand elements (images, communication channels, advertising and others) to appeal to local preferences of customers. Nonetheless, there seem to be conflicting results on the establishment of a brand image and the use of events in the three islands. The results indicate a positive well-established brand image in Puerto Rico and the use of events for networking while Aruba and Curacao has failed to establish a brand image or recognize the advantage of events thus far.

A limitation of the study is the time dimension used for this study which covered only seventeen weeks even though the study makes interesting findings regarding an efficient event marketing communication strategy.

Given this situation, it is recommended that Softex takes immediate measures to promote its image alongside its product range and adopts a responsible, low price yet qualitative image while maintaining the current developing pace in order to generate and maintain growth across all channels. Furthermore, Softex should organize its events parallel with the local holidays and events and adopt different brand concepts for each island to appeal to local tastes and preferences. It is believed that under these recommendations Softex will solve the identified problem and enhance its future growth potential and ensure itself a strong competitive position as it moves forward with its operations.

## INTRODUCTION

The following research is about establishing brand image and communicating it by means of an event marketing communication strategy. Academic literature has facilitated progressive exploration of brand and marketing communication fields as well as event marketing, with special regard to how these fields are influenced by culture. For example cultural values and aspects that determine the purchase of products, the choice of branding values and event preference.

Preliminary research indicates that a branding strategy and creating a strong, positive brand image is essential in creating a successful business venture and perceives it as a tool for differentiation oneself from competitors (e.g. Aaker, 2002; Kotler, 1991; Riezenbos, 2003; Keller & Kotler, 2012). Event marketing is a rising promotion catalyst of interest and is gaining leverage among the traditional marketing communication tools. A successful appearance, perception or image can be shaped and influenced by several methods, thus, the goal of this research is unveil the relevant factors that have a significant influence in the establishment and communication of a brand image. A second goal is to investigate whether events contribute to the shaping of an appropriate image and generating awareness and how this is then done. A special emphasis is placed on the interaction effects between culture and branding as well as marketing communication.

The research is divided into two parts: the theoretical part concentrates on the conventional branding of products, the role that marketing communications plays within a branding strategy, how events are utilized to communicate the established image and in what way culture influences these. The second part gives a more in-depth insight into how Softex has integrated branding and marketing communication and an event thus far into their strategies and to what extent culture has been considered. In the theoretical framework theories of Aaker, Keller and Kotler on strong brands will be discussed and essential parts of a brand will be researched. Event marketing concepts are also researched and explained and cultural theories of Hofstede and De Mooij will be discussed to explore significant cultural influences.

The topic arose from the increased motivation of Softex to target end-customers in a premium segment in the three islands in which they are active. As Softex is lacking marketing communication knowledge but wants to target culturally diverse populations, it is crucial to have knowledge on how strong brands are build and to understand culture as it impacts communication and branding.

## 1. PROJECT CONTEXT

Softex Products N.V. headquarters of SoftexGroup, situated in Curaçao manufactures hygiene paper products; for both domestic and industrial use, for more than 35 years. Beyond being characterized as a monopoly, Softex is also a mature brand that has decided to harvest their mature, but essential products by maximizing their cash flow and profit over the remaining lifetime of the products, with a low cost pricing strategy (appendix 1, p. 47).

35 years ago Softex could not have imagined the importance of branding or marketing communication as they had been dominating the market with their low pricing strategy, which continued for several years after their governmental protection had ended. Consequently Softex lacks marketing communication knowledge and has never implemented a marketing plan, or marketing department until recently. At the time it had been established, it was a monopolist on the hygienic paper market which helped them to advance in a short period of time which has resulted in a competitive advantage and substantial position today. By virtue of their long and prominent existence in the market they have thus far focused primarily on sending out a commodity statement of being a low cost provider. Consequently, the organization is being left behind by the competition as marketing activities such as, advertising, awareness building strategies, the establishment of a strong brand image and incentives to improve customer demand have stayed behind. Softex has failed to establish a good brand image and is currently still unknown in the market and would require marketing effort in order to cultivate the brand. Cultural aspects have influenced the absence of a marketing strategy by its high-context nature not requiring explicit communication or promotion. The standard has been communicated by means of their low cost pricing strategy, which has until now met the demand of their customers (appendix 1, p. 47).

Since the implementation of the marketing department in 2012, Softex has been very active in promoting its brands within its capability and resources (appendix 1, p. 47). Notwithstanding brand building can be challenging, especially when operating within multiple islands with differing cultures. The CEO and plant manager of Softex have decided to transfer from the low pricing segment to a premium segment and retailers as customers to end-user as consumer, to distinguish themselves from its biggest competitors “Bounty,” “Familia” and “Scott”, in Aruba, Curacao and Puerto Rico and to evolve as an organization. This has provided the foundation for future marketing activities with regards to events as it has been recognized that event is a fast growing industry, which has started to impact marketing, and is highly appreciated by the three involved cultures (appendix 2, p. 53). Marketing communication can make all the difference in separating your offer from those of the competitor as it serves to remind or persuade your target customers.

Certain aspects from which culture in particular, have to be considered when being active in a foreign market. Hollensen (2001) has emphasized that the socio- culture is the most important aspect to consider besides the political, legal and economic environment. The perceptions and preferences of the end-users of Softex in the three islands illustrate the essence of the cultural aspect. The buying behaviour in Curacao reflects low quality over price, whilst Puerto Ricans prefer high quality and Arubans prefer bundles rather than single rolls. The buying behaviour of each island is motivated by the colonial influences each have had and their demeanour towards their own national identity. The Aruban

buying behaviour for instance reflects American values which are predominantly individualistic, achievement and low- context (Countries and their cultures, 2014). Achievement and success implies status or financial improvement and thus influences consumption. Material comfort signifies attainment of the “good life” for most Americans and is often associated with bigger quantities or more things. (Schiffman&Kanuk, 2008). This might explain why Aruban customers prefer to buy bigger bundles and quality hygienic paper. While end-customers are Softex is top priority, it also targets the business-to-business market in The Dominican Republic and The United States. For these markets Softex hasn’t adapted its approach towards the local culture and buying behaviour as they are mainly manufacturing for private labels. This is explained by the well know companies (such as Family Dollar and Dollar Generation, which are comparable to Walmart) that they have as customers, that have their own recourses and marketing strategy to target their segment.

Softex is developing however, the start-up situation in which typical marketing approached cannot be employed demands exploration of brand image building through events in non-western cultures. Therefore, the client is interested in developing an event marketing communication strategy that is successful in these three cultural contexts, and wonders if and how the usual western marketing communication strategies can be adjusted to their cultural context.

## **2. ORGANIZATION**

For more than 35 years, Softex Group has produced napkins, bathroom tissues and paper towels. Founded by the family Lieuw in 1977, Softex is a hygienic paper manufacturer with a vision to become the one address for all hygienic paper needs. The manufacturing plant has expanded the reach of its businesses to include Aruba, Curacao, The Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and The United States.

Besides manufacturing their own brands, Softex also manufactures for overseas private labels. Softex’s portfolio consists of a number of brands including, Softex, Noky and Swave, which are also the leading brands. The policy that it maintains includes providing innovative quality goods, integrity and service reliability (appendix 1, p. 47).The organization’s success has been determined by their cost-based pricing strategy, which is also known as cost-plus pricing. The price is determined by the break-even point and adding a profit element on top of the costs.

Marketing manager, Mrs. Wijshijer has been working to understand and deal with the impacts of increased competition, from for instance, ‘Familia’ and ‘Scott’. Until now, Softex’s customers were solely wholesalers and retailers. With a newly defined market segment which is the premium segment, Softex wants to target the end-customer directly, making them their customers as well. During the first year of marketing operation in which Softex started to focus on the end-customer as consumer, a conducted market research revealed that locals are relatively unfamiliar with Softex. As a consequence, better establishment of their brand image through events has been getting more attention to be able to become success in the premium segment (appendix 2, p.53). This managerial interest in an event communication strategy which can be used on the three islands can be explained by the specific meaning given to events and social activities by the three cultures. Fan &Pfizenmaier (2002), states that



companies need to make themselves heard, to stand out from their competitors and events are proving to be the way to do so.

Curacao, Puerto Rico and Aruba are mostly known for their cultures that greatly value their local events- mainly their yearly carnival and establishment of social contacts and thus, are believed to be more attentive and investing towards events (appendix 3-5, p. 60-70). All three of the islands have an annual celebration of carnival, which stand for the celebration of their independence and culmination of all the different cultures that form the local culture (Dominican Republic, 2010-2014).

The culture of Curacao has had a profound impact on the way Softex has managed their marketing communications so far. As toilet paper is a staple product and their customers are price oriented there has been no need for communication or promotion. For the organization its very first campaign which ran from December, 2013 till March 2014, it has opted to reach the end- customer through mass media, particularly radio advertising. Given the rise and success of social media, Softex can gain a competitive advantage by embracing social media effectively, as Mrs. Wijshijer is convinced that it is more than likely that their customers are already doing so (appendix 2, p. 47).

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The research is built on several theoretical pillars to provide Softex with insights into creating relevant communications through events and how this may be influenced by culture. Three key concepts have to be distinguished within a study on communicating brand image by means of an event marketing communication strategy: (1) branding and marketing communication, (2) culture, and (3) event marketing. The framework which includes the three mentioned key concepts, expands on what the concepts entail when applied during a strategy to provide a more robust focus on managing brands and their image or as Keller (1993) refers to it; brand equity, which creates value to customers by enhancing communication. It provides insights into marketing communication approaches which can strengthen the interface between brand awareness and brand image and provides a point of view for understanding what event marketing entails as well as how it can contribute to the establishment of awareness and a positive brand image. Lastly, branding from an intercultural perspective provides insight into to what extent marketing communication is culturally bound and should therefore be adapted per culture.

#### **3.1 BRANDING AND INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION (IMC)**

Before conceptualising brand equity, it is useful to define the concept of a brand.

According to the American Marketing Association a brand is “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competitors” (Keller & Kotler, 2012:241). A brand is thus, a mechanism for accomplishing competitive advantage for organizations as a consequence of differentiation.

Marketing communication which is an important process of branding is becoming extremely important given that customers are becoming more sophisticated in terms of brand performance. Keller (2003) emphasized that integrated marketing communications has become essential in this century, for building and maintaining brand and customer equity. Brand equity is defined as “a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand’s name and symbol that adds to (or subtract from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm’s customers” (Aaker, 2002:7-8). Keller has approached brand equity from a customer perspective and has defined customer-based brand equity as “the differentiated effect that brand knowledge has on the customer or customer response to the marketing of that brand” (1993:2). Despite the different approach to brand equity, both have integrated marketing communication (IMC) in common which have been defined as “a planning process designed to assure that all brand contacts received by a customer or prospect for a product, service or organization are relevant to that person and consistent over time” by The American marketing Association (as cited in Keller & Kotler, 2012:495). Several researchers have suggested IMC as an intrinsic part of strategic brand management. According to these (Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan & McDonald, 2005; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Keller, 1993; 2001), IMC is what might help to build strong brand equity and can produce positive effects on brand image and awareness, and relationships with the customer.

### 3.1.1 BRAND EQUITY

Brand equity encompasses four asset categories: brand awareness, loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations to which customer-brand relations are substantial (Aaker, 1996). Building customer-based brand equity requires development of a familiar brand which holds strong, favourable and unique brand associations in mind of the customers. This is achieved through brand identities (e.g. brand symbol, name or logo) and the integration of these in the marketing programme. Keller concluded that the brand communications by the firm, IMC in particular is crucial for brand equity to exhibit brand identities and brand performance (Keller, 1993:4).

Brand awareness consisting of brand recognition and brand recall, relates to the probability that a brand comes to mind. It has an important customer decision- making role for the reason that awareness makes brands familiar and thus more considerable. Memorable brand experiences and creative brand messages is a means for enhancing familiarity, as noted by Keller (2003:69).

Brand associations can take different forms but are classified into the categories: *attributes* which are the characteristics of the product, *benefits* which is the value that customers attach to products and *attitudes* which relates to the evaluation of the brand. By means of associations that can be based on for example, company performance and past experiences, organizations can establish uniqueness and differentiation from competitors (Keller, 2003:71). According to Keller, brand image has been long recognized as an essential concept and is required for building brand equity. Brand image is the perception that customers have in mind about a brand that is reflected by brand associations (1993:3). The image of a brand is perceived by marketing communications, own perceptions related to the brand and from their direct environment expressing their opinions. Advertising is considered to be one of the marketing tools that have positive effects on customers' brand image. Aaker (2002) contends that the brand identity should be emphasized as much as possible during advertising campaigns, for the image to be as close as possible to the identity.

Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan & McDonald (2005) quoted Hunt (forthcoming), who noted that it is constitutional for brand equity strategies to achieve competitive advantage and as a consequence superior financial performance. Organization's their financial performance is an indicator of quality for customers and from which their perception of quality is derived (Aaker, 2002:17). The financial performance is also depending on the brand loyalty of customers in which the previous assets play a crucial role (Aaker, 2002:21).

### 3.1.2 BRAND IDENTITY

Keller (1993) had pointed out that prior to building brand equity the brand identity has to be defined and integrated into the overall marketing programme as this strengthens the organization its brand equity.

Several definitions have been proposed for the term brand identity, the most suitable definition consistent with the research topic is defined as "a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members" (Aaker, 2002:68). Therefore, brand

identity can be perceived as a set of associations which an organization wants to establish among its (potential) customers.

In the determination of a brand identity, organizations determine their identity by identifying core values that reflect who they are and what they stand for, whereas the perceived brand image by customers might not align with the set brand identity. This means that the brand identity is not necessarily the same as the brand image. This is supported by Aaker (2002) who is of opinion that there is an obvious distinction between a brand identity and image and their roles. According to Aaker (2002), a brand image is passive and reflects the past whereas the identity of a brand is active and is future oriented. If a brand identity is to be effective, it must provide certain benefits to fulfil customer needs. Aaker has described these needs in his brand identity planning model as the value proposition which consists of functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits (2002:91).

One important consideration with building brand equity is how the brand identity is supported and integrated in the marketing programme (Keller, 1993). According to Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan & McDonald, this can be achieved by means of a brand identity strategy which they define as “one that informs, guides, and helps develop, nurture, and implement the firm’s overall IMC strategy through various brand identity contacts” (2005:73). The success of a brand identity strategy is reflected in the communication that reveals the brand and its identity and thus the most important factor for strengthening the brand associations through messages that are transmitted by means of various media channels. That is, a brand identity strategy could serve as a guide for developing and implementing an integrated marketing communication strategy.

### **3.1.3 BRAND COMMUNICATION AND INTEGRATED MARKETING**

Brand communication can help brands move forward as it enables development of brand awareness and a positive brand image. Carlson, Give and Dorsch (2003) as quoted by Madgavaram *et al.* (2005:71), are convinced that effective IMC can achieve desirable customer responses such as brand recognition, or motivation/willingness to buy the brand. Keller (1993) found that marketing communication effort provides a flexible means for shaping customer perceptions, creating user and usage imagery and for supporting the brand name.

Integrated marketing communications has been defined by Cornelissen (2008) as quoted in Tetere (2011:27) as “a concept of marketing communication planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic role of a variety disciplines (advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion and Public Relations) and combine these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact.” Following this definition it should be recognized that strategic decision making with regards to communication is of great importance.

Researchers (Keller, 1993; Carlson, Give and Dorsch, 2003; Kitchen *et al.*, 2004; Madgavaram *et al.*, 2005; Naik and Raman, 2003) offer some evidence to suggest that IMC plays a robust role in enhancing organizational effectiveness and efficiency in reaching target audiences. Note too that it has been shown that IMC is advantageous and could increase brand equity and thus superior financial performance which might lead to brand loyalty.

The primary objective with IMC is to influence perceptions and behaviour through communication. IMC has been one of the first processes to nourish and handle human relationships which make it an integral part of an effective brand equity strategy. Additionally Tetere (2011:27), has outlined four main orientations of marketing adopted from Hall (1992) and O'Mally (1991):

- “1. Measurable short-term tactics are explained by sales-oriented emphasis
2. Persuasion-oriented focus on rational process that leads customer to purchase decisions;
3. Involvement orientation implies customer engagement;
4. Salience-oriented matters characterize how a brand attempts to demonstrate product in radically different, positive way through marketing communications (Dahlen, 2010, p. 299).”

The four orientations result in the following ten communication guidelines (Dahlen, 2010 as quoted in Tetere 2011:27):

- “Brand awareness;
- Brand salience – to differentiate a brand within an industry/class;
- Promoting product trial;
- Comparing brand against the competition;
- Changing negative brand perceptions, attitudes – to get target audience to reconsider the brand;
- Informational content – to provide data that leads customer to purchase decisions;
- Activity and engagement – to seek active involvement by target audience with communication messages;
- Strength of argument – to develop communications relevant to the level of involvement customers have with the brand;
- Appealing to informational and transformational needs – to adapt communication according to the level of rational and emotional needs of a target audience;
- Flexibility- to tailor communication content without affecting a consistent message.”

These aspects possibly reflect the organizational aim to be achieved through marketing communication. As customers have always been able to choose to neglect or pay attention to any kind of marketing communications the outside-in approach, that is, decision- making from a different (customer) perspective than their own.

### 3.2 CULTURE

There is no denying that culture has a significant influence on human behaviour and interactions. While culture has been conceptualized in a variety of different ways by different scientist for different purposes, most definitions include the notion that culture is complex and includes beliefs, customs, habits, art, and values acquired from society members, that is, the way of life of a group or society. Hofstede's definition of culture offers a concise representation of culture in reference to this research, from which its purpose is specifically to help understand the cultural implications on branding, marketing communication and events.

*"The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category from others" (Hofstede, 1991:5).*

Some researchers have studied branding from an intercultural communication and sociological perspective, for instance De Mooij (2005) considered Hofstede's cultural dimensions as a framework for cross-cultural communication providing understanding about what makes advertising culturally bound. Additionally, Hollensen (2012) considered the cultural meaning of products and brands. These approaches will be discussed more in detail in the following sub-sections.

#### 3.2.1 SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Hollensen (2012), states that it has commonly been agreed that culture has three different characteristics:

- 1) It is *learned*: that is, acquired by group members and passed on from one generation to the next;
- 2) It is *interrelated*: that is, different cultural aspects deeply connected with each other (e.g. marriage, social status and religion)
- 3) It is *shared* by the society members. Cultural values are passed on to an individual by other members of the group such as parents, family, friends, institution and other adults.

The function of culture becomes more crucial in respect to intercultural communication. Hollensen (2012:155) defines culture as "the learned ways in which a society understands, decides and communicates," recognizing culture as a framework for communication and emphasizing its function as "means through which people communicate" (Li, 2001:12). De Mooij (1998) as quoted by Li (2001:13), elucidates how culture prompts the way in which people communicate and what will be communicated:

*"when developing messages, our automatic pilot takes over: We produce, create, and send what fits our own patterns of learning and our own pictorial conventions, our own language, our own vocabulary. This is often done irrespective of the vocabulary of the receivers of our messages, who do not belong to our own culture" (1998:91).*

### VALUES

Branding which involves communication is a means for organizations to convey the brand's values to everyone who's involved with their organization. In order for brand values to appeal to customers, organizations need to look for ways to create shared value. One way of going about this is to explore the cultural relevance of their brands.

Values are considered to be deeply embedded in culture and are therefore perceived as the non-visible element of culture that differs across borders. As customers perceptions are based on values and brands face the challenge of conveying values across cultures and ensure that values resonate with customers with different cultural backgrounds (Hollensen, 2012; Hofstede, 1991; Torelli et al., 2012). Hofstede's (1991) cultural onion represents the layers of culture which can provide a framework for understanding individual behaviour. The outer layers of the onion are composed of artefacts and behavioural patterns. The next layer consists of norms, beliefs and attitudes while the core of the onion represents the underlying values or assumptions. According to Hofstede, values are slowly changes and are heavily influenced by the history of a country (1991:9). The relevance of identifying values per culture is illustrated by Rajaniemi and Laaksonen (1989) as quoted by Li (2001:44) who contend that "values affect lifestyles and lifestyles affect purchasing decision, which are apt to reinforce the existing situation." The relevance is also illustrated by De Mooij (2005), Puohiniemi (1998) and Alber (1994) as quoted by Li (2001), who argues that values can help brands to identify the proper advertising appeals. Puohiniemi (1998), argued that the most effective advertisements were ads that spoke about values. He argued that "advertisements could be designed to persuade or motivate consumers to do things or think about them in new ways when advertisers use the nature of values as guiding principles" (2001:45).

#### **HIGH AND LOW -CONTEXT CULTURES**

As cultures differ across borders so does the use of communication techniques of channels. Some cultures prefer explicit communication, in which they rely on facts and words whereas other cultures prefer implicit communication and symbols or status are given more importance. Hollensen (2012), therefore considers Hall's (1960) high and low contexts as a framework for understanding cultural orientations. He identified individualistic (Western) cultures with low-context and collectivism (non-Western) with high-context. The difference between high and low-context communication cultures aid in the understanding of orientation of culture towards communication and language, family and friends, appearance, time, space, eating habits and values, beliefs and attitudes, particularly in the tendency towards individualism versus collectivism. It reveals for instance why assertive communication approaches are used by western cultures in opposition of indirect communication approaches by non-western cultures.

#### **HOFSTEDE CULTURAL DIMENSIONS**

Hollensen (2012) refers to Hofstede's cultural dimensions as one of the significant models on national cultures to be mindful of when comparing cultures with regards to consumption behaviour, product use and creating marketing strategies that are to be effective beyond borders.

Hofstede distinguished five cultural dimensions on which people are mentally programmed: power distance, collectivism vs. individualism, femininity vs. masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term vs. short-term orientation. He later on added the Indulgence vs. restraint dimension (appendix 10, p. 84). The significance of the application of this model in this research is based on the belief that culture exists by comparison, meaning that culture only has meaning when being compared to other cultures (Hofstede, 1991).

De Mooij (1995;2005) adopted Hofstede's dimensions as she is of opinion that values and thus the dimensions can predict advertising appeals. This is supported by Torelli et al. (2012:94), who have indicated that past research has illustrated that cross-cultural differences in priority of consumers in respect to individualistic or collectivistic values predicts advertising appeals, the processing and persuasiveness of product information and the determinants of purchase intention. For example, Torelli et al. (2012:96-97) used the individualism-collectivism classification to associate a brand concept with cultural orientations in combination with the horizontal (emphasizing equality)/vertical distinction (emphasizing hierarchy) which Triandis (1995) proposed. Their main reason for combining these two classifications is to overcome limitations of Hofstede's dimensions and to make finer distinctions within the individualism-collectivism classifications. The H/V distinction has resulted from the observation that American individualism differs from Norwegian individualism in the same way that Japanese collectivism differs from Israeli collectivism. Aruba which has reportedly adopted American values tend to be very close to what they have identified as a *VI society* in which the emphasis is on improving individual status and distinguishing themselves from others through competition and achievement a self-enhancing concept would be more appealing to customers. Puerto Rico (*VC society*) and Curacao (*HC society*) on the other hand, tend to be more collectivistic, yet different appeals are still necessary. *VC societies* greatly value traditions, submit to the will of authority and support in-group competition while prioritizing the goal of the group, *HC societies*, unlike *VC societies* do not submit to authority and value sociability and interdependence. This makes the conservation brand concept most likely to be most effective for Puerto Rico to be less appealing for Curacao. Curacao is more focus on social relationship and therefore resonates more with a self-transcendence concept.

De Mooij (2005), points out that there are fundamental differences between Western and non-Western cultures as the uncertainty dimension reveals the strong need for explanation, structure and proof. High-uncertainty avoidance cultures emphasize dress and appearance and value emotions in opposition to low-uncertainty avoidance cultures. This also influences communication as the dimension requires adaptation with regards to emotional appeals, and the use of colours on their products and messages. Puerto Rico and Aruba which are more driven by competitiveness than Curacao who values the quality of life in terms of enjoyments would respond more desirably toward status appeals rather than relationship appeals. In terms of events this might apply that Softex would have to select different kinds of events for each island as they have different values.

### **3.3 EVENT MARKETING**

Event marketing literature has helped to acknowledge the increasingly importance of event marketing as a component in the promotions mix. Event marketing favours an organization to penetrate media clutter, and target an audience through a particular event, while enhancing brand awareness or building a brand image (Gupta, 2003; Behrer & Larsson, 1998; Fan & Pfizenmaier, 2002). Key findings from literature suggest that organizations use event marketing for their short-term goals and it is particularly effective when their objectives are focussed on enhancing their corporate identity, brand equity and/or image and to generate awareness, that is, brand value. However, multiple studies found that although events can generate increased awareness and an enhanced image there have been limited empirical research on the effectiveness of events. Thus far, event effectiveness have been extremely difficult to



measure and it has been found that event benefits may decay over time and do not necessarily translate to customer growth (Sneath, Finney & Close, 2005; Behrer & Larsson, 1998; Meenaghan, 1983).

Event marketing is often referred to as “marketing of events” and “marketing with events” (Sneath, Finney & Close, 2005:374). Marketing of an event is defined as “occurrences designed to communicate particular messages to target audiences” (Kotler, 2002:576), whereas marketing with events involves sponsorship. The unique appeal of events is its ability to integrate other marketing communication activities and they offer something that other marketing techniques cannot, which is the experience (Sneath, Finney & Close, 2005). According to Getz (2007:18) “an event is an occurrence at a given time and place; a special set of circumstances; a noteworthy occurrence.” Whelan & Wholfeil (as cited in Crowther, 2010:315) typify this by stating that events “aim to harness the potential for emotional bonds through shared customer experiences and providing brand experiences, entertainment, and education, which customers perceive as adding to their enjoyment and experienced quality of life.” Events are categorised on the basis of the established marketing intent, the target audiences and the corporate or marketing objectives. With direct events which are also referred to as exclusive events (e.g. entertainment and PR events, trade fairs) people attending have “a direct bearing on the objectives,” and the event is controlled from planning till delivering (Gupta, 2003:87; Crowther, 2010). Indirect events which are also referred to as non-exclusive events (e.g. FIFA World Cup, corporate events and exhibitions) are most often collaborated events in which there is less control and are either sponsored or the organization is one of the exhibitors. With such events the attendees do not necessarily form the target audience but media coverage and word-of-mouth publicity will help the event reach to reach larger audiences, who might actually be the target audience (Gupta, 2003; Crowther, 2010).

The experience is advantageous in the way that it provides the opportunity for personal interaction with the brand. The hands-on experience appears to enhance the brand personality which is desirable in equity building according to Sneath, Finney & Close (2005). Behrer & Larsson (1998) and Hoyle (2002), have pointed out that the benefit of interaction is the opportunity to receive direct feedback from attendees, to develop relationships with those who attend. This will in turn create a unique bond with the audience which increases favouritism of the brand. Another positive attribute of the experience that events provide according to Behrer & Larsson (1998) is that in combination with the meeting and the messages which form the event, alludes to the senses of the audience. The values that the brand image consists of can therefore be enhanced by means of events.

### **3.3.1 EVENT OBJECTIVES AND EVENT SELECTION**

When engaging in event marketing, specific objectives have to be set as they are the precursor of the event design. Gupta (2003) and Meenaghan (1983) have classified the event objectives as marketing, corporate, product-related, sales, and personal and media objectives (appendix 11, P. 86). An event can achieve several objectives simultaneously or one at the time depending on the objectives of the organization. For example, the most important event objectives for Softex according to Mr. Lieu are to increase awareness, brand image, sales and to test a new market/launch a new product. These four objectives can be categorized into product-, sales- and corporate objectives which will be used simultaneously (Behrer & Larsson, 1998). Event marketing objectives serve as guidance for the event selection which will help them to accomplish their objectives. Event marketing can according to Behrer &

Larsson (1998), serve as the 'engine' running an organization its marketing strategy. This is achieved by engaging in several marketing activities throughout the year to be consistent or yearly sponsoring events generating maximum effect.

The starting point of event selection or the planning of an event is determining certain criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the event. For the reason that there seems to be a lot criteria for selecting events, this research has considered the criterion for making a rational choice regarding event perception by the target audience for which Meenaghan (1983) has produced a list of 14 criteria which can be found in (Appendix 12, P. 87). According to Meenaghan (1983) the rational choice to be made is that each organization should specify the event selection criteria for it to be relevant for the organization, the products and the specific audiences. The selected criteria from his list for the event must be related to the organization its stated objectives. He further argues that the event selection should be reliant on the ability of events to fulfil these objectives.

### **3.3.2 IMC APPROACH TO EVENT MARKETING**

It is recognized that events should be prevalent as key aspect in organizations their marketing strategies as they can have a strategic role in creating value for a brand or organization (Bowdin, 2006 as cited in Crowther, 2010). Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan & McDonald (2005) noted that various marketing communications such as sponsorship and event experience (Keller & Kotler, 2012), influence brand equity. It is of utmost importance that organizations communicate effectively by reaching their target audiences and then induce them to act in the desired way. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) plays a crucial role in this. The existing consensus in event marketing literature is that IMC is the appropriate way to achieve favourable outcomes and thus, should events be considered as an essential component of an IMC strategy. IMC also provides a tool for evaluating event effectiveness (Sneath, Finney & Close, 2005).

### **3.4 BEST PRACTICE OF COCA-COLA**

Much has been written about branding and marketing communication strategies e.g. as stated by Aaker, 2002; Keller, 1993; Carlson, Give and Dorsch, 2003; Kitchen et al., 2004; Madgavaram et al., 2005; Naik and Raman, 2004, branding and integrated marketing communication strategies are powerful tools that boost company's success. As a matter of fact, an interview was conducted with the marketing manager of Coca-Cola<sup>1</sup> Curacao about their branding strategy and marketing communications as one of their powerful tools.

Marketing manager of Coca-Cola Company Curacao laid out the company approach to branding and the strategy it adopted to become successful on the island. According to Mrs. Verhulst Coca-Cola adapts to local markets but has always stayed consistent with their values: happiness, fun, sharing and the

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<sup>1</sup> Coca-Cola Company is the world's largest beverage company and one of the world's most recognizable brands. The Coca-Cola Company owns or licenses an extensive range of brands, including four of the top soft drinks on Curacao: Coca-Cola, Fria, Minute Maid and Powerade. The company's segment includes Europe, Latin America, Africa, Euroasia, North- America, and Pacific Bottling corporations and investments and operates in more than 200 countries. The company has made lots of investments in promotion of the brand which has made them the best recognized global brand and evoke its customers.

tradition of Coca-Cola. Despite Coca-Cola its worldwide recognition its strength has been consistency, personalising messages and brand recognition. "Consistency is needed in order to build a certain reputation what in turn leads to brand recognition. Coca-Cola invest a lot in promotion of the brand but considering what it gets back for it, makes it worthwhile," according to Mrs. Verhulst.

There are specific areas where Coca-Cola is focussing on including loyalty, reinvention to keep up with your target audiences and to keep them interested, the brand focus (3Ps), the brand reach for your customers and the attributes of the brand which is important to maintain the brand image. The complexity of Coca-Cola is its extensive range of brands which makes them compete against their own brands sometimes. This makes the measuring of brand equity difficult but despite that Coca-Cola has managed to obtain high brand equity. The key to brand building and staying relevant is to establish the brand identity and to ensure that the identity reflect your unique values. Creative personality is essential for long-term success.

The brand image of Coca-Cola has always remained the same similar to the contour-shaped bottle which is synonymous with the brand. Its bottling system has helped to ensure security and recognition of the brand and remain unaffected by new product introductions. Coca-Cola has adopted a customer approach and targets all age groups but points out that it is not merely about localising ones strategy. "Fria has been introduced as local product on Curacao and comes in lively colours which the culture appreciates, which is also illustrated by the colourful buildings and houses all over the island. The soft drink is an adaptation but is still in line with the general Coca-Cola values such as happiness, fun and sharing," (appendix 7, p. 77).

For Coca-Cola marketing communication has been a defining aspect of its success and key part of its strategy. The advantage of having a strong brand with a universal message is that it does not necessarily need local marketing communication adaptation. Coca-Cola has acknowledged the importance of adaptation to local cultures but has according to Mrs. Verhulst not been required in Curacao due to the familiarity and values of the strong brand. "On a worldwide scale Coca-Cola has incorporated sponsorship and CSR into their marketing strategies. This year Coca-Cola is one of the sponsors of the Fifa world cup for which we have launched a campaign in Curacao for customers to win a trip to Brazil to witness the event. Our long-term objective focuses on climate and energy protection, water policy and sustainable packaging. Locally it is extremely important to focus on the climate as it is highly polluted climate, which is why we are sponsoring 'CuraDoet,' who are actively trying to mobilize the inhabitant to strife for a cleaner Curacao. Coca-Cola is trying to invest in those areas where development is possible such as education." (Mrs. Verhulst, appendix 7, p. 77).

Mrs. Verhulst concludes that it comes down to brand awareness and recognition. According to her "once you have built a strong image and brand recognition, you have built a solid basis for whatever road it is you want to follow" (p. 80).

### **3.5 SUMMARY**

In the context of this research culture is the concept that encompasses beliefs, customs and habits acquired by people as members of a society. Culture in effect, provides a framework within which

individuals function. A consequence of culture is its influence of customer buying behaviour. The challenge that brands face is adopting their branding strategies in line with culture. The premise of branding and marketing communication is its ability to enhance the effectiveness of reaching target audiences and managing brands and superior financial performance by standardizing their messages, communication, and attributes that is, image. Brands generally strive to maintain their established brand identity, brand personality and brand image across markets, but it becomes challenging in different cultural situations. This makes it necessary for brands to adapt to different cultures and reanalyse the attributes, features and values attached to the brand identity, image and personality to appeal to the local preferences of customers. Cultural differences mandate that brands have to be sensitive to different cultural facets which might explain the relevance of event marketing in this context. The increasing popularity of events on the islands offers brands a powerful tool to involve customers and providing them with a platform to interact with the brand.

The example of Coca-Cola illustrates how the brand has recognized the different customer needs and adapted the brand to customer preferences while maintaining consistency of their values across markets.

These concepts hold the key to an event marketing communication strategy that has to be adopted accordingly to reflect consumer preferences when entering or being active in markets, which is the case for Softex.

#### **4. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The first significant decision that needs to be decided is which practical approach regarding the research design will be taken (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2010). A research design can be perceived as the connection between the data to be collected and the analysis and conclusion to be drawn to the research questions. It should ensure a good overview of what needs to be achieved (Rowley, 2002).

This research has undertaken case study as research strategy to reach the aim of the research, from which the justification will be explained in-depth in the following sub-sections. In this research the researcher has chosen to use the interpretivism approach to case study design. It is an appropriate approach to use when the researcher wishes to interpret the event, understand the meaning construction and reveal what meanings drive the behaviour of people. For this research it was necessary to understand the real conditions in order to analyse the situation to be able to make recommendations. By adopting this approach, I engaged with key informants of SoftexGroup and CEO's of cultural institutions as well as a marketing manager of a well-established brand to collect in-depth information regarding their branding and marketing communication strategy to understand what stimulated their motivation for events and their current strategy. Interpretations have been made based on the obtained data to serve the research purpose which was intended to give recommendation concerning an event marketing communication strategy (Saunders et al., 2009).

##### **4.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

This research will be based on the research method of Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010) which have provided a predefined set of stages (problem analysis, diagnosis, design, intervention and evaluation), also called the intervention cycle. According to Verschuren and Doorewaard(2010),this research will follow a practice-oriented approach as it is intended to design a new strategy and thus, can be placed in the design stage of the intervention cycle.

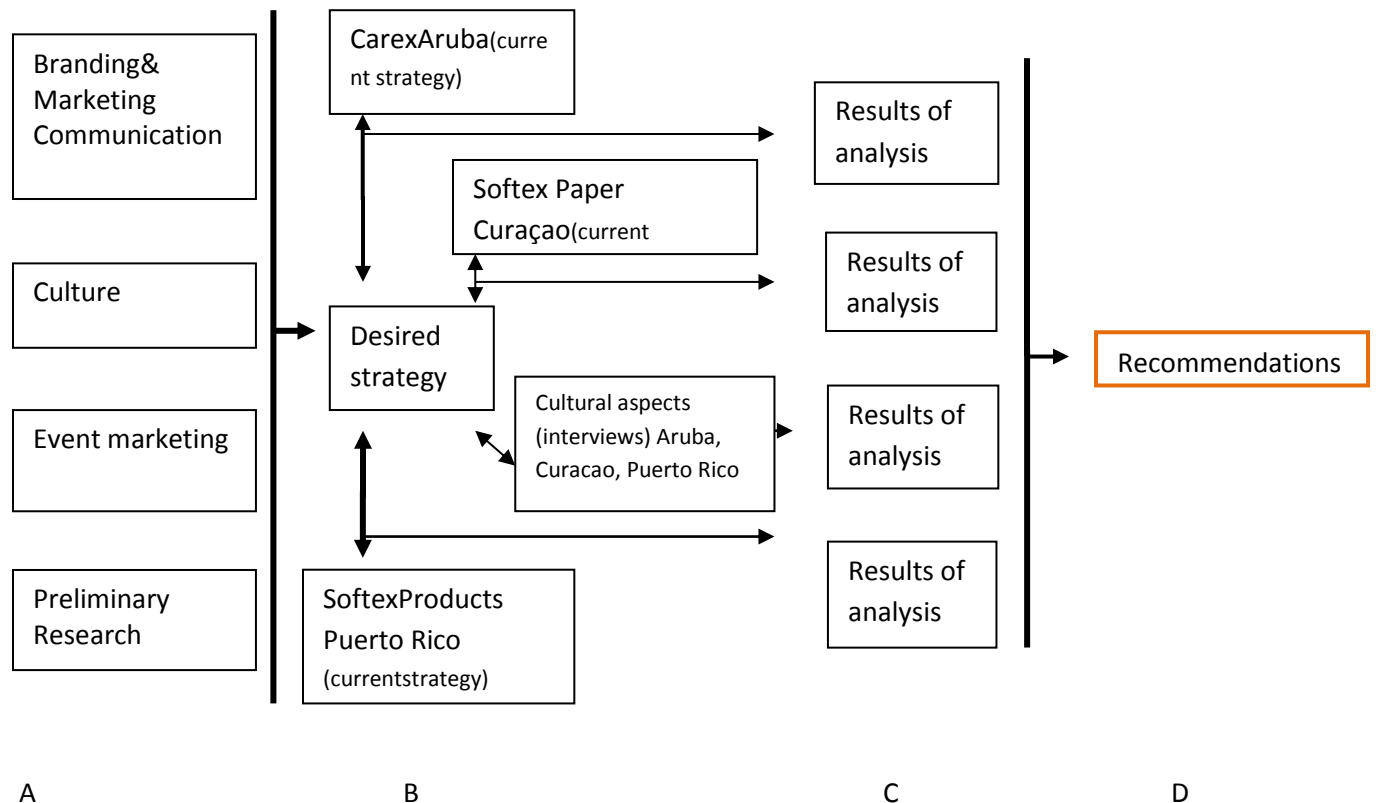
As the objective forms the basis of the research, all current information surrounding the problem needs to be considered. It appears that there is a substantial gap between the desired and current situation regarding communicating a brand image. This is being fostered by the lack of marketing and marketing communications (appendix).As the problem and causes for the lack of promotion and communication with its customers on the domestic market have been identified and defined, Softex is in need of a first prototype of an event marketing communication strategy that will enable them to successfully communicate its brand elements and enter the premium segment.

The following research objective has been formulated:

‘To make recommendations to the marketing manager of Softex Group, Priscilla Wijshijer, about the design of an event marketing communication strategy for Aruba, Curaçao and Puerto Rico **by** adjusting a western event marketing communication strategy to the cultural contexts of Aruba, Curacao and Puerto Rico to establish a strong brand image’.

## 4.2 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

According to Verschuren en Doorewaard (2010:65), “a research framework is the schematic representation of the research objective and includes the appropriate steps that need to be taken in order to achieve it.” A research framework is important for establishing theory what is indispensable when asking the question what should be done to achieve the objective of making recommendations regarding the event marketing communication strategy with the focus on establishment of a stronger brand image. This has resulted in the following research framework:



(A) A study of communication brand image through events, based on expert insights and the consultation of relevant scientific literature, yields the desired event marketing communication strategy (conceptual model), (B) by means of which the three islands in which Softex operates will be analysed with regard to the desired situation for adapting a western strategy to meet local cultures. (C) A comparison between the results of these four analyses concludes with (D) recommendations for an efficient (western) event marketing communication strategy adapted to the cultural aspects of the three islands.

#### 4.2.1 RESEARCH OBJECTS

Research objects are the subjects to be studied which determine the knowledge to be generated which contributes to achieving the set research objective. For this research four research objects have been identified:

##### **Carex Aruba (1), Softex Paper Curacao (2), Softex Products Puerto Rico (3)**

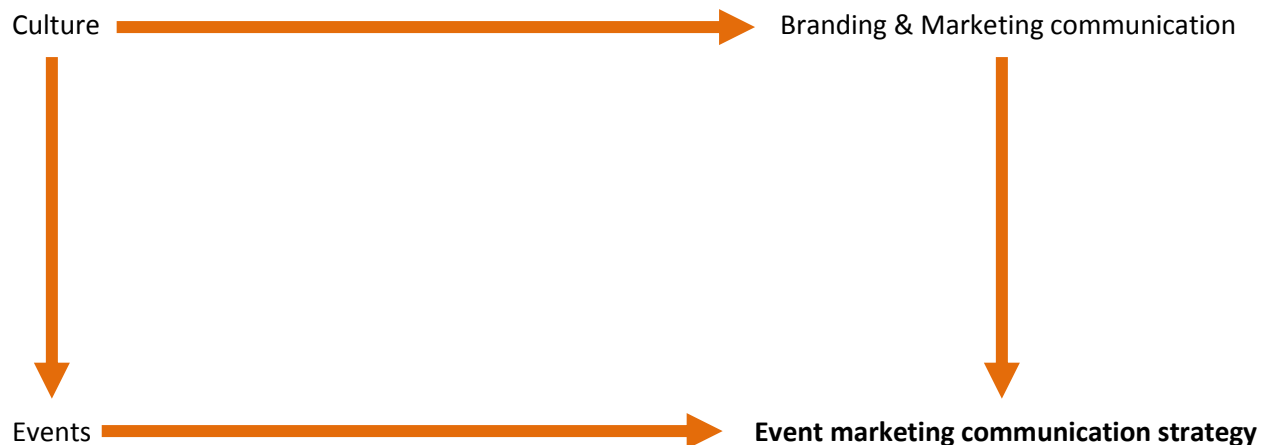
SoftexGroup focuses on both business-to business and business-to-customer, making the entire organization irrelevant for the research project. Therefore the research objects have been confined to three branches of the organization that are comparable in the number of staff members, activities and in the business-to customer focus. The current marketing communication strategy of the three islands needs to be analysed. The researchers need to find out what Softex wants to achieve through events and compare this to the customer's need and/or perception (culturally determined) on communicating through events by Softex.

##### **Cultural institution**

The research also focuses on the (non-Western) cultural aspects of the three islands which plays a role on communicating with the customers through marketing communications, therefore cultural institutions from which cultural insights have been attained is this research's object. The cultural insights will illustrate on how a Western event marketing communication strategy has to be adapted to meet the local cultures.

#### 4.2.2 CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The conceptual model provides a schematic representation of the assumed causal relationships between the key concepts, that is, a conceptual outline of the research (appendix 9, p. 83).



Softex its aim is to establish a brand image and be in dialogue with its customers through events. An event marketing communication strategy involves branding and marketing communication to enhance communication effectiveness and events which offers a powerful tool to involve customers and providing a platform with interaction with the brand. It becomes a bit more challenging in different cultural situations which is the case in Aruba, Curacao and Puerto Rico, which is why culture is the

intervening variable. It has an impact on customer buying behaviour requiring brands to adopt their strategies in line with culture.

#### **4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**Question 1: What relevant elements can be derived from branding and marketing communication, culture and event marketing theories about the development of an event marketing communication strategy to help establish and communicate a brand image?**

- What key elements can be derived from branding and marketing communication theories?
- What key elements can be derived from event marketing theories?
- What key elements can be derived from cultural theories?

**Question 2: How can the western cultural aspects of an event marketing communication strategy be adapted to the cultural aspects of the islands involved (non-western cultures)?**

- What aspects of the event marketing communication strategy need to be adapted to the different cultures?
- What cultural aspects does Aruba need to include compared to the western cultural aspects?
- What cultural aspects does Curacao need to include compared to the western cultural aspects?
- What cultural aspects does Puerto Rico need to include compared to the western cultural aspects?
- What other distinguishable factors can be identified?

**Question 3: What are the main similarities and differences between the non- western and the western event marketing communication strategy?**

- What are the similarities and differences between the results of analysis of the non-western strategies?
- What are the similarities and differences between the results of analysis of the western and non-western strategy?



#### 4.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010), state that a research strategy is a set of crucial decisions which determine data collection for empirical research. Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010) have provided five major research strategies: surveys, experiments, case studies, desk research and grounded theory approach. Which strategy to use in the research can according to Verschuren and Doorewaard be determined by looking at three different key decisions; (1) breadth versus depth, (2) qualitative versus quantitative research, and (3) empirical versus desk research.

According to Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010), qualitative research is the non- numerical interpretation of observation aiming to determine relationships and/or patterns. Qualitative methods allow for a particular subject or topic to be studied in depth as it is attempted to understand the information that emerges from the data.

A qualitative research method builds of the researcher its data interpretation and has the ability to undertake an in-depth investigation to obtain a better picture of a situation. According to Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010), qualitative research is the non- numerical interpretation of observation aiming to determine relationships and/or patterns. Qualitative methods allow for a particular subject or topic to be studied in depth as it is attempted to understand the information that emerges from the data.

Yin (1994), as quoted by Rowley (2002) defined case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.18). Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010:179) state that an advantage of the case study is that it obtains “a general idea of the object as a whole” which can be “advantageous during a research project aimed at changing an existing situation.” Characteristics in Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010:178) their definition includes; “intensive data generation, selective strategic sample, more depth than breadth, a small domain consisting of a small number of research units, qualitative data and research methods and assertion concerning the object as a whole.” Yin (1994), as quoted by Rowley (2002) has emphasized that the types of research questions determine the appropriate approach. Case studies are believed to be useful in answering “How” and “What” questions, as they are posed to discover phenomena. In extension to discover certain outcomes they may provide explanation as to why certain outcomes are provided. This is very important in the present study which examines how a western cultural event marketing communication strategy can be adopted to the cultural aspects of Aruba, Curacao and Puerto Rico, and how this then can enhance the brand image of the organization. At the same time this also explains why this particular strategy has been preferred in the research. In addition to Yin’s definition, Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010) have distinguished a sub-variant of the single case study that has been applied and is the so -called embedded case study. The use of an embedded case study allows for the three cases of Softex; Aruba, Curaçao and Puerto Rico to be studied as individual cases with regard to the cultural aspects of each of the islands. Case studies may either be used for descriptive, explanatory or exploratory purposes, without having exclusivity between them. Given the “how” and “what” research questions, this case study is descriptive and explanatory.

Case study research is a research strategy which has an advantage of other research methods as it deals with a range of data collection methods, and allows in-depth investigation and achieves isolation of

factors within real- life context. There is a lot of scepticism on the research strategy though. Rowley (2002:20), had highlighted the identified lack of rigor and objectivity and the difficulty to generalize, and the ability to ensure validity and reliability. However, it was noted that the quality of the case study can be increased by construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability.

#### **4.5 RESEARCH METHOD**

Research methods are specific research techniques or activities designed to collect and analyse data (e.g. observation, interviews, questionnaires, focus group). Although Saunders et al. (2009) have identified multiple sources of evidence suitable for the case study; semi-structured interview and desk research have been employed in this research.

##### **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

Saunders et al. (2009) identified three forms of interviews; unstructured, semi-structured and structured, but has argued that the semi-structured interview are a means to understand the relationship between variable, such as those reveals from a descriptive study. The use of qualitative interviews is related to the research strategy and data collection question. The interview consists of a set of questions to generate information about a specific issue. Saunders et al. (2009) indicated that the investigator is not requested to follow a specific order but can vary the order depending on the development of the conversation. Semi-structured interviews provide the investigator with the opportunity to probe for detailed information by asking the respondent to give clarifications to the answer (Saunders et al., 2009). Interviews have been transcribed, analyzed and discussed in the following chapters. Interview transcript can be found in the appendix.

For this empirical research four semi-structured face-to-face interviews were performed with the CEO, plant manager and marketing manager of Softex, the CEO of the cultural institution of Curacao and the marketing manager of Coca-Cola Curacao. Despite being different organizations and having different kind of knowledge and insights, the relevance here is that they all have dealt with culture to some extend for marketing their products and services. Second, one semi-structured group interview was conducted with the general marketing manager and marketing employees of the three island to explore if the branding strategy differed per island and identify how marketing communication activities are being undertaken. The undertaken group interview has allowed me to undertake a direct observation at the same time to collect data for the research. The observation was beneficial in emphasizing the cultural impact of each island as it even seems to influence the organizational behaviour. Third, one electronic semi-structured interview was conducted with the cultural institution of Puerto Rico as culture plays a crucial role in the design of an marketing communication strategy and it was necessary to explore the impact could have on it. Lastly, one semi-structured telephone interview was undertaken with the marketing manager of Coca-Cola Curacao to explore the cultural aspects adopted in their marketing communication strategy and the motivation behind engagement in certain activities.

## **DESK RESEARCH**

Verschuren en Doorewaard (2010) characterize desk research as a method that “is carried out mainly from behind a desk, in the library and or achieves.” In this research desk research has been used for the purpose of collecting data (articles, manuscripts, video and audiotapes) about the marketing activities in each island and the goals Softex wants to achieve in each island through events. In addition, it had been used for analyzing the brand image of Softex on each island and to examine the cultural demands of the customer and lastly the presented theories in the theoretical framework were gained through desk research. The use of the documents has helped to strengthen the credibility of the research and to complement the interview positively in portraying a whole picture of the current situation.

## **GENERALISATION, VALIDITY, RELIABILITY**

The risk of this research method lies within the little basis of generalizations and the analysis of case studies as it tends to be more subjected to researcher bias than other research strategies (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2010). Generalization can be performed by informing existing literature to enhance internal and external validity and the theoretical level of the established theory from the research.

The research is based on one typical case study within the Caribbean “SoftexGroup” in which the generated evidence will be more convincing. The research produced a specific strategy to help Softex enhance their brand image properly and manage their marketing communications effectively, making validity of less importance (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2010). Interview questions were directly linked to the research objective and research questions, to ensure validity. Data has been analysed with accuracy and the transcripts have been validated by the interviewees to assure accuracy of the data. Secondary data have been used to determine questions to be posed and the validity of the provided information. All interviews have been recorded to avoid bias and a neutral tone of voice has been maintained throughout the interview to avoid observer bias and thus ensuring reliability. When question were unclear, question were repeated to provide the proper understanding for the interviewee to express their thoughts and feelings without intervention which could lead to participant bias.

## 5. RESEARCH RESULTS

### 5.1 THEORETICAL RESULTS

The presented theories in the theoretical framework will contribute to analysing the empirical research results. Before the results can be related to the theories, it must be understood how the theories contribute to the research. This section briefly addresses the key elements that can be derived from theories and how these will contribute to the research.

**Q 1: “What relevant elements can be derived from branding and marketing communication, culture and event marketing theories about the development of an event marketing communication strategy to help establish and communicate a brand image?”**

#### **1. What key elements can be derived from branding and marketing communication theories?**

Branding and marketing communication theories explain that marketing communication is an important process of branding and is essential for building and maintaining brand and customer equity. Marketing communication can yield positive effect on brand awareness and image and help in building relationship with customers, however, prior to this a brand its identity has to be defined and integrated in the marketing programme. It is of essence to develop a familiar brand that holds strong, favourable and unique brand associations in customers’ mind. The plant manager and CEO of Softex will be asked what kind of image and/or associations they want to establish.

#### **2. What key elements can be derived from event marketing theories?**

Event marketing theory explains that specific objectives have to be set (by the organization) as they are the precursor of the event design. Objectives serve as guide for event selection or organization as there are multiple events depending on the objective that the organization has. It has been recognized that events should be prevalent in organizations their marketing strategies as they provide the opportunity for personal interaction with the brand. The greater the unique bond with the audience the greater the favouritism of the brand will be. All three locations will be asked to indicate their objectives regarding the use of events. These will be analysed and used for event selection according to goal to be achieved.

#### **3. What key elements can be derived from cultural theories?**

De Mooij (2005) has studied branding from an intercultural communication perspective and has considered Hofstede’s cultural dimensions for a framework for cross-cultural communication for understanding what makes advertising culturally bound. The Hofstede model in combination with the context model of Hall exemplifies how western cultures differ from non-Western cultures and how cultural differences in priority of customers in respect to the dimensions or values predicts advertising appeals, the processing and persuasiveness of product information and the determinants of purchase intention.

### 5.2 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RESULTS

Several interviews were conducted with Cultural experts of the three islands and the CEO and employees of Softex who hold the position of Plant Manager at Softex paper Curacao, Marketing Manager of SoftexGroup and Sales Managers of Puerto Rico and Aruba. This has been done with the aim

of investigating the current branding strategy and marketing communication activities and what their expectations are on communicating through events.

The empirical research results will be answered by 5 sub-questions that reflect the research question below:

**Q 2: “How can the western cultural aspects of an event marketing communication strategy be adapted to the cultural aspects of the islands involved (non-western cultures)?”**

**1. What aspects of the event marketing communication strategy need to be adapted to the different cultures?**

This question was asked in order to examine if all aspects of the event marketing communication strategy remained the same in the three different cultures. Although not necessarily culturally bound but yet relevant for this research is that the branding aspect of the strategy differs for all three islands.

Mrs. Wijshijer who holds the position of Marketing Manager of SoftexGroup, believes that there are differences in terms of branding and marketing communication when it comes to the different islands in which Softex is active. Mrs. Wijshijer states that there is a big difference between the branding approach in Curacao and the one in Aruba. This difference is due to the fact that Softex in Aruba is a distributor and Softex Curacao a factory. The value which each wants to connote to their brands differs as Carex also sells other products such as baby product, cups and plastic plates. Softex wants to stand for low-price, high quality and local whilst this would clash with what Carex currently stands for as it is also importing products which means it is no longer local, nor can it use any kind of symbols for customers to recognize it as a Softex product. Both in Curacao and in Curacao, Softex is relatively unknown but Aruba does not strive to establish the same brand image as Curacao although it has been established that more awareness is required. Carex has not been very active when it comes to marketing communication. Besides some advertisements in a magazine of a local supermarket and product discounts during Christmas time no marketing communication initiatives have been conducted according to Mrs. Raven who holds the position of Sales Manager and is also responsible for marketing activities in Aruba.

Brands are very important in Curacao when it comes to displaying status, that is, the more status the product displays, and the more willingness there is to purchase an expensive product. Brands from which no social prestige can be obtained might be noticed but people tend not to become loyal towards it. Inhabitants of Curacao are very price sensitive and do not have a direct interest in quality when it comes to basic needs as opposed to the west. It is important thought that the brand is being associated with the values that have been established by Softex. Brand recognition which has been considered important by scholars is low in Curacao, possibly by the diverse portfolio of brands that Softex has and the lack of marketing communication. The brand image has not been established yet as the organization has held a monopolistic position for years and maintained a low pricing strategy instead of promoting its brands as quality products. The brand identity of SoftexGroup has been determined as: “the one address for all your hygienic paper needs.” Mainly two of the three leading brands are known by many and are not perceived as quality product while Softex wants to promote their brands as quality goods. The main objective according to Mr. Luis who holds the position of Plant Manager at Softex Paper

Curacao, is to make a shift from low-quality products to high quality products and from retailers as customers to end-customer as customer which is why it is important to establish a brand image (appendix 2, p. 53).

As the inhabitants of Curacao are very price sensitive Softex has not adapted their low pricing strategy yet and are a bit reluctant towards change. Mr Luis explains that in transferring from target group and expanding as an organization, marketing and a strategy in particular is needed to help increase the brand recognition and awareness. A certain level of trust among people needs to be established as their perceptions can influence the brand meaning (appendix 2, p. 53).

For Softex, the right media for reaching implies radio advertisements. Mrs. Wijshijer indicated that the difference with western advertising styles is that Antillean advertisements are preferred to be done by radio instead of printed advertisements or television commercials by customers. Newspapers are commonly read but advertisements are easily overseen for an unknown reason. She believes that radio advertisements should be adorned with party like tunes or local music beats to make it more appealing and should not be too long as it will not keep customer's their interest on Curacao (appendix 1, p. 47). The most popular radio channels for such advertisements are Radio Mas (99.7 FM) and radio Direct (107.1 FM).

Softex Products Puerto Rico unlike the other two does have a brand image. Mrs. Wijsher further states that although Softex Products Inc. has attended at exhibitions and trade shows in Puerto Rico its main purpose has not been promotion but rather networking. When it comes to the customers, Mr. Torres who holds the position of Sales Manager and marketing employee explained that the "Puertorriquen" are very proud people and are very proud of products manufactured in Puerto Rico. Despite the stiff competition from multinationals, Softex has carved its way to success. In 2012, Softex has won the "Hecho en Puerto Rico" award which is an excellence award for their products and service (appendix 6, p. 71). The award has helped Softex to build a brand image associated with high quality, low-price and good service, which has led to increased loyalty from customers towards the products. The emblem of the award which is also visible on the products has helped to enhance the brand image, brand awareness and recognition. Besides the events described above, Softex has had media coverage from the local television and radio stations due to its prestige achievement.

## **2. What cultural aspects does Aruba need to include compared to the western cultural aspects?**

Marketers who want to introduce products in Aruba have to consider the fact that the Aruban culture has been greatly influenced by American values. Mr. Palemo who holds the position of executive director at the cultural institution of Aruba (Cas di Cultura) mentions achievement, success, and individualism as highly regarded American values that set the island apart from its other collectivism neighbour islands Curacao and Bonaire. These values signify attainment of the "good life" for most American and thus also for Arubans and is often associated with bigger quantities according to Schiffman&Kanuk (2008). One particular adaptation to this particular culture that Softex has done is adapting its product line to producing bigger toilet rolls and paper towels for Aruba. According to Mrs. Wijshijer the Aruban culture has demanded for Softex to produce these bigger rolls and to offer bigger

paper toiler bundles. The premium segment is something that is likely to become very successful in Aruba as they are more determined toward success and achievement and thus value quality more.

The cultural aspect that Aruba does need to include as it differs from western cultural aspects is the high indulgence that the island has. In considering the appropriate media to reach Softex its target audience it is important to take note of the high regard for enjoyment and leisure time that the culture has. Events such as Carnival, Betico Day (status Aparte), Dera Gay and the Flag Day are among the events that Mr. Palemo has indicated that are celebrated throughout the year and are highly anticipated by the society. It satisfies desired and wishes in regard to enjoyment and fun while advertisements during the events are more likely to attract the interest of the target audience. Finally Mr. Palemo has indicated that the Aruban culture is very open-minded making it easier to introduce new ways of advertising or product launches through means of events (appendix 5, p. 69).

It appears that a Western style has been adapted in Aruba to a certain extent as they portray individualistic values, low uncertainty and a pragmatic way of thinking while still preserving their collectivistic value of realising their desires with regard to having fun and enjoying life. This latter is also the cultural aspect of Aruba that needs to be included into the strategy compared to the western cultural aspects.

### **3. What cultural aspects does Curacao need to include compared to the western cultural aspects?**

Culture brings its own challenges to the table when developing a marketing communication strategy, especially when it involves different islands and cultures. The high-context communication style of Curacao should be taken into consideration when considering advertising messages as visuals and symbols are more welcomed opposed to facts and data.

Generally it would be difficult to introduce a new product or reach the target audience through innovative ways as the Antillean culture is very intolerant towards changes and ambiguity. This could lead to an obstacle in regard to introducing a new quality product. According to Mr. Bacilio who holds the position of CEO at the cultural institution of Curacao (Kas di Kultura) the collective nature of the people could make it even more difficult or easier for any organization to influence behaviour. In such culture people have a sense of belonging to a group and are seeking alignment with the group's opinion.

It appears that the Hofstede dimension *indulgence* is one cultural aspect that is of essence to a marketing communication strategy in Curacao according to Mr. Bacilio. Living a virtuous life, leisure time and enjoyment are extremely important and can be perceived as the perfect opportunity to market a product. As long as customers are given the opportunity to have fun, celebrate and do as they please, interest increases. Celebrating life and enjoyment is very important in Curacao. Events satisfy the customers by providing them with entertainment and not too much information about the product. Mr. Bacilio his expertise on the culture has confirmed that messages are more likely to be received or awareness generated by means of events as these are greatly valued by the culture. He further states that customers on the island do not distinguish between the types of events as long as their desires and impulses with regard to enjoyment and having fun can be realised by attending the event (appendix 3, p. 60).

Softex has been sponsoring a local softball team for years without recognizing the benefits this could bring about. Instead of deriving benefits the sponsoring has been established as a result of relational ties according to Mr. Luis.

#### **4. What cultural aspects does Puerto Rico need to include compared to the western cultural aspects?**

There are a few cultural aspects that need to be considered when adapting a western cultural strategy to the “Puertorriquen” culture. Due to the highly collectivistic nature in which relationships and loyalty are paramount a certain degree of loyalty has been established among customers towards Softex its products. The package for the Puerto Rican customers has been changed to fit the market. Unlike the Antillean customer who prefers single toilet rolls, 4-pack toilet paper of the brand Swave is preferred, which is the most qualitative product of Softex. According to Mr. Torres who holds the position of Sales Manager and is responsible for marketing activities as well At Softex Products in Puerto Rico, this might be explained by the proud, competitive and adopting nature of “Puertorruenos” despite their collectivism. While family and education are greatly valued, the island has adopted certain values from the country of which they have been rules on in the past namely, The United States. The development is the perseverance for achieving result, excellence and hard work which is partly why they are open to adaptation to achieve certain goals according to Mrs. Rodriguez who holds the position of executive director of the cultural institution of Puerto Rico (La case de la herencia cultural puertorriquena). Class distinctions are based on the ability to consume certain goods and the goal is to purchase high-quality goods such as Swave (appendix 4, p. 65).

According to Mrs. Rodriguez, the Puerto Rican culture has a strong focus on realising impulses and enjoying life to the fullest extent rather than controlling these impulses and desires.

Mrs. Wijshijer has already pointed out that Softex Products Inc. has attended trade shows and exhibitions. Mr. Torres explained that the main reason of this attendance is the growing trend of these events on the islands. Multinational from abroad and mainly American companies have utilised this as a marketing tool for promoting their business and products, but as America and Puerto Rico differ in culture; collectivism versus individualism, this marketing benefit of events have never been acknowledged. From a cultural perspective the importance of these events lies in its network ability and sociability with other industry member and the ability to expand the customer base. Sponsoring is also part of the organization its activities but again this has been influenced by culture as it is a matter of relationships rather than using it as a marketing tool.

#### **5. What other distinguishable factors can be identified?**

Considering the current business situation the event objective of Softex Products Inc. in Puerto Rico would be to increase sales as it has been noted that loyalty among customers has already been enhanced and people associate good service, low price and high quality with Softex. The event objectives for Softex in Aruba and Curacao are mainly to generate brand awareness and enhance the brand image, that is, product and corporate objectives.



It appears that events are the proper way to increase awareness of the people facing the brand. As Softex is relatively unknown it is essential to increase the awareness by a vast percentage. As Softex has been established for many years and has a local advantage it can emphasize the difference of the product. Events are experience based which can help to build customer relationships to maintain the brand preference among the customers. These objectives are also identified in literature as sales, product and corporate objectives (Gupta, 2003; Meenaghan, 1983).

### **5.3 ANALYTICAL RESULTS**

This section analyses the results of the Western cultural aspects that have to be adapted to the cultural aspects of the islands involves. The results will be analysed by means of the following research question:

**Q 3: What are the main similarities and differences between the non- western and the western event marketing communication strategy?**

#### **1. What are the similarities and differences between the results of analysis of the non-western strategies?**

The Aruban, Antillean and Puertorriquen culture seem to have one common collectivistic trait which is relevant to this research. The collectivistic trait includes the importance of happiness and the control one has over their life. Cultures with a high score of indulgence, which all three cultures seem to have, allow for people to freely satisfy their desired, especially those related to having fun and enjoying life. In such societies people value leisure time and friends and tend to be more outgoing, optimistic and focus on the present moment.

The Antillean and Puertorriquen culture have more cultural aspects in common according to the cultural dimensions theory of Hofstede. Both islands have a collectivistic culture in which group ties strong and the family is extended to include indirect family or even friends. Communication in collectivistic cultures is usually high context as directness is being perceived as rude. Their cultures are also characterised by the focus on “us,” relations are prioritised above tasks, and there is the need to maintain harmony and avoid confrontations. The second cultural collectivistic trait that the islands have in common is uncertainty avoidance. In high uncertainty cultures, there is the tendency to avoid risks and unexpected situations which create anxiety. Both islands have a preference for predictable or controlled situations.

The Aruban and Antillean culture which have both been influenced by Western cultures seem to share one common individualistic trait. The individualistic trait includes power distance which describes how less powerful members of a society accept and expect power inequality. In small power distance cultures such as Aruba and Curacao, people have equal power and can advance to a higher status through income or education. Hierarchy is established for convenience and superiors are accessible.

Not only does Aruba differ from the other two islands by its individualist paradigm in which the highest value is placed on interest of the individual whose primary concerns are personal preferences, needs and goals which are values that are downplayed in collectivistic cultures but does the Antillean culture also differ from Puerto Rican collectivism. Torelli et al. (2012) has used the individualism- collectivism classification in combination with the horizontal/vertical distinction that Triandis (1995) proposed.

Triandis observed that that even within the individualism-collectivism classifications, individualistic cultures or collectivistic cultures can differ. He emphasised this by stating that Norwegian individualism differs from American individualism in the same way as Japanese collectivism differs from Israeli collectivism.

Aruba which has reportedly adopted American values tend to be very close to what Torelli et al. (2012:96-97) have identified as a *VI society* in which the emphasize is on improving individual status and distinguishing themselves from others through competition and achievement a self-enhancing concept would be more appealing to customers. Puerto Rico (*VC society*) and Curacao (*HC society*) on the other hand, tend to be more collectivistic, yet different appeals are still necessary. *VC societies* greatly value traditions, submit to the will of authority and support in-group competition while prioritizing the goal of the group, *HC societies*, unlike *VC societies* do not submit to authority and value sociability and interdependence. This makes the conservation brand concept most likely to be most effective for Puerto Rico to be less appealing for Curacao. Curacao is more focus on social relationship and therefore resonates more with a self-transcendence concept.

Direct communication among individualist generally is considered appropriate in the Aruban culture is considered inappropriate within the Antillean and Puerto Rican culture.

## **2. What are the similarities and differences between the results of analysis of the western and non-western strategy?**

Marketing and advertising theories and techniques are born in Western countries, making western cultural aspects at the root of how advertising works. To be able to understand how marketing works across cultures, cultural differences and similarities have to be examined as well.

The individualism-collectivism dimension seems to explain variances in communication the most. The distinction high and low-context communication, as described in the theoretical framework, fits the different communication behaviour of members in collectivistic and individualistic cultures. In Aruba, which is a low-context culture, people are more oriented towards written words whereas in Curacao and Puerto Rico people are more visually oriented, making the message difficult to perceive by outsiders. The major difference concerning communication is the direct (preferred by westerns) and indirect style, which affects the writing or communication styles. The indirect style conceals true intentions and is perceived as respectful by collectivistic cultures whilst the direct style expresses messages or desires explicitly. The use of the inappropriate communication style in culture can lead to misunderstanding.

Another difference between the western and non-western strategy is based on the uncertainty avoidance dimension which determines the appeals to be used in advertising which has also been emphasised by De Mooij (2005). High uncertainty avoidance cultures such as Curacao and Puerto Rico are more likely to use group identity appeal while Aruba is more likely to use individualistic appeals that focus on the individual. Cultures with a strong uncertainty avoidance call for structured advertising as it has to provide a sense of security, including demonstration of how the product works or has to be used. In low uncertainty avoidance cultures, ambiguity is tolerated.

The difference between western and non-western cultures with respect to marketing communication or events in particular is reflected in how marketing is used. In individualistic cultures marketing and/or advertising is used to persuade customers whereas collectivistic cultures value relationship building and the establishment of trust between customers and the brand more, also because of the higher power distance. This could imply that individualistic cultures use repetition more and collectivistic cultures stress the brand name or product more as they value symbols and visuals.

De Mooij (2005) has pointed out another difference between Western and non-Western cultures as the collectivistic culture tends to use more emotions in their advertising, which is different from the role of information in advertising that is important in individualistic cultures.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this research, the efficiency of an event marketing communication strategy has been examined using a case study approach. Additionally, the study investigates the interaction of culture with regard to the aforementioned elements.

The findings from preliminary research and academic literature imply that a brand is the public image of an organization or products, a reputation, a promise. Keller (1993) and Aaker (2002) have pointed out that when a brand and its image are delivered consistently, it shapes customers' perceptions. An effective brand honours values, celebrates its personality and embodies what it represents while developing clear, compelling and consistent messages that can speak to large target audiences. A crucial part of developing a brand strategy is the establishment of the brand identity and image. The aforementioned fundamental building blocks of a brand pose a challenge in cross cultural situations making it necessary to adopt marketing communication to different cultures. Given this it may be concluded that Softex has already established their brand identity as "the one address for all your hygienic paper needs," yet there is still the need for improvement as far as brand image is concerned. For this brand image development Softex needs to understand the different customer consumption patterns and need to adopt accordingly for an effective strategy when operating in different markets.

Empirical research indicates that Softex want to align its brand image, which is mainly relevant for Aruba and Curacao, with the premium segment which they want to enter. This means that their brand image should reflect high-quality, consistency to meet customer expectations and a higher price yet lower than the competition due to its local presence. On the flip side, customers in Curacao have until recently not been ready to purchase staple products at premium prices but rather focus on affordable prices and smaller quantities. It further indicates that individualistic (Aruba) and collectivistic (Curacao and Puerto Rico) cultures tend to be the two ends of a continuum. Softex has recognized the different customer needs and has adopted the brand to the preferences of the customers in each culture with respect to product packaging and marketing communication.

Based on these results, the following conclusions can be drawn about the design of an event marketing communication strategy for Softex in the three mentioned islands. First of all, Softex faces a lucrative deal in terms of untapped market potential (premium segment) and broader reach by means of events yet it also poses certain challenges such as cultural differences. As found in the results, it can be concluded that the consequences of culture on brands mandate for brands to adopt different brand concepts for each islands. However, one common cultural aspect known as Hofstede's latest cultural dimension called indulgence indicates the potential efficiency of events in the three islands for achieving Softex its marketing objective(s).

In contrast, it can be concluded that Softex has a long way to go in order to establish a positive brand image given that they have never initiated any marketing activity or effort until recently. Second, it may be concluded that Softex needs to remain consistent it is event marketing communication efforts in order to increase brand recognition which in turn will contribute to brand loyalty. This means that more effort is required by the organization in order to be fully efficient.

Overall, competitive environment forces organizations to find the best way to operate efficiently and effectively, and failing to do so will incur losses, which might take them out of business. Because of this Softex has been stimulated to invest in innovation and increase their productivity.

#### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Further studies might explore how in the area of community events, where a for-profit organization participates as partner with a non-profit organization (e.g. CuraDoet) as a form of corporate social responsibility. Given the contrasting mind-set of for-profit and non-profit marketers it would be interesting to investigate on how Softex could benefit from a non-profit partnership. Given the research design, it was unable to examine the benefits, if any, that the mind-set of non-profit marketers may have had on the efficiency of the event marketing communication and the objective of establishing a strong, positive brand image. Non-profit organizations aim to promote awareness and through that the organization its programme. What makes non-profit marketers interesting for Softex is their common interest in building relationship and facilitating two-way interaction. Non-profits usually rely on the customer its positive relationship with the organization. As it seems that Softex has increased its relationship building value and is evolving towards non-profit practises with its objectives and thus, event marketing communication strategy this represents a fruitful future research direction. The combination of the contrasting mind-sets might be great at building awareness, gaining new customers who will already have a positive image about the organization as you are collaborating with an organization that supports their favourite cause (Dilen, 2014).

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the recommendations for the event marketing communication strategy for Softex. The recommendations are based on the conclusion presented in chapter 6. These recommendations will help Softex to communicate its brand image by means of an event marketing communication strategy.

The recommendations are:

- ✓ That Softex takes immediate measures to promote its image alongside its product range and adopts a responsible, low price yet qualitative image;
- ✓ To increase awareness and visibility by using the softex logo in promotions;
- ✓ That the world clean- up day, the carnival season, Sue season, The Holy communion and the Summer Holiday, be the time for promotion through events;
- ✓ That Softex maintains consistency in order to generate and maintain growth across all channels
- ✓ That it adopts a self-transcendence brand concept for Curacao which concerns with helping others and being pro-social, a self-enhancement brand concept for Aruba which symbolizes status or personal achievements and a conservation brand concept for Puerto Rico which concerns maintaining tradition and certainty that status quo provide, to be more appealing to customers in each island.

The communication strategy of an organization plays a crucial role in the development of the brand. Communication becomes more complex when there are multiple competitors trying to attract the same target audiences. Culture also impacts communication from which it is believed that the individualism-collectivism dimension explains the most. Multiple communication techniques are applied in marketing of a product as customers demand the way of communication to be adapted to them. It is therefore important that Softex its event marketing communication strategy to spread in all dimensions to appeal to a large target audience. Cultural theories reflect that the purpose of marketing communication varies across cultures. Non-western cultures tend to use marketing communication for the purpose of building relationship and trust between customers and the seller and it focus more on inducing positive feelings. These differences hold the key for an effective strategy when operating in different markets.

### CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

Objectives are important to be set and clarified for the planned actions to be achieved. There are three levels of objectives; corporate, marketing (events in this case) and communication. It is advised for Softex to adopt the following objectives:

#### Corporate objectives:

- To protect and maintain its leading position of local hygienic product in Aruba, Curacao and Puerto Rico
- To build a strong momentum in the growing premium segment in the involved islands (nothing represents the brand and its image more than the products. Product quality and improvements should be at the forefront of the corporate objectives. Understanding the competitive landscape, new opportunities and market desires are crucial for a profitable approach towards the product goals.)

- Intensify Softex its effort to develop a positive brand image and reputation by supporting the local community and providing services
- Continue the drive for increased revenue through proper marketing management and better products

### **Marketing/Event objectives:**

In order to represent a larger part of the Caribbean market, Softex could increase the awareness by 15% in the next 6 months, and by 25% for the next 12 months. As explained before Softex products are mainly bought by parents and elderly people who have grown up with the brand. Therefore, one of the objectives of the brand should be to increase awareness among a younger target group by 10% in the next 12 months. Despite the low brand recognition, in terms of sales Softex is a successful brand that could increase their sales by 3% in the next 6 months, and by 5% in the next 12 months. To appeal to a larger target audience, Softex would like to test a new market for high income customers, promoting a more western lifestyle. As a result, the brand image of Softex could increase by 10% in the next 12months.

Marketing communication activities are a essential part in achieving the other two objectives and have to be coordinated with other organizational activities:

- To enhance the brand awareness by 15-20% in the next 12 months
- To emphasize the brand strength and thus differences of the product compared to competitor products and create differentiated brand image awareness increase by 20% in the next 12 months. Softex its local presence in all three islands is its strength for ensuring low prices.
- To increase awareness of the brand name among the customers by 15% in the next 6 months and by 25% in the next 12 months. Softex is a well-established brand in the islands but still unknown making it essential to increase the awareness by an important yet realistic percentage.
- To maintain brand preference among its current customers
- Product launches as it is effective way to debut the new product into the premium segment and can help to boost sales and introduce the product to potential customers
- To strengthen the relationship with customers
- Ideally communication should lead to increase of consideration of Softex when purchasing

These objectives are recommended as events in general have an image association potential but according to these objectives Softex should focus on two types of events; PR events and entertainments events. According to Gupta (2003) entertainments events are integrated into the marketing strategy and are used to build brand image which is Softex its primary goal, and can also reach a larger target audience due to the publicity and media coverage it will generate. PR events are used for product launches which are essential for Softex as they want to enter the premium segment. Both are events that are planned form the beginning until delivery. Whether these objectives will be met can be determined by post campaign research which should be initiated by the beginning and continued till the end for the situation to be monitored.

## **TARGET AUDIENCES**

The target audience for Softex is male and female ages 16-80+, spread across all incomes and races. The target audience is motivated to buy low-priced hygienic paper products due to their staple nature which almost every household purchases. A higher-priced brand can thus, easily be substituted by a lower-priced brand, which is beneficiary for Softex.

The brand needs to increase its sales in the 16-24 age groups as they are the future customers, making it significant to reach them for the long-term objectives. The short-term objectives will target the 24+ age group more effectively as they are the most inclined to buy by impulse.

As the large audiences on the islands tend to be more receptive to a campaign or advertisements linked to an event, it is recommended for Softex to either sponsor events such as The North Sea Jazz festival or organize its own event. A strategic way of communicating with its target audience prior to the event is by means of cinema advertising to diffuse the product launch. The advantage of cinema advertising is that the audience is most often local, focused on the screen and captive. This allows for the message to be absorbed without any distractions. For consistency this could be combined with toilet advertising in the restrooms of the cinema to generate top of the mind awareness.

## **CREATIVE STRATEGY**

Softex is locally present in all three islands and can thus ensure low pricing regardless of the quality and should emphasize this in their promotions as well as their diverse offering to serve the different needs of the customers. As messages are likely to change, early promotions should focus on generating awareness of the brand name and brand image, whereas later promotions might concentrate specific benefits of the products.

To appeal to the target market Softex needs to adapt a different brand concept for each island, but overall should promote the products and its users to be intelligent, successful, and reliable and the products to provide security. Barriers to purchase should be overcome by adopting a different brand concept for each island; Aruba promoting a self-enhancement brand concepts stressing status, personal achievements and efficiency, Puerto Rico adopting a conservation brand concept concerning traditional values and certainty that status quo provides whereas Curacao should adopt a self-transcendence brand concept symbolizing consideration towards the welfare of others and being sociable. It is significant to stress that Softex Puerto Rico does not need to establish an image as one has already been established by the "Hecho en Puerto Rico" excellence award and is therefore perceived as a high quality brand that offers low price and good service, but this image should be upheld with consistency. The intent of the strategy is to generate more awareness and to communicate a brand image, thus, It would make sense to target the mind-sets identified in the target audiences and emphasize the arguments for buying the product(s). The tone of voice should be modern and with humour if possible.

## **COMMUNICATIONS MIX**

When considering the various communication methods one factor have to be considered; hygienic paper is a low involvement product which calls for a responsive appeal. This implies that communication is aimed at reminders so that the products stay on top of the mind. The overall aim of this strategy is to



generate awareness for which grounds needs to be established for emphasizing why the particular brand is better (Hollensen, 2012). According to Hollensen (2012) it is then advisable to focus more on the audio/visual part of the advertisement and the colours or slogan than on the content of the advertisement this also aligns with the collectivistic culture its preference for symbols and imagery in advertising (De Mooi, 2005).

**Public relations,** “the promotional discipline of forming what your audience thinks or feels about the value of your enterprise and, even more important, about your organization as a whole” (Hoyle, 2002:46), are advantageous in building loyalty towards your event and to present the public with “what others say about you rather than what you say about yourself” (Hoyle, 2002:47). The aim of public relations ranges from creating awareness of the event to continuing awareness to managing negative publicity. Public Relations are becoming an increasingly popular technique with its tools (press releases, media alerts, event fact sheets photos, brochures, flyers, giveaways, stunts) to bringing a product or event to attention. It is useful because it enjoys a high credibility although the message cannot be controlled (Hoyle, 2002). This communication form will be of importance for Softex its product launch.

**Sales promotion,** short-term incentives to encourage purchase. Sales promotion is most effective at the beginning of the product life cycle to encourage trial. Softex its products have been on the market for years however, for the shift in focus on customers and the introduction of a new quality product sales promotion should be put into place (e.g. by offering the first 50 customers a free single roll or make use of online discount coupons). Sales promotion can also be used to increase sales from time to time.

**Advertising,** any paid form of non-personal mass communication from an identified sponsor, is one of the most “predominant and traditional event promotion techniques (Hoyle, 2002:42),” should be the fundamental communication mix ingredient for the campaign(s), particularly radio advertising. The right advertising instrument for event needs depends on the target audience that has to attract and the instrument reach. According to Hoyle (2002), for localized events newspapers, brochures/flyers, and co-promotion with supporting facilities and groups are most effective. Advertising is controllable, and used to increase awareness, create interest and inform the target audience about Softex and its products. Collectivistic cultures which are linked to high-context communication call for structured advertising that makes use of group appeals, including a product demonstration. It is also important that the brand name or product is emphasized in advertising as sign and symbols are valued more. The indirect communication style of collectivist calls for the use of emotions or implicit communication in advertising. On the other hand, the advertising method has to be adopted for Aruba as it portrays more western cultural aspects. This implies that in advertising Softex should focus more on providing information (facts) and making use of repetition of the message. The advertising should make use of individual appeals and possibly stress how the product benefits the customer in terms of status.

The first recommended campaign can be found in appendix 13 on page 90.

#### **TIMING AND BUDGET**

Marketing communication should start prior to the product launch or event for them to reach their fullest potential. Public Relations activities will be provided before and after the launch and advertising will be put into place as soon as the product is available (appendix 14, p. 92).

**POST CAMPAIGN TESTING**

Post-testing (during and after campaign) helps to evaluate the success of the campaign and provides feedback which are helpful for future campaigns. For the post-testing a survey among the target audiences is recommended to determine the reactions to the communications used during the campaign. The post-testing should also include awareness, brand image and the recall ability of the audiences towards Softex to see how it has influenced the people/customers. These results can then in turn be used to measure the result of the campaign compared to the result prior to the campaign.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 “INTERVIEW SUMMARY 1- SOFTEXGROUP”

<b>Interview file n°:</b> 1	<b>Date:</b> February 14, 2014
<b>Year/Semester/Block:</b> Semester 2, block 2	<b>Time:</b> 09.30
<b>Main topic: marketing techniques/strategies and activities of Softex</b>	<b>Duration:</b> appr. 75 minutes
<b>Place:</b> Softex, IndustrieparkBrievengat, Curacao	
<b>Name of interviewer:</b> SukiMartis	
<b>Name of interviewee:</b> Mrs. P. Wijshijer	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> answering questions based on their knowledge and experiences	
<b>Sub-topics:</b> organizational context of Softex	
<b>Reasons for interviewing:</b> gaining knowledge from insiders/experts	

<b>Description: summary of transcript and comments ( in English)</b>
<p><b>1. What does Softex Group stand for?</b></p> <p>Paul Lieuw founded Softex Curacao in 1977 with the purpose of manufacturing toilet paper, napkins and kitchen towels for domestic use, and eventually to be used by institutions such as hospitals, restaurants and hotels. He started the company with the brand Noky, which still exist today. Three years after the start Mr. Lieuw expanded the business by founding another plant in Puerto Rico, followed by Softex paper Carex in Aruba in 1985, Softex group in Florida and South Carolina in 2001 and 2010. The latest business expansion took place in 2012 in the Dominican Republic.</p> <p>Paul started his business with as mission to manufacture quality products offered at a low price that provide added value for our customers, for Softex to be considered as their first option. This counts for both partnerships and supplier. Ever since Paul founded his company he has been striving to become a market leader when it comes to hygienic paper and I believe that he has also achieved this over the years.</p> <p><b>1. How does the organization look like?</b></p> <p>Although it can be said that there is a top-down management within the company, there are no harsh lines between the departments and responsibilities. There are appointed managers but every decision will be taken by Mr. Lieuw himself. This structure has its advantages but you might imagine that it has its disadvantages as well, especially when certain principles are not valued or acknowledged. It limits the room there is for creativity and anatomy for the employees as they are not entitled to take crucial decisions within their discipline.</p> <p><b>Can you explain yourself by means of an example?</b></p> <p>Let's take my discipline as an example, marketing, the company exists for over 35 years today and although we are trying to integrate a marketing department, Mr. Lieuw has been successful for 37 years without marketing so there is little support for my effort as marketing is undervalued. Every strategy I might try to implement or campaign I develop will be evaluated by Mr. Lieuw himself, who eventually decided whether I can go on with it or not. As he does not necessarily believe in marketing he might not acknowledge its impact or</p>

advantages. I am therefore limited in my actions.

**2. What kind of products does Softex manufacture?**

The core products of Softex are napkins, bathroom dispenser tissues, toilet papers, paper towels and institutional paper. We have a number of brands, like Softex, Noky, Swave, Beginnings and Swave Satin that we offer for both domestic use and sell to institutions in the 'horeca' field.

**3. What markets do you target with your products?**

We primarily target everyone on the islands, you might acknowledge that everyone wants toilet paper and looking ahead we can say that there will be a graying trend on Curacao for instance, so focusing on the head of each household is no longer effective. In order for Softex to maintain its success it would have to focus on the young adults as well to establish some brand loyalty.

Besides domestic users we also focus on industrial companies like restaurants and hotels. Our private labels are our biggest profit generator so it would always be one of the objectives to find companies that want us to manufacture the paper for their labels but of course, Curacao, Aruba and Puerto Rico are relatively small islands.

**4. Who are your key competitors in the market?**

In terms of competition it depends on what you are comparing your product with. Softex does stand for quality, innovation and integrity but then again you would have to look at our quality range. Brands such as, Bounty or Page is way out of our range and thus, are competitors but not direct competitors that we compete with. It is quite common on the islands that you will see the number of sheets, the ply number and the diameters on the packaging as competition is determined on those things. Bounty for example, is an A-brand and although we would like to manufacture an A brand products one day, but I believe that before that can actually happen we are 8-10 years further.

Momentarily, we regard Familia, Scott and Snowwhite as our biggest competitors for the reason that they offer single rolls as well, and have similar sheets and diameter rolls. Of course, Scott would still outdo us at the moment as they are producing A/B products and we are producing C/D products.

Odd, to say but I suppose that we are also competing against our own brands at the moment due to import. Some of our products are being produced in the US, like the Softy for example and solely offered in The States as well. When companies are ordering products from the United States and find that their shipment is not enough to fill the entire container they are top loading it with hygienic paper. Once the paper towel, Softy is imported here the price increases making it more expensive. The same top loading principle happens with Colombian toilet papers as well, they don't necessarily have a specific brand name but they are offering cheaper products.

**5. What strategy did Softex apply to meet the demand of its consumers?**

I'm not sure if we can speak of strategy in this case, as marketing is relatively new and I still have a lot to prove in terms of that but Softex has never had a different strategy other than their cost-pricing strategy. It has been a monopolistic organization from the very beginning and the local inhabitants have grown up with Noky for example, thus there was no need for a strategy or marketing for that matter. What we did do is look at the trend and play in on



that. Consumer behavior in Curacao and Puerto Rico is different from Aruba. How? In Curacao and Puerto Rico people tend to be more sensitive towards prices, the live and look at things from day to day so it would make no sense to offer them bundles of 12 or more because they would not buy it anyways. We did do that in the beginning but we have noticed that they prefer to buy single toilet paper rolls. The maximum amount of toilet paper one would buy at a time is six, so we then offered a bundle of six toilet papers. Aruba on the other hand has adopted American values and buying behavior more than we have and do not see the logic behind buying one single roll of toilet paper. The bigger the bundles the better. Therefore, we are not offering single rolls in Aruba, but bundles.

**6. How has Softex been able to maintain their success for over 35 years without a marketing department or active communication with its customers?**

As I have just explained it has been due to the monopoly power that Softex has enjoyed. But with that said, I do have to say that a change can be noticed. We can still speak of a monopoly but our public is becoming more educated. There is a graying trend which according to my belief will only increase in the coming years and our brands are not known or preferred among the young adults. I think it is just a matter of time before others also acknowledge this and decide to start a manufacturing company that offers hygienic paper as well. Softex no longer enjoys government protection, or is benefitting from other barriers restricting market access, so it is crucial for us to act now.

In the time that Softex had been established, the terms social media or internet did barely exist yet. Although Softex had enough time to make use of those tools they have chosen not to do so. Last year we started with social media and internet but not actively. This would be another objective as it could facilitate brand awareness which is one of my main objectives.

**7. Why has Softex decided to integrate a marketing department now?**

I have worked in The Netherlands for 20 years, and although I have worked in a different brand, I have seen the impact that marketing can have for any organization. Softex may fail to see it but as times are changing, the population is changing, buying behaviors are changing, the organization also needs to change to adapt to those things. You could argue that it is not necessary but then you would have to face the consequences linked to that as well. You could always grow and expand and as that is one of Softex's objective, it has decided to try to integrate marketing to see how that might benefit the company. The graying trend makes it crucial to become known among other age groups of the population, to think ahead on what else could be done to still sell your products and to make profit.

**8. As marketing is relatively new for Softex, is the organization still in alignment with its main objectives?**

I would not say this is the case, but we are trying to sort it out. I guess it is an ongoing process. Marketing is a principle that is not known here at Softex and is hard to be acknowledged due to the companies' success over the years without it. It is not going the proper way, or as one might know marketing but it's a work in progress.

**9. What are your marketing objectives?**

Softex stands for providing quality goods and service that create value for our clients through innovation, integrity and partnership. We are the one address for all your hygienic paper needs, which is also our vision.

For me the brand identity, or core values are innovation, quality and integrity. It might seem controversy to say quality as I have explained earlier on that we are manufacturing C/D Quality products but in every quality range you can strive for quality. With innovation I mean to say that, despite being successful you have to keep innovating yourself in terms of you product to see what can be improved to offer you customers the best product possible.

It is important that when communicating externally everything is aligned. As it is right now alignment is missing which might explain why results of a survey we performed last year indicated that the customers are confused about which brands are Softex'. It is therefore, one of my objectives to achieve compete alignment of the brand image, logo and message that we want to communicate. I think this is necessary to obtain more brand awareness as this seems to be lacking. Other than that, it is also my objective to improve our customer and business relations in order to establish customer satisfaction. My last objective is to increase our profit by 5% within this year and to become more active in promotional activity to ensure that are customers are satisfied and keep buying our products and ideally we reach new customers with our activities as well.

**10. What does the marketing team needs to do in order to reach a proper level of alignment with the overall organizational objectives?**

To be very brief, we would have to move mountains. It is not easy to make big steps as I'm the only marketing employee at Softex who is managing the marketing department at Curacao and Puerto Rico alone. I do have a colleague in Aruba who is doing the marketing of Aruba in collaboration with me but still it is hard. I would like to do a lot for us to be aligned and benefit from marketing but as I said, we are going forward with 'baby steps'. It would probably take years before we can actually speak of a proper marketing department and activities but right now it would probably be the best thing to make sure that our message is out there. Brand awareness and our image would be the first step to establish that internally and externally.

**11. Your first campaign was based on customer loyalty, how do you define customer satisfaction and loyalty?**

The reason why softex has a couple of different brand, Softex, Noky and Swave for example is to ensure customer satisfaction. Customers on the islands are very price sensitive and given their unstable economy that is only logical. Besides that, you do have to consider that there are still different classes that have different preferences and resources. Noky, the longest existing brand is the cheapest toilet paper; it is also the one with the lowest quality. Softex, is the follow up of Noky with a bit more quality and thus also a little bit pricier. Swave, the name says it all, is the softest one in terms of the three and is also the most expensive one. In this way we have the same product but offered in different quality and price ranges to fit all demands.

As Softex has enjoyed monopoly power it is hard to know for sure if we can speak of customer loyalty but I like to believe that we can. Nowadays, there are other brands which are being imported from the Netherlands, Jumbo brands or Page or the United States, Scott and Bounty, but local still prefer to buy our brands. Some are brought up with the brand and have remained loyal to the brand until today. During our first campaign, we had one customer who showed us picture from when she was little and is still using the same brand

today.

**12. What is the background to events within the company?**

As we are relatively new, the marketing department barely exists for two years now we haven't done much with events yet. I would like to but everything is very time consuming when you are doing it with only one employee. I consider events to be the proper marketing tool on the islands as the culture is very relationship oriented and greatly values social contacts. As you might now, carnival and "Seu" are events on the islands that everyone is paying a lot of attention to. A lot of effort is being put in the events and a lot of companies make good use of those events to reach their target groups. Inhabitants do not like to read so much and they do not like to invest a lot in long-term projects and therefore, events where they get to have a good time is perfect for us to build our customer relationship while creating brand awareness.

We are currently sponsoring a Softball team on Curacao and Puerto Rico, but nothing is being done with that to get our name out there. I think this is something to focus on in the direct future as it would be a good way for us to build brand awareness.

**13. What would you say is the current brand image of Softex?**

About a year ago I had my very first intern which had developed a questionnaire to see how our customers are thinking about Softex. Surprisingly enough a lot of people are not aware that many of our brands are actually from Softex. The very first brand that was brought on the market on Curacao was Noky and that one is connected to Softex but other brands such as Swave or Beginnings are still a mystery to many. Another thing that came to light is that people don't seem to mind brands or their image on its own, it is all a matter of quality and pricing. This would also be a stimulator for the customer to switch brands.

On the basis of that I was able to conclude that there is no denying in the long way that Softex has to go in terms of communicating their marketing efforts. Establishment of a brand image would probably be the proper first step.

**What makes you think that brand image is the proper first step and not raising brand awareness as people are relatively unknown with Softex?**

Well, right now it would be really hard to develop campaigns that could raise awareness as we are unfamiliar with the associations that people have. I want to make sure that the information we send out about the brand from this moment onwards is not confusing to the customer. I want to have a consistent image that we can uphold which is something that can be done once a proper brand image has been established.

**14. Do you have specific objectives with events?**

Yes, I believe that it is the perfect tool to build customer relations and increase our brand awareness. Events here are something that almost everyone takes part in and therefore the potential to reach our target group or possible new customers is extensive.

**15. How do you foresee the future of this marketing department?**

There is a lot which can be improved or that has to be implemented but I hope that in at least 8 years I can reflect and see that some changes have been made.

<b>Interview file # 1</b>	February 14, 2014
<b>Purpose of the interview:</b> get insight into the marketing techniques/strategies and activities of Softex	<b>Time:</b> 09.30 <b>Duration:</b> appr. 75 minutes
<b>Main Topic:</b> organizational context/Marketing department <b>Primary research Question:</b> What is the current situation on the three islands with regard to event marketing communication strategy?	
<b>Place:</b> Softex, Industrieparkbrievengat	
<b>interviewer:</b> Suki Martis	
<b>interviewee:</b> Mrs. P. Wijshijer	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> Answering questions based on knowledge and experience	
<b>Nexus:</b> <b>Topic 1: Marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge</li> <li>• Strategy</li> <li>• Target groups</li> <li>• Core values</li> <li>• competition</li> </ul> <b>Topic 2: marketing objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand awareness</li> <li>• Brand image</li> <li>• Customer relationship</li> </ul> <b>Topic 3: Events</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event objectives</li> <li>• Type of events</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Sponsorship</li> </ul> <b>Conclusion:</b> From this interview it became evident that the marketing department is lacking knowledge and therefore, has yet to implement a strategy to build brand awareness and brand image. Due to the organization's monopolistic position no strategies other than a low pricing strategy have been implemented to reach its target groups. Due to developments and changing demands, competition has been increasing which makes marketing necessary. It is their objective to strengthen their brand image through events as it fits their culture.	

## APPENDIX 2 “INTERVIEW SUMMARY2- SOFTEXGROUP”

<b>Interview file nº:</b> 2	<b>Date:</b> April 9, 2014
<b>Year/Semester/Block:</b> Semester 2, block 2	<b>Time:</b> 09.00
<b>Main topic:</b> marketing techniques/strategies and activities of Softex	<b>Duration:</b> appr. 90 minutes
<b>Place:</b> Softex, IndustrieparkBrievengat, Curacao	
<b>Name of interviewer:</b> SukiMartis	
<b>Name of interviewee:</b> Mr. Paul Lieu& Herbert Luis	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> answering questions based on their knowledge and experiences	
<b>Sub-topics:</b> marketing context of Softex	
<b>Reasons for interviewing:</b> gaining knowledge from insiders	

<b>Description: summary of transcript and comments (in English)</b>
<p><b>1. What is the main reason for implementing a marketing department?</b></p> <p><b>Paul:</b> I often hear people saying that Softex has managed to stay successful for at least 35 years without marketing so why start now? Let me tell you it is not easy. It hasn't been 35 flawless years without hard work and hurdles. We have enjoyed governmental protection for over 20 years but after that it was hard to keep ourselves standing. 13 years ago we wanted to try something different so we introduced the gray environmental friendly toilet paper which is also cheaper but end-customers weren't so happy about the change, they are not keen about changes and letting go of the familiar without a notification. So why a marketing department? At a certain point you have to acknowledge that the world around you is changing even if you may not want the change. You can ignore it for as long as you want but fact is it is changing and if you choose to ignore it you have to face the consequences. I want Softex to exist for a very long time after today so I had to acknowledge that there is competition, that in order to thrive we have to step up our game and in order to do that marketing is needed. I'm not certain what will fall under marketing but I'm certain that for what we need in the future, it will need promotion as the end-customers on Curacao already showed us that without proper introduction it will all fail.</p> <p><b>2. Who do you consider to be your customers?</b></p> <p><b>Paul:</b> Are you referring to the clients here on Curacao or all of our clients?</p> <p><b>I'm referring to your clients/customers on Curacao, Aruba and Puerto Rico</b></p> <p><b>Paul:</b> I heard you refer to customers in terms of the end-customers but that is not who we consider our customers to be actually. We see retailers as they are the ones who buy our products and on their turn sell it to the end-customers. We don't really see the end-consumer as customer as the distributor has to power to say yes we buy your products to offer to the end-consumer or decline. You see we want them to continue to buy our products; you are dependent of them, so when it comes to marketing why would you then implement a certain strategy or promote your products when it is all about the price the retailers want. We distinguish between a several things, depending on the island or country you pick. Let's take two examples: The United States and Curacao. For the States we only</p>

manufacture private labels and thus no promotion needed it's solely about what the customer wants and that's it. Now for Curacao it is a little bit different.

**Herbert:** Here we differentiate between the domestic market and the industrial market, when it comes to the industrial market again we don't need to promote our products it is mainly what our customers want and that's it. It is not a matter of quality but pricing. For the domestic market, there are retailers in between, those are the ones we consider to be our clients. See it this way, they have two options; either they buy our products or they don't. So we are pretty much dependent of them, the end-customers are more likely to buy toilet paper anyway. When the retailers says they are not willing to pay more than NAFL. 3,- than we have no choice but to adapt to that wish. They are the ones that give certain wishes or indications that we take with us when manufacturing the toilet paper. So yes we would like to offer so many things but we have to take these things into considerations. Now the kind of customers that you are talking about, and what might have caused confusion because Priscilla might have given you the impression that those are our customers, is where we are headed to. As you might understand we want to be in direct contact with them and therefore would need marketing and communications, but we are not there yet. If they would be, then you would be right and nothing that you have been told makes absolutely no sense, I guess it is just a matter of alignment and the lack of marketing knowledge. Everyone is trying to go forward without the actual knowledge how to and therefore we just started somewhere.

**It would then be logical to say that nothing has been done in terms of communication and promotion, or am I mistaken?**

**Paul:** no, you would be right. You have to understand that when we are speaking of toilet paper on Curacao, I don't even think that there was need for communication and production. It might be difficult for the European or American to understand but often you have to listen to what you customers want, if you want to be able to sell at all. Curacao is not in need of promotion; at least the customers are not in need of it, it is a cultural thing. You want to make sure that you sell your products so you adapt to the wishes of the customer. Again, half of our production is for private labels and then no such thing is necessary. It is as simple as this, you offer people your product if they like you they are able to sign the contract but if tomorrow your contract gets fired, you are left in insecurity as the next might not like you and then it is end of contract. In our earlier days, our brand would not sell at all despite the fact that it is toilet paper. I'm speaking about 13 years ago after the governmental protection ended, it wasn't a matter of promotion or communication it was simply what our customers were able to tell us from what they observed from the end-customer and that was that they wanted the familiar white toilet paper at a cheap price.

**3. Does Softex make use of segmentation or is it just a matter of private labels and retailers?**

**Herbert:** yes we make use of segmentation but that in terms of what was explained earlier. We focus on the domestic market and the industrial market.

**Of course, but if for example you say domestic market, you can still segment that part. Would you then still speak of segmentation or not?**

**Herbert:** in terms of marketing and the European understand I guess not. Curacao is a special case and thus no marketing principles as you might know it directly applies in this case, at least that is not how we have approached it. According to your understanding of

segmentation, we can only speak of it when I explain where we are headed. Momentarily we are trying to bring an A-quality product on the market that could compete with Scott, Cotonnelle, Familia and Bounty, but would be cheaper because it is manufactured here and thus, no import or shipping cost which would give us a huge competitive advantage. But the local people have no knowledge at this moment that we produce A-quality paper and that we are only targeting people in the premium segment so that would need proper introduction, marketing and marketing communication.

#### **4. What would you say is your current marketing (event) strategy?**

**Herbert:** I don't know if we have a marketing strategy, it's what we should have but from the very beginning Softex has been using a low cost pricing strategy and I have never stopped, not even when the marketing department had been implemented. The main reason for that is, as we have already mentioned you adapt to what your customers want, you look at what you can buy at what price and what you need to make a profit. For 20 years long we enjoyed government protection but after that it was still a struggle on how to stand on our own feet, so there was no way of changing that strategy. People bought our products for a low price and proved to be sensitive to changes as we found out with our environmental friendly toilet paper, so we had to be careful as we were now competing with other products as well. Now we have implemented a marketing department but the strategy we used so far is the same low pricing strategy we have always used, the only thing we did is try to adorn it with some marketing activities but the fact is there is no marketing strategy if you put it that way. We are trying to start with marketing activities and it may have not been done the right way but sometimes you need to start somewhere, especially when you are in the impression that the European methods don't work for your geographical region. So to answer your question, there is no marketing strategy there is only the low-pricing strategy and some marketing effort, in this case the campaign which you have witnessed over the last two months.

Now if you are talking about events, that is what we want and should make use of as events are major when it comes to Curacao, Aruba and Puerto Rico. Being present as a brand indicated that you count; you would not even have to promote your products it is all about your name showing up at the event and thus is that something that we aim for.

#### **What role would event/sponsorship play in your possible marketing communication strategy?**

**Herbert:** I'm talking about events because I have noticed over the past few years that events are the only things that matter here, it might differ per island but if you want your name to be remembered then you should be present at an event. So in promoting our products or brand image I would definitely opt to make use of events in achieving that. At this point event and sponsorship are playing a minor role. We have not been present at any event and although we do sponsor a local softball team we have not in any way, reminded the community of our presence or made use of the opportunity to develop potential customers or support activities that we believe this, but I think the time for that to change has come. I would almost say that there is no other way if we want to continue to head forward. In fact, sponsorship is part of our marketing but it is not done in the right manner that we could make use of it to enhance our brand image. So an event marketing communication strategy which suits us to market our name and products.

#### **Would you say that you are in need of a marketing strategy or would you argue against this?**

Overall, I would say yes certainly. We have been successful for so many years but how long can we

continue to ignore the changes that are happening in the world. Eventually you would have to adapt at a certain point whether you want it or not, unless we would want the plant to close. Momentarily we are working on improving our products into 'real' quality products to be able to compete with bounty, familia, scott, cottonelle which are all A-quality products but also very expensive. In case we manage to offer the same quality but for a lower price as we manufacture our products here and have no import or shipping costs, they would have to compete with us, the only problem then is that we need marketing, a clear strategy.

**When you are talking about making a shift from price to quality, what would this mean for your current strategy?**

**Herbert:** it would mean that we are in desperate for a strategy. I even agree with you that we should have had a strategy before starting the campaign that you have been part of the last two months but the problem is just the lack of marketing knowledge. You know that you have to do something but not exactly what the proper steps are. The result then is, that you set up a campaign in the way that you assume is the right way and I think that it had its impact, it might not have had the best success a campaign can have such as Heineken but people now know we are trying to do something.

**5. Survey results have indicated that Softex lack a brand image and familiarity among its end-customers, why haven't you done something about that?**

**Herbert:** I don't know whether I have an answer to this question but I'll try.

**Paul:** The confusion starts when we start talking about Softex. We do not want to communicate Softex to the outside world as Softex is a name that has been derived from another name for political and tax reasons. So actually softex is not even the proper name of this company and thus, not a name that we want our customers to associate our products with.

So let me turn it around and ask you: what would our brand image look like? Hereby I give you the freedom to come up with a brand image that would suit us best, you are the expert here.

**Herbert:** I understand that it would be difficult to speak of different brands as the three islands have different products besides noky, swave and softex. So in order to establish an image you would have to speak about softex at a point but I guess we have never thought about an image. As Paul already said, that would be our question to you.

Again, our marketing department is really new so we are still in the process of learning and adapting to the idea that you have to promote your products and communicate with customer as this has never been part of our doing. So from your explanation I understand that you actually mean that Mrs. Wijshijer indicates that she wants to establish a brand image for our products on three different islands but I'm not sure whether I agree with this at all. I can acknowledge that end-customers have no clue what to understand or think of when they see the name Softex and in that sense I would understand that it is hard to generate awareness as there is no familiarity with the different brands we manufacture. So then, I guess it would make sense to establish a brand image for us when we are entering the premium segment.



**6. If you are aware that some marketing effort is necessary for the existence or development for the company, why have you chosen to start a campaign without the proper knowledge instead of obtaining the knowledge first?**

**Paul:** when you sometimes have a certain vision in mind and know that your competition is increasing and you would have to focus on a different segment as your current one is starting to wobble, there is this certain pressure that you have to do something to maintain your business. Implementation of a strategy would mean that you would need certain knowledge but also that you are going against your customer demands and how are you going to tell them that you are going to do it differently because you want more stability, you want to expand. When knowledge lacks in such a crucial situation, what do you do? You still try to do something that might work or confirm that what you intent to do might work. In this case we are not sure if the approach we have chosen has worked but we wanted people- the end-customer to know that we exist with this campaign and it might make no sense but given the resources this is what we could come up with.

**Herbert:** For you or any other person for that matter that is not from here or has studied in Europe or America it might make absolutely no sense as you are right in saying that even the campaign was not based on basic marketing principles. But we tried to leave those behind and tried to adapt to the habits of the locals of Curacao, in the end those would determine if they want to buy our products or not. Keep in mind that marketing is new to us, I cannot stress this often enough. The idea of a campaign sound good to us, the idea of letting people know that we are still out here and that we are trying our best to do something like the rest is doing. And according to my believe that has worked. I have had feedback from people within my circle saying that it was about time that Softex did something so in that sense we are proud that we did this even if you would argue that it made no sense, as no real objective had been set or the campaign on itself was a big hurdle. Having said that, let's me get one thing straight. The premium segment that we want to enter, would need a different approach, nothing can be left to chance and thus, we would need a proper strategy as a campaign like this would not help us to succeed or compete with the big names out there, I'm looking forward to your recommendations.

**7. This interview is a clear example of the lack of alignment within the company; do you perceive this as a future problem?**

**Paul:** you might be right. I can understand that it causes confusion as you have been given different impressions and marketing information about our ideas and strategies but I'm working on it. Before we are even able to enter the premium market we have to have a better marketing plan and it would be nice if you could look into that, it would give us a good start. For that to be maintained I'm planning on hiring the proper personnel to avoid any difficulties concerning that in the future. So please understand that we are making baby steps when it comes to marketing a heading into the right direction and I hope that you can make a big difference in that as you already understand that it is a new concept for us that we have yet to understand. Marketing on its own is very broad and as you have just noticed it's even hard to make a distinction on what is and what isn't marketing. The marketing communication comes in as you have explained, and I tell you this, I did not even know that term and have yet to understand what your study actually entails.

**8. I have notices that you do not make a clear distinction between promoting your products in the premium segment and an event marketing communication strategy, are you aware**

**that these are not directly the same?**

**Paul:** well, no that you indicate it, I can try to understand that it isn't but that is what we need. Herbert already said that events are the way to promote your brand on the island and not only here, it is also an phenomenon on Aruba and Puerto Rico but apart from that we also want the premium segment, would that mean that an event strategy would not work within that segment?

**I'm not saying that when you enter the premium segment you will not be able to use an event marketing communication strategy, I'm saying to be careful that you do not mix the two up.**

**Paul:** I think it is best that you explain this to Herbert as he would understand you better than I would, it is getting more and more complicated right now, I'm sure you know what you are doing so just start somewhere and see how that can benefit us the best.

<b>Interview file #2</b>	April 9, 2014
<b>Purpose of the interview:</b> get insight into the marketing strategy of Softex	<b>Time:</b> 09.00 <b>Duration:</b> appr. 90 minutes
<b>Main Topic:</b> Marketing strategy <b>Primary research Question:</b>	
<b>Place:</b> Softex, Industrial Park	
<b>interviewer:</b> SukiMartis	
<b>interviewee:</b> Mr. P. Lieuw& Mr. H. Luis	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> Answering questions based on knowledge and experience	
<b>Nexus:</b> <b>Topic 1: Marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- (Marketing) strategy</li><li>- Communication/promotion</li><li>- Events</li></ul> <b>Topic 2: Customers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Private labels/retailers</li><li>- End customers</li><li>- Demand, culture</li></ul> <b>Topic 3: Premium Segment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Quality vs. price</li><li>- promotion</li><li>- brand image</li></ul> <b>Conclusion:</b> At the moment Softex does not have a marketing strategy as it considers retailers as its customers on Aruba, Curacao and Puerto Rico. They are partly dependent on the customer	

demands to be able to maintain their success which is partly determined by their low cost pricing strategy. As they would like to enter the premium segment with a new A-level product they are in need of an event marketing communication strategy.

### APPENDIX 3 “INTERVIEW SUMMARY 3- KAS DI KULTURA CURACAO”

<b>Interview file n°:</b> 3	<b>Date:</b> May 2, 2014
<b>Year/Semester/Block:</b> Semester 2, block 2	<b>Time:</b> 15.30
<b>Main topic:</b> culture of Curacao	<b>Duration:</b> 90 minutes
<b>Place:</b> Kas di Kultura Curacao	
<b>Name of interviewer:</b> Suki Martis	
<b>Name of interviewee:</b> Mr. G. Bacilio (CEO of the cultural institution of Curacao)	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> answering questions based on their knowledge and experiences	
<b>Sub-topics:</b> Hofstede’s dimensions and Hall’s contexting	
<b>Reasons for interviewing:</b> gaining knowledge from insiders/experts	

#### Description: summary of transcript and comments ( in English)

**1. How would you describe the culture of Curacao considering the cultural dimensions I have just explained?**

As it is quite a lot to take in lets go through it per dimension. So to begin with the individualism versus collectivism dimension, I would say that it is a bit tricky. The culture as we know it today has stemmed from African, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese influenced and aside from that we have had Columbians, Dominicans, Venezuelan influences from immigrants that came for work to this island and decided to stay. Considering all of these influences you would argue that Curacao is undoubtedly collectivistic but through the years the Dutch influences from being a Dutch colony have been adapted. You would probably see this individualistic influences mainly in the work-field but it certainly has had an impact in making the society less collectivistic. At a certain point we have adapted certain Dutch values and have stick to it.

**I might be wrong or it can be that Softex is a diversion from the rest but I have failed to see individualistic values or behaviour within the work field, this not only counts but Softex but other organizations as well. Every activity is dependent on social relationships or family ties, it this than not extremely collectivistic even within the work field?**

Actually it is funny that you point this out as it makes me reflect back on my previous position as a functionary and then you would be completely right. Here it is all about the social contacts and relations you have and not necessarily about your credentials. My mistake in this was that I had restricted my view to my own experiences and how I run this institution but when being objective, you are absolutely right in saying that the culture of Curacao is quite collectivistic.

**Here it becomes a little bit trickier as literature would say that Latin-American countries all score quite high on collectivism, what would differentiate Curacao from Aruba and Puerto Rico if you would assume that they also have some collectivistic values?**

Right, you do make me think. What first comes to mind is our Dutch influenced system but that doesn’t sound right so let me start over. Curacao has strong African influences which stem back from the slavery. It was all about family and undertaking activities together, supporting one another and that is just part of our history. It is something that defines and differentiates us from the other ABC- islands. That would be the core of our collectivism which has only been enhanced by the Spanish who are also collectivistic.

**16. To what extent would you say that the culture avoids uncertainty??**

This is an easy one, I was already concerned that you would give me a hard time. But coming back to your question, I cannot express enough in words how much we hold on to the familiar. People would go out of their way to avoid the uncertain; they are curious but would not even go near the unfamiliar to explore what it could bring them. This might explain why folklore is still so popular here, Sue is something that stems back from the slavery time but it is still celebrated every year again with so much enthusiasm. Perhaps the younger generation is a little bit more exploring towards new things as they travel and go abroad to study but we do see a graying trend here so for them and everyone in between they would certainly avoid and reject everything that is new and unfamiliar to them.

**Would you say that this cultural aspect explains why so many companies on the island are reluctant towards implementing marketing or is this influenced by other factors?**

Very difficult question, you certainly make me think as you are indeed correct about so many organizations not having marketing departments or strategies but I'm not certain about why this is the case. You can indeed argue that it is that marketing is something that is still new here and in that sense it would be unfamiliar and then not something that would be explored easily. On the other hand, the island is so young and collectivistic so people depend on their relationships and contacts to do word-of-mouth marketing for them. One way that you see this is that all day every day on the radio you hear so many advertisements and competitions and they are actually all the same. People who are familiar with the brands or organizations react to them so in that sense I guess they have yet to understand what marketing is and how it can benefit them. By doing the same you are not really generating an advantage point for yourself and thus no one is actually gaining anything from it. Well they are profitable but they are certainly not going forward and expanding, evolving. I think it has a lot to do with an underdeveloped marketing knowledge. The only organizations that are marketing themselves properly are the global organizations on the islands, the multinationals that are international, let's put it that way.

**17. Would you place Curacao on the Femininity or masculinity side of the dimension?**

It is exactly in the middle. You might think that it would be a masculine island but it isn't as much as you think. Yes indeed, the people here are very competitive to an extent where you would have to question whether it is competitiveness of just purely egocentric behavior. Most of the time you see that one does not want the other to have something that they actually have or want. As soon as they see that another person does have what they wanted the competition starts, it is not something to be proud of but it is what it is. Material success and heroism are also features that you can find back in the culture. Image, status, success if what counts here it is that tool that people use to compete with; look at what I have. It is all about showing off and going to the full extent to get and show what one has. On the other hand our culture is also modest in a sense. When we look at Aruba for instance they are more assertive towards showing off their treasures to lure tourists but maybe that has to do with their willingness to cooperate to go forward as an island which Curacao lacks. It is important to care for the weak as the majority of the inhabitants are strongly religious and thus view this as an obligation rather than a willingly act. As I just indicated with my example of Aruba, Curacao is in no way consensus-oriented, this explains why we have to vote every two years and the parliament is a total chaos. Everyone wants to be right and it even turns into a conflict without any solution, there simply just is no middle way. Quality of life however, is something that is greatly valued. No time constraints, no

structures, a lot of leisure time, ¾ of salaries go to events and having a good time, you see groups of people hanging out in front of snack bars. People want to have the freedom to enjoy life and they are given that opportunity here.

**18. Is the culture more focused on indulgence or are they more restrained towards it?**

Definitely indulgence, perhaps not the full 100 percent but certainly around 97. Lunch times are extended; people take every opportunity to celebrate something and the bigger the better. If you would hold some kind of survey they would probably tell you that the events such a carnival and sue are not big enough, it should be more extravagant. I can rave on about this for hours but yes very indulgence oriented. You often see that people save for weeks in advance just because they feel the need that they must go the next upcoming event, they dress up and go. It is so deeply rooted in the culture that schools and companies are closed for days in the carnival season, for sue people get the days afterwards off.

**Can I then say that this is the reason why events have become the promotional tool here on the island?**

Yes, if you want people to have a look at your product make an event out of it. If you would not do this I can assure you that no one would even notice your product unless it is a necessity but as soon as you hire a local band you have half the island present and perhaps they just came to have a drink and a good time but eventually they will have a look at your product as well. I would say that you are missing out if you are not engaging with your customers through events. If you have never been to the local carnival I would say to come back once and take a look. It is the place and time to market yourself and a lot of companies have noted that. It is almost as if they do not find advertising annoying anymore as they are having a good time.

**19. To what extent does the society illustrates power distance?**

I guess that this is the dimension in which you see the Dutch influences the most. Reflecting on the past, the power distance was extensive. You were to know your place and not question this. Nowadays, it has become less but in a way I think it also has to do with the size of our island. It is a small island so at a certain point you lower the distance to be accessible to everyone. The Hague was situated on this island so influences have made their way and as the years go people have come to realize that accepting equality is not such a bad thing after all. For instance, when you walk in the streets changes are that you might bump into our prime minister and he is willing to have a chat with you. The distance between you and the prime minister has disappeared in that sense. Nowadays that is normal whereas a decade ago you could not even walk into a person of high importance as they were shielded from the general public. Now what hasn't changed is respect. Now I have lived in the Netherlands for some time so as the CEO of this institution I have kept some hierarchy within the organization but when you do not do this from the beginning I can assure you that within no time everyone assumes that that their indulgence nature can take over and no work need to be done. It is in this way that I discipline them. But respect, I can probably assume that for you it would be normal to refer to someone as them or call them by name without having to say "u" all the time. Over here it is a bit different, there no way that I can say what you might know as "je of jij" it is probably even unacceptable to call them by their name. You refer to someone the majority of time as aunt or uncle and then the name it is a form of respect. The younger generation might use the "you" form as I have just expressed in Dutch but, even this would not be done in the presence of an elderly person

**20. Where would you place Curacao's culture in the pragmatic versus normative dimension, more on the pragmatic or normative side?**

Although most people greatly respect traditions I would say that we have a normatic orientation here. The culture dictates that it is impossible to understand everything. It has always been a very religious island and still is although for instance, atheism and homosexuality have become debatable, but the inhabitants trust in their religion. They are not concerned about what tomorrow brings or why certain things happen, it is just the will of God and that should not be questioned. The norm here is that people live a virtuous life from day to day and are not willing to make any kind of effort to discover the truth. They make the situations adapt to the truth. Yes it sounds weird but I have no other way of explaining it, it is just a matter of experiencing it.

I find this dimension kind of unsuitable for our culture as both sides of the dimension have values that we cannot identify with. For example we are not focused on achieving quick results or perseverance in achieving results as the focus is on quality of life, results will eventually come but it is not something that is emphasized. Perhaps it should and could benefit us at times, but I hope that one day the people of Curacao will acknowledge this. As they are so afraid of the unfamiliar people are reluctant to invest in things as it can lead to failure or losing instead of gaining from it. The future is by the way not something that is being considered here. Most people swear by *carpe diem*, enjoy the day we will see about tomorrow. It is how so many people live from day to day, they invest so much in buying bigger cars with all their money or loans and are not concerned about how they have to provide for the rest of the month, or going out the entire week and think next week about how they will survive the rest of the month as all of their salaries have gone to enjoying life. It's yeah well as we said indulgence is very high.

**21. In terms of communication, is the culture more direct or indirect?**

Very indirect. We actually perceive it as rude when people are direct. There is not a lot of effort in wrapping your message around in some gift paper before handing it in to that person. It is funny that you mention it, I have my sister over from the Netherlands and I'm shocked every minute by her directness and I have lived in Holland for quite some time. You often see situations in which people are saying yes but the actual answer is no. I must admit that it can be pretty frustrating, especially when you are doing business but that is how communication takes place here. Being direct is just, it comes across in a very 'hard' manner as the one communicating is not taking the other's emotions into considerations. You also see this in commercials or advertisements. They are marketing in an indirect manner to avoid humiliating everyone. Let me tell you the people here are very concerned about how they are being perceived and can be ashamed for the most unexplainable situations. Everything wants to be put in the melting-pot, they want to keep everything a secret or hidden and thus unless you are communicating with a foreigner who has immigrated here, we communicate in an indirect way. It might take longer and more effort to get to the core message but when you are used to it there is nothing to it.

**22. What would you say is the cultural element that sets you apart?**

This question would only lead to negative answers so please allow me a minute to think about this. I would say its African roots. If you look at other collectivistic islands around us, Bonaire, Aruba or Puerto Rico they all have some collectivistic elements but none of them, except for Puerto Rico maybe have hold on so tightly to the African influences that have

stayed behind. All the islands have been influenced by individualistic countries such as The States and Holland but despite these influences, here on Curacao people have not adapted their selves to individualistic values that much.

<b>Interview file # 1</b>	May 2, 2014
<b>Purpose of the interview:</b> get insight into The Antillean culture	<b>Time:</b> 15.30 <b>Duration:</b> 90 minutes
<b>Main Topic:</b> culture <b>Primary research Question:</b> How can the western cultural aspects of an event marketing communication strategy be adapted to the cultural aspects of the islands involved (non-western cultures)?	
<b>Place:</b> Kas di Kultura, Curacao	
<b>interviewer:</b> Suki Martis	
<b>interviewee:</b> Mr. G. Bacilio	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> Answering questions based on knowledge and experience	
<b>Nexus:</b> <b>Topic 1: Hofstede's dimensions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individualism vs. Collectivism</li> <li>- Indulgence vs. Restraint</li> <li>- Uncertainty avoidance</li> <li>- Power distance</li> <li>- Masculinity vs. femininity</li> <li>- Pragmatic vs. normative</li> </ul> <b>Topic 2: communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High context communication</li> </ul> <b>Topic 3: marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- events</li> <li>- marketing department</li> </ul> <b>Conclusion:</b> Curacao is a collectivistic nation that strongly holds on to security and the familiar rather than the unknown. Rather than focusing on achievement the focus is on enjoying life to the full extent. Due to Dutch influences that culture is less power distance oriented and focuses more on the quality of life in terms of pleasure. Everything more or less depends on relationships.	



#### APPENDIX 4 "INTERVIEW SUMMARY 4- LA CASE DE LA HERENCIA CULTURAL PUERTORRIQUENA "

<b>Interview file nº:</b> 4	<b>Date:</b> May 6, 2014
<b>Year/Semester/Block:</b> Semester 2, block 2	<b>Time:</b> 11.30
<b>Main topic:</b> culture of Puerto Rico	<b>Duration:</b> 60 minutes
<b>Place:</b> Skype	
<b>Name of interviewer:</b> Suki Martis	
<b>Name of interviewee:</b> Mrs. L. Rodriguez (executive director La casa de la herencia cultural puertorriquena	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> answering questions based on their knowledge and experiences	
<b>Sub-topics:</b> Hofstede's dimensions and Hall's contexting	
<b>Reasons for interviewing:</b> gaining knowledge from insiders/experts	

#### Description: summary of transcript and comments ( in English)

##### 1. How would you describe the culture of Puerto Rico considering the cultural dimensions I have just Explained?

To begin with the people of PR are very very proud of who they are and therefore do not like to be associated with any other nation or race. We have been an American colony for a very long time and in fact we enjoy American citizenship but in general we do not refer to that. We see ourselves as a distinct nation with our own values, norms and influences. Having that said I would not argue that there are no American influences visible without our culture but that does not define the people of PR. In the colonial days for example our government was afraid to adopt anything from Americans as it was a way of eroding our own culture. We have Adopted English as one of the official languages but to be honest not many people speak English well, because of this strong urge to preserve our culture. Because of this pride that we have and the distinctiveness that we want to portray ourselves with we believe that we have to be and remain one tight society in which we help each other. This does not mean that often we have our in-group conflicts but the emphasize is mainly on our relationships. In or outside of the work field we are all one family and willing to help each other at any time.

##### Does this mean that rules do not necessary apply, particularly in the workfield?

You have to see it as some kind of loyalty; we are trying to stay this distinct proud society which can only be achieved through our relationships. Of course there are rules but our relationships come first, we think it is important that we have each other's support so that we can all advance. With this image that we are trying to portray comes commitment, in that sense this is our commitment to our nation. We are a very small island and thus, in order to still stand strong as a nation you have to be willing to invest in your own people. Relationships is our means to invest.

##### 23. To what extent would you say that the culture avoids uncertainty??

To the greatest extent of course. When you discover or see that when you do things in a certain pattern and it works out for you, why astray from it? Security is our motivation which you might have already understood from what I have explained earlier, we are trying

to make a statement, to achieve something. Changes or unknown situations can be threatening in that sense. Now, if we observe that let's say something new has been introduced in PR and it seems to work out for quite some time, perhaps then we have the need to have a closer look at it to see what it actually is or does or can benefit from it but in general the norm is avoid everything you don't know and stick to your beliefs as that has always worked. It is something like culture, something that you have been taught since you were little and thus while growing up it became a security in a way. I don't know if I'm explaining it clearly enough for you to understand but something that you are used to is difficult to break away from or to stop doing it. We do not like stressful situations so why go there?

**24. Would you place Puerto Rico on the Femininity or masculinity side of the dimension?**

How do we score on caring for others and quality of life? Relatively high, about 90 I would say. Family is the core of our culture, it is what helps us throughout of lifetimes. We are often together as there is the expectancy that we have to support one another, in terms of material and emotionally. We don't have all the aspects of this masculine dimension such as great competitiveness but it is certainly there. I think this is because of the harmony and the respect for family life that we have. If we would have to compete let's say against another nation that it is a totally different case of course, we would for a team and be really competitive towards them. In some case we think it best for fight or competition to go ahead until there is a winner or the situation is resolved, but I think every culture or country has this aspect. We all work hard to achieve something, man or woman, adult or children we are certainly progressing as a nation and we want to make sure it is being noticed.

**25. Is the culture more focused on indulgence or are they more restrained towards it?**

I almost feel as if I tell you that everything is relatively high but indulgence is definitely something we characterize ourselves with. What quality of life do you have if you do not get to enjoy as well? As family is so important to us we often come together and celebrate life, we build on our relationships and money is something that is seen as something that comes and goes anyways so why not spend it on enjoyment. We have a very positive nature and thus a drink once in a while or carnival are things that we enjoy. At work you often see that everyone values their relationships with each other more than the tasks at hand, so you often see that there are celebrations after work hours, they often organize happy hours. I guess it is just who we are, we love to enjoy life.

**26. To what extent does the society illustrate power distance?**

Religion and respect which I believe goes hand in hand in our culture is probably the most valuable trait. From your upbringing until you are an adult you are taught that respect is the most important thing. You have to respect yourself and give it to others as well. It comes before everything else. As this respect aspect is so important we still see hierarchy in society and people are actually very accepting towards it. We have come to observe which is also something that you are taught from childhood that you learn through observation, that there is a difference in the distribution of power and with it comes certain benefits or disadvantages. But each should know their place in society and accept it.

**27. Where would you place Puerto Rico's culture in the pragmatic versus normative dimension, more on the pragmatic or normative side?**

I am not sure whether I can distinctively place ourselves in one of the two. I believe that the

combination of our collectivistic, religious and indulgent nature we don't necessarily have the need to know or explain it all. As I have already pointed out it is all about family al living life to the fullest while you can. You have never been promised tomorrow en therefore there is no need to always discover everything. If I would have to decide anyway I would place it directly in the middle of the dimension. We have a little bit of both I suppose. A bit future oriented, traditions are important but yet not everything can be explained.

**28. In terms of communication, is the culture more direct or indirect?**

As indirect as we can get. Directness is something that is being perceives as being rude so you won't easily have a conversation that will reveal the actual reason behind it from the very start. We are not in a rush so we like to take our time, show respect and have a conversation with each other without any possibility of insulting one another or show disrespect. Sometimes you might see that closest relatives are a little bit more direct towards each other but even this is something that seldom happens.

**29. What would you say is the cultural element that sets you apart as a nation?**

Our pride. We progress slowly but certainly. Education is becoming more important for instance and anything that we can be proud of and to help distinct ourselves with is what sets us apart.

**Would you say you share some cultural aspects with Curacao and Aruba?**

I can't say for sure. In the beginning I said we do not like to be compared with any other nation but in general we from the Caribbean or Latin-American tend to be more focused on our relationships with relatives and even colleagues at work. One thing I know that we all have in common is Carnival, the extent to which we all celebrate it and go to the fullest extent during this period, it is certainly something we are all proud of and distinct us from the more Western cultures. Other than that I'm not sure whether I have the proper knowledge to say something about this I can solely speak for our culture.

<b>Interview file # 4</b>	May 6, 2014
<b>Purpose of the interview:</b> get insight into Puertorriquen culture	<b>Time:</b> 11.30 <b>Duration:</b> 60 minutes
<b>Main Topic:</b> Culture <b>Primary research Question:</b> How can the western cultural aspects of an event marketing communication strategy be adapted to the cultural aspects of the islands involved (non-western cultures)?	
<b>Place:</b> Skype	
<b>interviewer:</b> Suki Martis	
<b>interviewee:</b> Mrs. L. Rodriguez	

**Role of interviewee:** Answering questions based on knowledge and experience

**Nexus:**

**Topic 1: Hofstede's dimensions**

- Individualism vs. Collectivism
- Indulgence vs. Restraint
- Uncertainty avoidance
- Power distance
- Masculinity vs. femininity
- Pragmatic vs. normative

**Topic 2: communication**

- High context communication

**Conclusion:** Puerto Rico is likely to be a collectivistic society that greatly values respect, hierarchy and enjoyment. It does not necessarily have a need to discover explanations for everything as life should be taken as it comes but value traditions and future investments.

## APPENDIX 5 “INTERVIEW SUMMARY 5- CAS DI CULTURA ARUBA”

<b>Interview file n°:</b> 5	<b>Date:</b> May 1, 2014
<b>Year/Semester/Block:</b> Semester 2, block 2	<b>Time:</b> 15.00
<b>Main topic:</b> culture of Aruba	<b>Duration:</b> 45 minutes
<b>Place:</b> Cas di Cultura Vondellaan 2, Oranjestad, Aruba	
<b>Name of interviewer:</b> Suki Martis	
<b>Name of interviewee:</b> Mr. P. Palemo	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> answering questions based on their knowledge and experiences	
<b>Sub-topics:</b> Hofstede’s dimensions and Hall’s contexting	
<b>Reasons for interviewing:</b> gaining knowledge from insiders/experts	

### Description: summary of transcript and comments ( in English)

**1. How would you describe the culture of Aruba considering the cultural dimensions I have just explained?**

We have been known for a very long time as one of the ABC-islands, which stands for Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao. So the presumption we encounter often is that the cultures must be equal, let me make something very clear, this is not the case. With the emphasize on not. We might have been under the Dutch regime for a great number of years but unlike the other two islands we have been greatly influenced by the American culture. This does not necessarily mean that we have completely lost our own Aruban culture, it is certainly visible but especially the cultural values of the Americans that are focused on the future and achievement is of importance of us. It has to be understood that Curacao was sort of the capital of the ABC-islands and it has an enormous and profitable oil refinery that is boosting the economy for over a decade while Aruba is solely dependent from tourism. At a certain point you want to advance as a nation, and as we are already a small island you thus, at least in our case become more adopting towards certain values that will help you to achieve this. Most of the tourist are American and after experiencing and observing their culture it became a business process as well. A lot of companies are American based and thus more logically we adopted part of their culture as it helped us to advance towards our objectives. Although you might still see that the family is quite collectivistic within “doors” we have become very individualistic. I think as we are so dependent of the tourism, we have adopted the value for displaying initiative and interacting with people we might not even know. It is part of the culture that the direct family is still being taken care of but other than that people are comfortable with taking care of themselves without relying too much on others or the government for support.

**2. To what extent would you say that the culture avoids uncertainty??**

I don’t believe that we avoid the unknown that much. We are very welcoming towards new things that we don’t know and might help us advance as an island or strengthen corporate relations. For example, Al Gore’s sustainable programme- green energy for Aruba has been welcomed with open arms. Off course this does not imply that everyone on the island is very welcoming towards new ideas, as you will always have a part of every society, particularly the elder people who are a little bit more reluctant towards it but the majority

of our society are very open-minded and open for the new and unknown. The reason behind some of the uncertainty avoidance behaviour that you might see although it is very little can be explained by the fact that Aruba has never really received as many immigrants as for instance, Curacao. Because of the oil refinery a lot of immigrants moved to the island primarily for work and eventually stayed. Today you see that the culture over there is so diverse and multi-cultural, that is something that is not the same in Aruba. We did not receive such a large group of immigrants as we are not perceived as the capital nor did we have an oil refinery to provide jobs. That helped us to preserve our cultural roots and heritage for a great deal. Some people are still in for this preservation although we have had some immigrant groups over the years.

**3. Would you place Aruba on the Femininity or masculinity side of the dimension?**

Of the three islands we are probably the island that is most oriented towards achieving a positive image to attract as much tourist as possible but also to move on forward, to develop and grow- to achieve something. The breaking away from this ABC-island association was one of the first towards actually even competing with the other islands. Curacao may have the size and resources to be the most successful but we want to prove them wrong. I think with our mentality that we have adopted from the American culture and our drive for achievement we are definitely the one who are on our way to the most success. We take a lot of pride in this as well. It is not just the case of succeeding we want our tourist to be able to have a great time as well, for them to experience what we are selling and there is only one way to make this happen, by achievement.

**4. Is the culture more focused on indulgence or are they more restrained towards it?**

Now this we do have in common with Latin-American or Caribbean culture, depending on how you want to refer to them. I think this is something that is deeply rooted with the Latin-American cultures, pleasure. We love to have a great time and to enjoy- we have Carnival to do this, we have the flag day and lots more great national events but besides that in general everything can be turned into a social event that does not include hard work, task or keeping the time in mind. This is done however in moderation; we are still taking the hard work and dedication in consideration to achieve results. Thus, there are specific days on which we indulge and celebrate but after that everything is back to normal and working towards our goals.

**5. To what extent does the society illustrate power distance?**

Limited, or I mean to say within organizations or government you will see that there is hierarchy as it is sometimes needed to keep everything organized but this does not mean that superiors are inaccessible. Respect is also something that is being highly regarded especially towards the elderly. In terms of respect you might say that there is a lot of power distance but in general it is relatively low.

**6. Where would you place Aruban culture in the pragmatic versus normative dimension, more on the pragmatic or normative side?**

More on the pragmatic side. I think this is where you will see the American values reflected again. Long term objectives are valued but we do want to see short term or quick result as well to see if we are on the right track. There is the belief, that has only been strengthened over these last years that we are able to change our own future situation if you only put your mind to it, this really reflects the typical 'can do' mentality of the Americans.

**7. In terms of communication, is the culture more direct or indirect?**

A mix of both. You see that the American culture has penetrated our own culture in some various aspects and thus you get a mix of the two. Especially in the business world you tend to see that people are more direct in their communication as they are focused on reaching consensus and achieving results quickly. Sometimes this extends to their social life as well. On the other hand however, you have this collectivistic value that you have to regard each other and thus cannot be insulting towards one another. Thus far I think that people in general have been able to adapt themselves to the situation or people that require them to be either direct or indirect. I definitely think it is becoming more and more direct though.

<b>Interview file # 5</b>	May 1, 2014
<b>Purpose of the interview:</b> get insight into Aruban culture	<b>Time:</b> 11.30 <b>Duration:</b> 45 minutes
<b>Main Topic:</b> Culture <b>Primary research Question:</b> How can the western cultural aspects of an event marketing communication Strategy be adapted to the cultural aspects of the islands involved (non-western cultures)?	
<b>Place:</b> Cas di Cultura :Vondellaan 2, Oranjestad, Aruba	
<b>interviewer:</b> Suki Martis	
<b>interviewee:</b> Mr. P. Palemo	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> Answering questions based on knowledge and experience	
<b>Nexus:</b> <b>Topic 1: Hofstede's dimensions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Individualism vs. Collectivism</li><li>- Indulgence vs. Restraint</li><li>- Uncertainty avoidance</li><li>- Power distance</li><li>- Masculinity vs. femininity</li><li>- Pragmatic vs. normative</li></ul> <b>Topic 2: communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- High context communication</li></ul> <b>Conclusion:</b>	

**APPENDIX 6 “INTERVIEW SUMMARY 6- MARKETING DEPARTMENTS SOFTEX ARUBA, CURACAO & PEURTO RICO”**

<b>Interview file nº:</b> 6	<b>Date:</b> April 28
<b>Year/Semester/Block:</b> Semester 2, block 2	<b>Time:</b> 10.00
<b>Main topic:</b> marketing techniques/strategies and activities of Softex	<b>Duration:</b> appr. 60 minutes
<b>Place:</b> Skype	
<b>Name of interviewer:</b> SukiMartis	
<b>Name of interviewee:</b> Mrs. P. Wijshijer, M. Torres & G. Raven	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> answering questions based on their knowledge and experiences	
<b>Sub-topics:</b> Marketing objectives of Softex	
<b>Reasons for interviewing:</b> gaining knowledge from insiders/experts	

**Description: summary of transcript and comments ( in English)**

**1. What kind of branding strategy have Carex and Softex products Inc. used so far?**

**Miguel Torres:** I’m not sure about the branding but I can tell you this. The difference with Curacao is that we have an excellent award in Puerto Rico which is called “Excellence in Entrepreneurial Quality Awards .” Four years ago Softex has won this award due to its success on the market and it production of quality products and jobs. Since we have won this award and became members of the Puerto Rico Product Association (PRPA), who hands out these awards on a yearly bases there was no need for branding anymore. Our products gained more awareness due to this among the locals which helped our sales tremendously. In general the people of Puerto Rico are extremely proud people and proud of what has been made in Puerto Rico. I think it is because of that reason that they have showed more interest and loyalty towards our products since winning the award.

**Priscilla:** Marketing is similar to in Curacao a new concept for Softex in Puerto Rico as well. Together with Miguel we have been trying to establish a new for ourselves before winning the award. It was believed that as a small manufacturing company we would make no chance against the big multinationals and their national brands. When winning this excellence award everything changed. You have to remember that at the time there was no marketing department at all yet so it made all the difference. In one happening awareness was raised and softex was being associated with quality and excellence. When winning the award you get to make use of the emblem of the award in supermarkets or your products or as we have on our containers. When consumers see this they know in an instance that it is a quality product that has achieved something and that is being manufactured in Puerto Rico itself which makes the product and the brand favourable. Our price, quality and service is really what distinguishes us. The advantage of being local is the price we can offer our customers. This has been especially favourable as our top selling product here is the swave which is of the best quality of all of our products. I think I says something about the culture itself.

**Gigi Raven:** Aruba (Carex) has no branding strategy. We partly manufacture for private labels and thus makes it unnecessary to have any kind of branding strategy but even for our customers there is no specific branding strategy. Apart from the fact that it has to do with marketing just being introduced 1,5 years ago it also has to do with the fact that Carex also has other product



such as baby-oil, cups etc. For these products we do not have any association with Softex Paper Products (Curacao). As Priscilla is the general manager of all three islands we did not implement a branding strategy on our own for the island. This would imply that there is no brand image or specific values attached to Softex. This is also reflected among customers who are relatively unknown with the name Carex or Softex. I think it's our low price due to the local presence is what makes the products attractive, not necessarily the brand name, image or quality. In order to make you understand the situation in Aruba completely you have to keep this in mind, the different with Curacao is that we are not a factory as they are we are a distributor and thus would even require a different branding strategy, in this case we believe that it not necessary to have a branding strategy as we also have other products and it would be very difficult to attach so many values to our brand.

**Priscilla:** Softex and a range of our brands have turned out to be unknown by the locals. Many since our population is graying have grown up with one of our brands; Noky and therefore know the brand and prefer the brand as it is in a way a security. In terms in brand image I would have to assume that it is low-price. Noky has become a popular product mainly because of its long existence and low price and can be found almost everywhere on the island. The locals are very price sensitive which also plays a role. Nevertheless this is not necessarily the brand image that I would like to have for our brands. I want it to be more associated with quality, especially since we are trying to enter the premium segments as well.

### **30. Has Softex considered the cultural aspect so far in their strategies or activities?**

**Priscilla:** I think as it is becoming evident that we do not have a strategy at all that the cultural aspect has not been considered for it. When we refer to our product I think we have made a distinction between the three different cultures.

**Gigi:** I think we have considered the cultural aspect in producing the toilet rolls. In Aruba for instance you see that the toilet rolls are bigger than those being manufactured for Curacao or Puerto Rico. In addition we sell bigger bundles of toilet paper as the customer demands it. I assume it has something to do with the influences that each culture has had.

**Miguel:** I don't think I have much to add, I believe our situation is slightly different as we have the award and the pride of our people which has played a huge role in the brand image that we currently have. I was not a case of a branding strategy or activity. But in terms of product I think we are closest to Curacao. The color of the packaging differs but that is more of a strategic decision than a cultural one. What might be different from Curacao is the single rolls. Of course in Puerto Rico we also have poverty people prefer to buy 4-packs. Perhaps that is culturally determined as we do have some American influences whether we want it or not. The status is becoming more and more important.

### **What about the aspects of language, have this been considered?**

**Priscilla:** no not really. In Puerto Rico right now all texts are in Spanish but as some of our products produced in Puerto Rico also go to Aruba for instance and this is something we want to continue to do, we are not going to change the texts especially for Aruba. Many of the people do speak and understand Spanish so therefore I do not think this will be a problem. It will be very difficult if we have to change our texts all the time when we are sending products from Curacao to Puerto Rico, or from Puerto Rico to Aruba.

**This make me wonder if the this would not make it less appealing as the adaptation to the language can play a big role? For instance, consider the problems you had in Puerto Rico when wanting to directly translate a text used in Curacao to be used in Puerto Rico, it didn't work out well.**

**Priscilla:** You are right there, I thought it was perfect but my colleagues in Puerto Rico thought differently about it. They obviously know their own people and culture best and thus I had to put my own personal opinion besides me even though I though the text was ideal. But I believe than in this case it is a bit different, by now our products are already known among our customers and thus making it less big of a deal.

## **2. How have the marketing communications been determined so far?**

**Priscilla:** I think it was a matter of observation and culture. The first time we have ever used marketing communication was during our first campaign in Curacao. From culture we knew that radio is highly appreciated and often people read the newspaper to see what events have taken place. Me made our choice regarding this to use the radio and printed media as channels to communicate. For the future we would still like to make use of these channels but we have also observed as you have already learned from Herbert that events is emerging. The biggest names are present at the events that are taken place here so obviously we also want to make use of events.

**Miguel:** this is not something that we have deliberately chosen to communicate with but worth mentioning. After winning the award we received a lot of media coverage by local media stations, for example the local television channel has made a documentary about us, a local radio station has devoted some airtime to us, I have done several interviews with newspapers.

**Gigi:** we have only made some used of advertisements and no more than that. Marketing is new so in that sense a strategy would be nice.

## **3. What are the objectives that Softex has in regards to events?**

**Priscilla:** I think this is a tricky one. I could tell you what objectives we have from top management and as general marketing of Softex but I can also already tell you that it differs per island. Gigi for instance, has already pointed out that there do not necessarily need a branding strategy and they have not engaged in any kind of events yet. Puerto Rico on the other hand, has already been active for a few years in events thus the strategy would not directly apply to them as they are already quite successful.

For Curacao I would say that we have the following objectives: we want to raise the awareness as Softex is so unfamiliar, sales is of course always important, Herbert wants to launch a new A-line product and thus that would also be one of our objectives,

**Gigi:** I have to correct Priscilla in this one. Perhaps it would not fall under the same objectives as she has just told but we have had a cleanup day to strengthen our internal relations and to raise awareness. So in a sense it would be categorized under event I suppose. Other than that than I think we could use the events as a means to raise awareness as thus far we have only been able to do so via advertisements in magazines of supermarkets and by means of discounts.

**Miguel:** in Puerto Rico we have adopted the idea of trade shows and exhibitions of a means of networking and profiling your company. We have done this for some time now and it has

certainly helped. Of course we have the yearly Carnival which also means a lot to the culture but I'm not sure if we should be looking at other events for Puerto Rico. It would probably be better to keep focusing on trade shows and exhibitions but instead enhance the way we profile ourselves.

#### 4. What kind of events is likely to be selected?

**Priscilla:** my main interest is carnival as all three islands have it. For Puerto Rico it would then also be trade shows and exhibitions but other than that we are not interested in others to start off with. Of course for the future it would be something to reconsider.

#### Are events also highly used in Aruba as a way to engage with customers?

**Gigi:** off course Aruba has events such as Carnival and the Flag day or king's day and yes you will see companies advertising during these events but it is not the trend that we continuously have events organized to promote certain products or brands. You will off course see some exhibitions from time to time or an event launched by an organization for the introduction of a new product but it is not all about the celebration of something because the culture enjoys it, it is still very much about the product.

<b>Interview file # 6</b>	April 28
<b>Purpose of the interview:</b> get insight into current marketing strategy of Softex	<b>Time:</b> 10.00 <b>Duration:</b> appr. 60 minutes
<b>Main Topic: marketing strategy</b> <b>Primary research Question:</b>	
<b>Place: Skype</b>	
<b>interviewer:</b> Suki Martis	
<b>interviewee:</b> Priscilla Wijshijer (general marketing manager), Gigi Raven (sales manager and marketing officer), Miguel Torres (sales manager and marketing officer)	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> Answering questions based on knowledge and experience	

**Nexus:****Topic 1: Branding**

- No strategy
- Hecho en Puerto Rico award attributed brand image
- Low price, quality

**Topic 2: Culture**

- Marketing communication mix
- Adapted products

**Topic 3: Events**

- Carnival
- Trade shows & exhibitions
- objectives

**Conclusion:** It has become evident that Softex has never used a branding strategy in none of the three islands nor paid any attention to brand image. As the products and the brand seems to be unknown among locals this has increased the importance of raising awareness. Puerto Rico unlike the other two islands has won an excellence award which has helped it to gain awareness and given a brand image- quality. The event selection and objectives seem to be differing per island as Puerto Rico is already profiling itself through trade shows and exhibitions and Curacao mainly wants to focus on carnival and product launch.

## APPENDIX 7 "INTERVIEW SUMMARY- COCA-COLA CURACAO"

<b>Interview file n°:</b> 7	<b>Date:</b> May 5
<b>Year/Semester/Block:</b> Semester 2, block 2	<b>Time:</b> 14.30
<b>Main topic: marketing techniques/strategies and activities of Coca-cola</b>	<b>Duration:</b> appr. 60 minutes
<b>Place:</b> Rijkseenheid Boulevard 1, Curacao	
<b>Name of interviewer:</b> SukiMartis	
<b>Name of interviewee:</b> Mrs. Myrthe Verhulst	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> answering questions based on their knowledge and experiences	
<b>Sub-topics:</b> marketing communication strategy	
<b>Reasons for interviewing:</b> gaining knowledge from insiders/experts	

<b>Description: summary of transcript and comments ( in Dutch)</b>
<p><b>1. Hoelang werkt u al bij Coca-Cola en wat is hier de meest voornaamste reden voor?</b></p> <p>Een paar jaar geleden ben ik naar Curacao gemigreerd en dan is alles nog nieuw natuurlijk. Natuurlijk is Coca-Cola een vooraanstaand bedrijf waar iedereen wel ervaring bij wilt opdoen maar dat is niet hoe ik hier terecht ben gekomen. Ik heb eerst nog gewerkt bij wat locale bedrijven voordat ik toch zo'n 7/8 jaar geleden ervoor heb gekozen om te werken bij een bedrijf wat dichterbij mij zelf staat als persoon. Het is een bedrijf die staat voor innovatie en groei en daarbij ook bereid is te investeren in zijn medewerkers en de omgeving waarin zij actief is. Iets wat toch niet zo vaak voorkomt op het eiland jammer genoeg.</p> <p><b>2. Aangezien de naam coca- cola voor zich spreekt en er aangenomen kan worden dat er niet eens zoveel reclame of promotie gedaan hoeft te worden aangezien het een wereldwijde erkende merk is, word er toch aan reclame gedaan op Curacao? zo ja, wat is hier de reden van?</b></p> <p>Klopt we genieten van wereldwijde herkenning maar om succesvol te zijn is het belangrijk om consistent te zijn. De reden dat Coca-Cola instaan is geweest om een globale imperium op te bouwen is door consistent te zijn, het personaliseren van wat hun naar buiten brengen en naamsbekendheid.</p> <p>Deel van onze strategie is dan ook om consistent branding boodschappen naar buiten te brengen zodat onze consumenten weten en erop kunnen vertrouwen dat wij betrouwbaar zijn. Consistentie speelt zoals ik al zei een belangrijke rol in het opbouwen van een sterke reputatie wat weer leidt tot herkenning van je merk of brand. We besteden dan ook een groot deel van ons budget aan het adverteren van onze naam en we merken ook dat we hier veel voor terug krijgen, dus het is zeker de investering waard.</p> <p><b>3. Coca-Cola heeft een "glocal" strategie, op welke manier is het locale aspect aangepast aan de cultuur van Curacao?</b></p> <p>Coca-Cola haar algemene strategie is vooral gebaseerd op loyaliteit. Het is mede hierdoor dat Coca-Cola door de jaren heen in staat is geweest om haar nummer 1 positie te behouden. Het</p>

herontwikkelen en onder de loep nemen van je merk ontwikkeling is een tweede belangrijk aspect, het is dé manier om je doelgroep bij te kunnen houden.

Onze brand strategie heeft een verandering meegemaakt van de focus op het in staat zijn om het te kunnen betalen, beschikbaarheid en acceptatie naar prijswaarde, voorkeur en penetratie. Bij het opbouwen van een merk is het belangrijk dat het binnen het bereik is van je klanten, wat bij Coca-Cola gerealiseerd wordt met “binnen handbereik van lust” of zoals ze in het Engels zeggen “withing an arm’s reach of desire”. Het bijzondere aan Coca-Cola is dat de attributen die het merk heeft maandelijks wordt getest. De reden hiervoor is voornamelijk om ons image te behouden.

Het moeilijke aan Coca-Cola is dat we een familie zijn en meerdere producten hebben. Op een manier zou je kunnen zeggen dat we vaak tegen onszelf concurreren en dat er consumenten zijn die misschien geen voorkeur geven aan Coca-Cola maar wel aan Fria wat ook door Coca-Cola nationaal gefabriceerd wordt zonder dat consumenten het weten en dus toch voor Coca-Cola kiezen. Dit maakt het soms vooral moeilijk om de merkwaarde te meten juist door onze zeer diverse producten. Ondanks dit is het Coca-Cola toch gelukt om een hoge marktwaarde te behalen.

Bij het opbouwen van een merk is het belangrijk dat de identiteit van de merk vaststaat voordat er verdere acties ondernomen worden. Het is hierbij vooral belangrijk dat de identiteit de unieke waarde reflecteert, je wilt de consumenten laten zien dat het je enigszins kan schelen wat voor producten men in handen krijgt. Als je hierin slaagt dan ben je erin geslaagd of een creatieve persoonlijkheid neer te zetten waarvan je op lange termijn kunt profiteren. Onze image is vrijwel vanaf het begin hetzelfde gebleven en wordt voornamelijk weergegeven door de design van onze flessen. Het heeft geen invloed op de nieuwe producten die wij introduceren, het design heeft al kenbaar gemaakt dat het van Coca-Cola komt. Onze persoonlijkheid hebben we geprobeerd zo dicht mogelijk bij de klant te houden door het te bepalen als “deel van het dagelijks leven” dit is hoe wij Coca-Cola zien en willen dat onze klanten zien.

Doordat wij verschillende producten produceren aangepast aan verschillende leeftijden, levensstijlen en landen hebben wij bepaald dat het persoonlijk moet blijven. Het is niet enkel een kwestie van het lokaliseren van je strategie. In Curacao is Fria geïntroduceerd als lokaal product. Het is een frisdrank in verschillende levendige kleuren die het vooral moet hebben van zijn zoetheid. Zoals je misschien al weet is het deel van het cultuur om levendige kleuren te hebben, zoals de gebouwen die je overal ziet en wordt zoetigheid zeer gewaardeerd. Je zal dan ook niet zo snel Coca-Cola Zero ergens vinden, het wordt verkocht maar geen voorkeur aangegeven. Blijheid, waar Coca-Cola ook wel voor staat wordt op de manier toch nog gepromoot en onderling gedeeld. Je ziet bv. Heel vaak dat Fria’s worden uitgedeeld op feestjes, evenementen of mee worden genomen naar school.

#### **4. Zijn er elementen geweest van de marketing communicatie mix die uitblinken bij het**

##### **aanpassen van de globale strategie aan de lokale culturele aspecten?**

Coca-Cola maakt in het algemeen al gebruik van vrijwel alle marketing communicatie aspecten zou je kunnen zeggen. Wij profiteren hier natuurlijk ook van want je ziet op televisie bijvoorbeeld reclamespotjes op Amerikaanse televisiezenders. Ze maken gebruik van virale marketing, sales promotie, PR, noem het maar op. Of wij hier op Curacao ook enkele uitschieters hebben gehad, nee. We doen net zoals Coca-Cola waarschijnlijk wereldwijd doet aan CSR, we hebben campagnes, we hebben van tijd tot tijd kortingen, we doen aan sponsoring. Er is tot nu toe niets uitgeblonden waarvan ik zeg dat heeft Coca-Cola nog niet gedaan in Nederland, wat wellicht heeft te maken met de naamsbekendheid.

**5. Evenementen wordt door de lokale inwoners van Curacao zeer gewaardeerd, heeft**

**coca cola dit meegenomen bij het aanpassen van hun strategie?**

Zoals ik al heb uitgelegd is onze strategie niet op deze manier aangepast. Ik kan inderdaad wel erkennen dat er hier nog wel eens van een feestje gehouden worden en hoe meer hoe beter, het kan allemaal niet uitbundig genoeg maar nee. We hebben geen speciale evenementen geïntroduceerd als deel van onze strategie. We zijn niettemin wel bij de meeste grote evenementen aanwezig maar dat is al deel van onze strategie, consequent zijn.

**6. Volgens culturele literatuur is de cultuur van Curacao wat terughouden tegenover veranderingen en introductie van onbekende producten, op welke manier is coca cola**

**hiermee omgegaan bij het introduceren van de locale frisdrank Fria?**

Dat kan enigszins kloppen, maar moet ik erbij zeggen dat ik enigszins zeg omdat Coca-Cola hier niet zoveel van heeft gemerkt. Als je mij zou vragen of de cultuur van Curacao in het algemeen terughoudend is naar het onbekende zeg ik volmondig ja. Het voordeel van Curacao is dat het vrij klein is en de meeste mensen elkaar kennen en weten welke bedrijven er wel en niet zitten. Coca-Cola is natuurlijk een wereldwijd bekend merk en toen wij Fria hebben geïntroduceerd kon het enkel van Coca-Cola zijn of van twee van onze andere concurrenten: Lovers of Satex. Bij de lancering hebben wij het voordeel van Coca-Cola als wereldwijd bekend merk gebruikt om onderscheid te maken van de andere twee distributeurs waardoor wij al in het voordeel waren. Wellicht is het toch een cultureel fenomeen dat de inwoners van het eiland gelijk afkomen op evenementen. Wij hebben bij de introductie groots uitgepakt en gebruik gemaakt van een brassband, puur entertainment en gratis kleine flesjes uitgedeeld zodat men zelf kon proeven. Ik denk dat dat wel heel erg veel heeft geholpen. Fria bestaat natuurlijk al wel langer dan 8 jaar, en is tot de dag succesvol dus ben ik van mening dat deze aanpak wel degelijk heeft geholpen. Het feit dat het deel is van de Coca-Cola familie heeft naar mijn mening ook daarbij bijgedragen, het was nieuw maar niet meer zozeer onbekend.

**7. Doet coca -cola aan sponsoring as deel van hun marketing strategie en zo ja is dit**

**mede voor het aanspreken van een specifieke doelgroep en of voor de sociale**

**verantwoordelijkheid van het merk?**

Wij doen aan beide, zowel sponsoring als het bijdragen aan de maatschappij. Op wereldwijde schaal sponsort Coca-Cola verschillende sportevenementen. Ook dit jaar sponsoren wij de Fifa worldcup en we maken ook dit jaar gebruik van een locale campagne waarbij deelnemers een reis naar Brazilië kunnen winnen om aanwezig te zijn bij de wedstrijden. Coca-Cola stimuleert al jaren een gezonde leefstijl wat ook te zien is aan een aantal van onze producten. Daarnaast is een lange termijn doelstelling voor Coca-cola gesteld op het gebied van onder andere klimaatbescherming, energiebescherming, waterbeleid en recyclen en duurzame verpakkingen. Locaal proberen wij ons vooral te richten op het gebied van milieu. Het milieu is hier enorm vervuild en is er zelfs verwacht dat het eiland over enkele jaar enorme problemen heeft als de vervuiling zo langer doorgaat. Wij werken daarom met "Cura Doet" samen die zich o.a inzet voor het schoonmaken van het milieu op Curacao. Ze organiseren jaarlijks een clean-up day en wij maken dit mede mogelijk. Jeugd en educatie vormt onze toekomst wat natuurlijk de maatschaf bepaald van het eiland en coca-cola

gelooft dat er juist daarom geïnvesteerd moet worden in gebieden en datgene waar ontwikkelig mogelijk is, om die reden sponsoren wij ook een softbal team en de studie en beroepenmarkt om maar een paar op te noemen. De genoemde activiteiten zijn toch wel die wij al jarenlang, jaarlijks steunen daarnaast kunnen wij her en der nog altijd investeren in andere organisaties of doelen.

#### 8. Ondanks de bekendheid van coca cola, zijn er toch een aantal concurrenten waarmee

##### jullie concurreren, op welke manier zorgt coca- cola ervoor dat jullie toch uitblinken?

Ondanks dat wij prijswaarde bieden en kwaliteitsproducten aanbieden zijn de lokale inwoners toch prijsgevoelig als het om bepaalde producten gaan. Als het om coca-cola gaat zie je al gauw dat men daarvoor kiest om de smaak en bekendheid, het is een luxe goed wat toch wel enigzins een status laat zien. Fria is toch even wat anders, het is deel van de coa-cola family maar geen Cola zelf. Je hebt bijvoorbeeld Lovers sappen die concurreren met onze minute maid en de Criolita en Chubby die concurreren met Fria. De chubby is vrijwel bekend in het caribbisch gebied en word ook verkocht in Nederland terwijl Fria wat meer nationaal is. We hebben er daardoor voor gekozen om hiervoor een marketing strategy in te zetten zodat er toch loyaliteit wordt gecreerd wat nodig is voor het bestaan van het product. We hebben voornamelijk campagnes gelanceerd waarbij de deelnemers producten konden winnen bijvoorbeeld of door middel van sponsoring ervoor gezorgd dat er loyaliteit gecreerd werd. Softbal is een nationale sport wat toch veel erkenning krijgt op het eiland, wanneer men weet dat je dit stimuleert en graat ziet groeien zie je toch als snel je naam voorbij komen en blijven komen omdat je iets goeds doet in de ogen van de inwoners. Ik denk dat dit is wat ons onderscheiden heeft. Lovers is grotendeels afhankelijk geweest van overheidssubsidie bijvoorbeeld in tegendeel tot ons, dat is toch weer de kracht van Coca-Cola. Het komt er uiteindelijk op neer dat naamsbekendheid alles is, bouw je de juiste naam en bekendheid op dat kan je zeker meerdere wegen inslaan.

<b>Interview file # 7</b>	May 5
<b>Purpose of the interview:</b> get insight into how coca-cola has localized its marketing strategy	<b>Time:</b> 14.30 <b>Duration:</b> appr. 60 minutes
<b>Main Topic:</b> <b>Primary research Question:</b> How can the western cultural event marketing communication strategy be adopted to the non-western culture of Aruba, Curacao and Puerto Rico?	
<b>Place:</b> Rijkseenheid Boulevard 1, Curacao	
<b>interviewer:</b> Suki Martis	
<b>interviewee:</b> Myrthe Verhulst	
<b>Role of interviewee:</b> Answering questions based on knowledge and experience	
<b>Nexus:</b>	



**Topic 1: Brand Equity**

- Brand identity
- Brand image
- Brand recognition
- Consistent branding
- Brand awareness

**Topic 2: Global strategy**

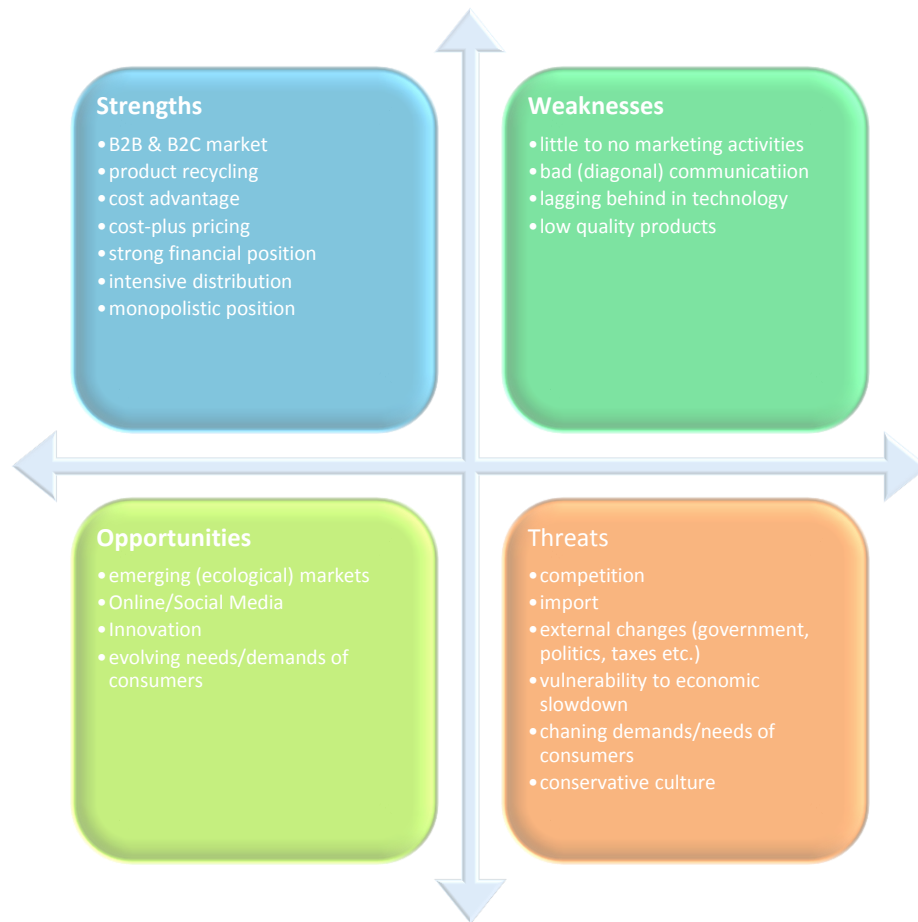
- Cultural adaptation
- Brand strategy
- Brand development
- Local presence
- loyalty

**Topic 3: Marketing communication mix**

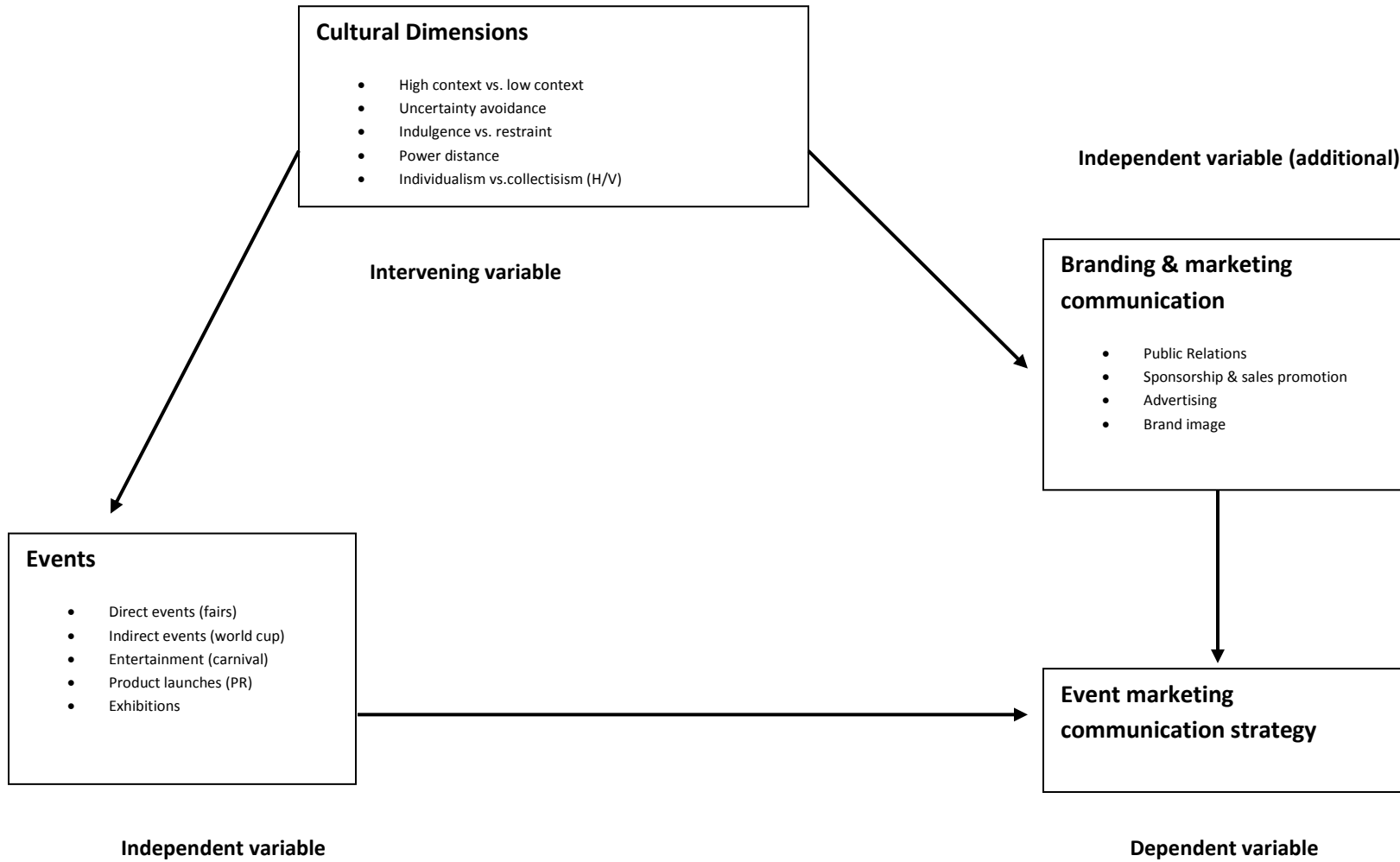
- viral marketing
- sales promotion
- PR
- Events/sponsorship
- CSR

**Conclusion:** Coca-Cola has managed to become one of the world leading and most recognized brands by their consistent branding, its strong brand recognition and by brand development. The brand illustrates that building a strong brand is essential for keeping up with your target audience and allows for new products to be introduced without affecting the overall brand. It has also contributed to less cultural impact on communication tools.

## APPENDIX 8 "SWOT ANALYSIS SOFTEX"



## APPENDIX 9 “CONCEPTUAL MODEL”



## **APPENDIX 10 “HOFSTEDE CULTURAL DIMENSIONS”**

This section will review the cultural model of Hofstede which will help to determine the thinking patterns, emotions and behaviour that form a culture's mental programming. Hofstede (1984) has defined culture as: “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another.” He distinguished five cultural dimensions on which people are mentally programmed: power distance, collectivism vs. individualism, femininity vs. masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term vs. short-term orientation. He later on added the Indulgence vs. restraint dimension.

### **INDIVIDUALISM VS. COLLECTIVISM**

Individualism represents a loose intertwined social framework in which individuals are likely to take care of themselves, immediate families and their own interests, while collectivism represents a preference for a tight intertwined social framework in which there is the expectation that individuals are being taken care of by relatives or members of a particular group and personal goals are downgraded to the goals of the group. This dimension helps to determine whether the self- image within a society is defined in terms of “I” or “we”. Trompenaars (1993) refers to individualism as the priority on the self and communitarianism as the priority of common goals and objectives. Individualism is regarded as short-sighted and selfish.

De Mooij (2005) argues that the perception of the self-image within a society has an important impact on advertising appeals. Logically, individuals belonging to individualistic and collectivistic are likely to respond differently to advertisements which are employing individualistic or collectivistic appeals. In resembles with Hofstede's definition of collectivistic cultures, advertisements emphasizing harmony, in-group and family will be more effective in collectivistic countries, whereas in individualistic cultures, advertisement appeals should emphasize individual benefits, personal achievements and independence. Modern and international appeals are considered to be popular within collectivistic culture as they address the need conform and belonging to a new, greater world.

### **POWER DISTANCE**

Power distance is defined as the degree to which members of a society accept unequal distribution of power. The fundamental matter in this dimension is how this inequality is being handled within the society. People in cultures with large power distance accept hierarchical order without further questioning, while societies with small power distance aim for equal power distribution and demand justification for unequal power in hierarchical situations.

Power distance also influences the construct of advertisements. Central in this dimension is the individual need to implicitly or explicitly differentiate oneself from through status symbols. Prestige branded products provides a tool for individuals to flag the social status, which might explain why status symbols have been used to incite customers their interest into certain products (Mooij de, 2005). Large power distance cultures are more inclined to use these status symbols as those individuals have a stronger urge to display their social status than members of small power distance cultures. Eastman, Flynn and Goldsmith (1996), found that price elasticity and consumption motivated by status illustrates

that customers who seek prestige brands that display status tend to be more insensitive to price. In other words, the higher the desire for a branded product, the more likely they are to pay a higher price for that product. Literature suggest that customers from a large power distance are more likely to buy prestige brands and are thus more price insensitive for these products but it does not state anything about the likelihood of small power distance cultures their price insensitivity toward prestige products.

### **UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE**

Hofstede(2014) defines uncertainty avoidance as “the degree to which members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity.” High uncertainty avoidance cultures are uncomfortable towards uncertainty and demonstrate intolerance for risks. The norm here is that truth and expertise will provide stability, will help with the establishment of rules, and refuse irregular ideas and behaviour. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures are more inclined in taking risks and feel more comfortable towards uncertainty. According to Hofstede, high uncertainty avoidance cultures are more likely to manifest emotional attitudes. On the same line, de Mooij (2005) points out that high uncertainty avoidance cultures are more biased towards emotional attitudes. They are perceived to be less innovative when it comes to products as it is a risky activity that will result in uncertainty and requires investment. In these cultures there is more need for stability, explanation and proof.

### **MASCULINITY VS. FEMININITY**

Masculinity vs. Femininity is a dimension that represents values within a society and how people relate to one another. The masculine side clearly distinguish between gender and their roles and greatly value assertiveness, achievements, performance and tasks. On the other end, femininity is characterized by quality of life, caring for others, cooperation and nurturance.

In masculine cultures, such as Aruba, Curacao and Puerto Rico,

### **PRAGMATIC VS. NORMATIVE**

This dimension which has been added to the other four in 1991 is described by how people relate to unexplained happenings around us. A normative orientation is characterized by strong desire towards explanations, establishing absolute truths, stability, great respect for traditions and a focus on the future and achieving quick results. In pragmatic societies, there is no direct need for explanation as there is the understanding that it is impossible to capture the complexity of life. The emphasis is not so much on truth as it is perceived to be depending on the situation, context on time and therefore, they accept contradictions and adapt to circumstances in order to live a virtuous life.

### **INDULGENCE VS. RESTRAINT**

The indulgence side of the dimension stands for enjoying life and having fun and to what extent people allow freedom for the fulfilment of this. The other side, restraint stands for suppression of needs which are regulated by strict social norms.

## APPENDIX 11 “EVENT OBJECTIVES”

Event Marketing Objectives	
<b>Marketing objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reach target markets</li> <li>- Brand positioning</li> <li>- Increasing sales</li> </ul>	<b>Product related objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance brand or product image</li> <li>- Generating awareness</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance corporate image</li> <li>- Create awareness</li> <li>- Create goodwill</li> <li>- Increase ROI</li> <li>- Building relationships</li> <li>- Strengthen internal relationships</li> <li>- Product launch</li> <li>- New market analysis</li> <li>- Feedback</li> <li>- Message transmission</li> <li>- Marketing strategy push</li> </ul>	<b>Sales objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing sales (short term and long term)</li> </ul>
	<b>Media objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generating awareness</li> <li>- Enhancing ad campaigns</li> <li>- Public Relations (publicity)</li> </ul>
	<b>Personal objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Management interest</li> </ul>

Table 1: Event marketing objectives

Source: adapted from Eriksson & Hjalssom, 2010; Gupta, 2003

## APPENDIX 12 “CRITERION FOR EVENT SELECTION”

Meenaghan (1983) emphasized how important it is to understand the event perception of the target audience and has produced a list of 14 criteria:

- (1) Ability to fulfil objectives
- (2) Image association potential of particular event
- (3) Event choice and company/product compatibility
- (4) Media coverage potential
- (5) The Funding requirement
- (6) Target audience coverage
- (7) Guest hospitality opportunity
- (8) Executive preference
- (9) Geographical coverage of the defined audience
- (10) Staff knowledge of the proposed event
- (11) Event type
- (12) Solus position
- (13) The possibility for adverse publicity
- (14) Possible organization behind the event

In the interest of events, these various criteria are to be considered in the selection of an event.

**The ability to fulfil objectives.** The recognized added value that events have is its ability to fulfil stated and multiple objectives at once. In the case of multiple objectives they must be hierarchically ranked and more importantly, the complexity between objective interplay has to be acknowledged enabling the creation of value.

**Image association potential of the particular event.** In the words of Meenaghan (1983), each event has image association potential meaning that each individual event creates its own personality and perception in the public’s mind. Therefore, relationship development with the audience differs according to the event type. This implies that an event suitable for one company might not be suitable for another. This makes the ability of the event to deliver a certain image critically important.

**Event choice and company/product compatibility.** The degree of compatibility between an event and product or brand is an important criterion according to Meenaghan (1983). He states that if there is no

link between the product or corporate image and the event, it might not utilize its potential source of advantage as it leads to attraction of the wrong kind of attention which might confuse the potential customer.

**Media coverage potential.** The criteria list also describes the media coverage potential which according to Meenaghan (1983) varies according to event. Media coverage can be greatly appreciated by certain organizations as it has potential to enhance their public image but the profile of the media audience and how it will match those of the organizational target market have to be considered as well. Gupta (2003) supports this as an important consideration when selecting an event as it's viewed as a valuable awareness generating tool.

**The funding requirement.** Funding is a requirement that is of essence within every event or endeavour. When organizing an event one wants to ensure that the budget is sufficient as the reputation of the organization is at stake and it is a prerequisite for an event to be undertaken properly. Costs do also need to be considered in terms of physical resources, staff talent and staff time. Meenaghan (1983) continues by stating that organizations need to determine when the investment is required and over which time period it will be sustained.

**Target audience coverage.** The effectiveness of an event is partly dependent on the target audience definition which will also steer the event selection and increase the effectiveness of the event investment. The audience has been distinguished in 1: the immediate audience present at the event, 2: the extended media audience or 3: both.

**The opportunities for guest hospitality.** In addition, face-to-face contact with the target audience should also be considered. In case an event is to fulfil multiple objectives, guest hospitality is prioritized in the hierarchical order.

**Executive preference.** While it is becoming evident that the target audience, media coverage and associations are important considerations, executive preference is another criterion which can aid organizations to avoid entering transactions which are less likely to lead to success. It represents the level of commitment from top management and their leisure interest (ibid).

**Geographical coverage of the defined audience.** Of particular interest are the geographical coverage, staff knowledge and the solus position criterion as those three relate to the segment that should be reached and whether it is most effective to use a series of events or solely one event. Events with an excessive or insufficient geographical coverage ability to reach the defined target audience should be excluded from the very beginning. The geographical coverage definition will support the organization in deciding whether a single or multiple events are necessary to cover the total market (ibid).

**Staff knowledge of the proposed event.** Meenaghan (1983) suggest that appropriate in-depth knowledge of the staff is required for them to be able to execute the event as planned. At least one member of the organization should be involved to serve as link between the organization and the event and should be able to beware the organization of any pitfalls, with their expertise.



**Event type.** According to Meenaghan (1983) events are classified according to generic type such as environment, sports and art. However, he also points out that organizations must consider other possible classifications to select the most suitable event.

As was already indicated above, organizations must carefully select the event type that will help them achieve their objectives. The question that Meenaghan (1983) posed was whether organizations should make use of existing or new events.

**Solus position.** This criterion helps to determine whether the organization should select an event that will be exclusive to the organization or whether it would be involved in cooperating with other organization to co-sponsor one big event. Co-sponsored events are deemed unattractive by Meenaghan (1983).

**The possibility for adverse publicity.** With this criterion it is all about examining the dimensions of the event to avert unanticipated reverse publicity. Additionally, the selection of the event regarding this criterion becomes a little bit more sensitive as the nature of the associations that an organization want to create have to be considered as well (Meenaghan, 1983).

**The possible organization behind the event.** The last criterion of the list is the possible organization behind the event which refers to the ability of executing an event in case an event is organized by a another organization which is being sponsored by your organization. One wants to make sure that the organizing organization has a clear understanding of the sponsor's interest (Meenaghan, 1983).

## **APPENDIX 13 “RECOMMENDED FIRST CAMPAIGN”**

Ideally Softex should pre-test, especially for a new product if the message send is being conceived as intended by their target audiences. This will reduce the risk of failure and allow for the message to be altered according to the feedback of the test audience. Testing with test audiences who represent the target audience should include the brand concept, the creative strategy of all communications.

Public Relations and advertising should be the first activities to generate pre-event awareness. Individualized promotions such as prize giveaways (as part of a competition for the pre-carnival event; “festival di Tumba”) and to have radio broadcast about this competition to generate awareness and for bringing the event to the attention of the larger target audience. Softex should also make use of advertising by using images of the event on the sides of the garbage trucks of “Selikor” which is the local waste management company (co-promotion with a supporting facility). Another way to generate pre-event awareness is by making use of cinema advertising as it can reach a large audience or to use a more creative strategy by using the mobile advertising sign, which is a new upcoming advertisement trend on the islands (locals or tourist who hire a truck are riding around the island with an advertisement sign/board attached to the truck).

Upon the launch (carnival season) a second wave of press materials should follow (flyer; with more discrete information; and portable toilet advertising (co-promotion with Selikor). The idea behind Softex its presence in Carnival that it will build a stand with its logo seat, which will also be distributed during the most significant parade “Gran Marcha,” to increase the visibility of the brand name and to provide target audiences with the comfort of having a foldable cardboard seat (made especially to generate brand awareness), that can be used during the carnival seasons for viewing the carnival. Besides distributing logo seats Softex will be handing out a single roll of the newly introduced toilet paper for trial, which the target audiences can use during the carnival season. During this season “Selikor” provides portable toilets, also known as “porta potty’s” but does not provide them with toilet paper and thus, people have to bring their own toilet paper rolls. Their toilet roll packaging could be customized to the campaign name “enjoy your stay” but this is optional. Following the idea of building a stand with the logo seats and to distribute these in combination with the toilet paper, it will not only enhance the awareness and brand image but appeal to the media which is present during the whole season, a creative stand with logo seat which are unfamiliar on the islands is likely to create some buzz which could result in positive media coverage. Effectiveness is likely to increase when public relations activities appear in media consumed by the target audiences.

Sponsorship, offers an opportunity to enhance awareness and image in a later stage. The use of advertising (cinema, outdoors), along with Public relations seem most promising in reaching and affecting the target audiences. The creative strategy will be used to place advertising in target media, with different concepts according to the islands to meet and appeal to all three cultures. Advertising will go through different stages to interest and make the target audiences aware of the brand and hopefully encourage them to trial or purchase. Sales promotion is very important during and/or after the launch to stimulate customers in the market. Providing discounts or buy three get one for free specials are recommended. Softex has to make sure that the communications mix are integrated and in line with

one another. The campaign will combine push and pull strategies to be most effective among its target customers.

### **Media strategy**

Print advertisement will be placed in the most popular and quality newspapers and magazines to reach the younger and elder target groups. Newspapers and magazines identified to be read by the target audience are: Vigilante, Extra, Go Weekly, Bon dia Aruba, Diaro, El Nuevo dia and Primera hora.

Outdoor advertisements and cinema advertisements are used to reach the larger target audience. These creative advertisements will complement radio and print advertising and will be visible on the street and in the entertainment scene.

PR activities will concentrate on the target audience with radio programmes mentioned in the recommendations section.

Sales promotion has been discussed in the recommendations section as well.

Internet can also play a vital role for promoting businesses and products, but as Softex is just exploring social media it is advisable that the flyer is placed online on their Facebook page for everyone to find.

All adverts should emphasise the Softex image, and mentions website and Facebook page for customers to find.

## APPENDIX 14 "TIMING AND BUDGET"

