

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE AFRICAN RURAL SURVIVALIST CONSUMER CULTURE**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The main aim of the research is to determine the rural consumers' perceptions of the corporate image of Pharmaceutical organisations in the greater Bushbuckridge area. It is therefore imperative to discuss culture and the African rural survivalist consumer culture and how their perceptions can influence corporate image

This chapter focuses on consumer culture with specific emphasis on consumer behavior, the definitions of culture, subcultures, and the characteristics of culture and the components of culture. The concept of cultural differences is discussed in detail. Specific attention is then given to the rural survivalist consumer culture.

#### **3.2 SOCIETAL CULTURE**

##### **3.2.1 Definitions of culture**

Culture is at the centre of the social anthropologist's inquiry. Knowing about different cultures enables people to understand why those in other societies think and feel differently. To convey better the meaning of culture, various definitions are provided below.

McKenna (2000:470) understood culture as the shared values and beliefs held by groups in society that give their actions meaning.

Kossuth & Cilliers (2002:65) define culture as the common experiences of individuals which result in shared motives, values, beliefs, identities and interpretations or meanings of significant events.

Lamb, Hair & McDaniel (1996), Hawkins, Best & Coney (2001: 42) and Schneider (1997:20) provide the following definition: culture is the set of values, norms, attitudes and other meaningful symbols that shape human behavior and included the artefacts and/or products of that behavior as these are transmitted from one generation to the next.

Culture is not fixed. All cultures evolve and develop over time. Significantly, all cultures are susceptible to the forces of globalisation (Makgoba, 2000 and Constantin von Barloewen, 2001:33).

Hofstede (1991:5) argues that culture is the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.

Solomon (1999:377) emphasises that culture is the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms and traditions among the members of an organisation or society. It is what defines a human community, its individuals, its social organisations, as well as its economic and political system. It includes both abstract ideas, such as values and ethics and objects and services that are produced or valued by a group of people.

From the various definitions of culture it can be concluded that culture entails distinct knowledge, values, norms, ideas and symbols shared and transmitted by people in a particular society. Culture is not static, but it can change either gradually or instantly.

Due to their cultural diversity, perspectives and reactions of people in different societies can be predicted to some extent. Though one can notice that each and every individual in the same society is still different, all its members are more alike when compared to people in other societies.

### **3.2.2 Subcultures**

Every individual can be associated with a more specific culture or subculture. Consumer decisions are affected by that particular culture. It is important to understand what is meant by culture in order to distinguish between culture and subculture, since both categories are important to the consumer search process.

The term subculture is used to refer to group variations that exist within a culture. A subculture can be defined as any group within a society that preserves the principal characteristics of the wider society or culture but nevertheless exhibits its own distinct set of values and beliefs (Walters and Bergiel, 1989: 253). The community in the greater Bushbuckridge area constitute a specific subculture.

Hawkins, Best & Coney (2001:148) define ethnic subcultures broadly as groups whose members' unique shared behaviors are based on a common race, language, or nationality.

### **3.2.3 The importance of understanding and accepting cultural differences when designing a corporate image**

Chapter 2 emphasised the importance to involve consumers when creating, maintaining and regaining a successful corporate image.

In consumer behavior, consumer culture is defined as the sum total of learned beliefs, values and customs that serve to regulate consumer behavior of members (Shiffman & Kanuk, 1994).

With a limited understanding of a specific culture, an organisation will find it difficult in selling products in the culture. Organisations, also Pharmaceutical organisations in the greater Bushbuckridge area should become familiar with cultures and adapt their corporate image to accommodate different cultures.

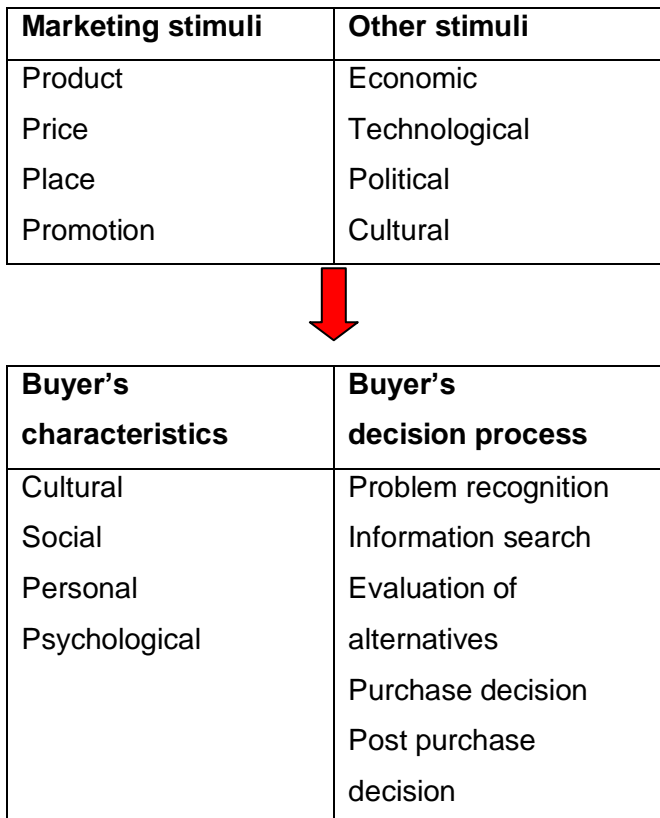
### 3.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

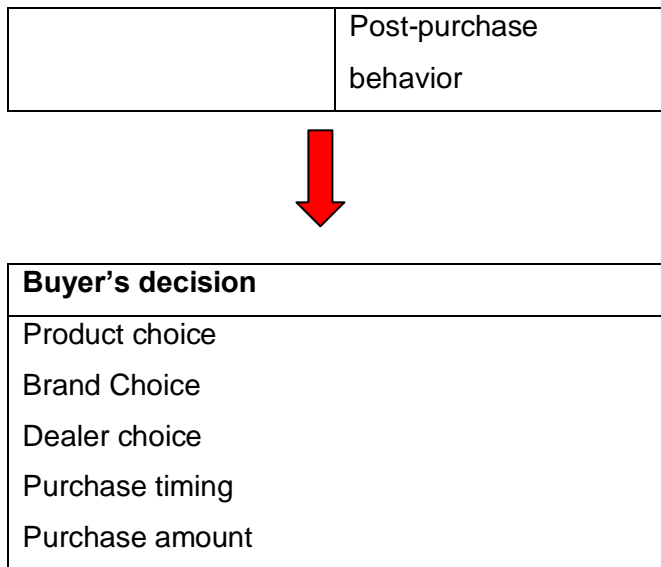
When culture is made the object of analysis, it is often in the form of cross-cultural insight highlighting differences between two cultures, but this approach frequently fails to show the extent to which culture itself influences all human behavior, especially consumer behavior.

Consumer behavior can be defined as the mental, emotional and physical activities that people engage in when selecting, purchasing, using and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy their needs and desires. (Wilkie (1994:14), East (1990:1), (<http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~renglish/370/notes/chapt05>).

The starting point in understanding consumer behavior is the stimulus response model shown below:

Figure 3.1: Model of buyer's behavior





(Wilkie, 1994)

The buyer comes into contact with marketing and environmental stimuli, and the subsequent series of internal processes leads to certain purchase decisions. The marketer's task is to understand and act upon the various influences that affect the buyer's thought processes when faced with these purchase decisions.

Wilkie (1994) emphasizes the strong influence that customs, values, attitudes and beliefs, emanating from societal culture have on the consumer decision making process.

### **3.4 CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS**

Western and non-western cultures which have co-existed in South Africa for a long time deliberately separated 'ethnic development primarily of whites and non-whites has led to a "cultural patchwork" rather than a "melting pot". The population which exceeds 40 million is made up of 76% Africans, 9% Coloureds, 3% Indians, 11% Whites and 1% others. ([www.labour.gov.za](http://www.labour.gov.za)). Ethnic Africans are divided into nine major tribes with their own unique cultural practices and languages: the Zulu (majority), the Xhosa, the South and North Sotho, the Twana, the Venda, the Ndebele, the Swazi and the Tsonga. The white population includes the Afrikaners (descendants of the original European settlers, the

Dutch Calvinist Boers – or farmers) as well as those of various other European origins (British, Italian, Portuguese, German, French, Slavic and other).

There are eleven official languages (nine African languages, Afrikaans and English) with English being the official language of business. Afrikaans, a Dutch creole, is spoken by the Afrikaners and many Africans and Coloureds. Of the nine local languages, Zulu is the most commonly spoken, but many black South Africans without formal education are fluent in several languages so as to communicate in the multilingual townships and in the workplace. More than 80% of the population is Christian (most whites and coloureds, and roughly 60% of Africans), about 60% of Asians are Hindu and 20% are Muslim (Hofmeyr, Templer and Beaty, 1994). There is also a large white Jewish community. Respect and deference to elders is common among both Africans and Whites - the heritage of an authoritarian culture based on strict religious values.

### **3.4.1 Different cultural paradigms**

The following analysis focuses on the prevalence of North European, East Asian, Westernised and African cultural paradigms.

#### **3.4.1.1 North European**

According to Mbigi (2003:19), “The cultural world view of North European is “I am because I think I am”. Emphasis is on rational scientific thinking. European leaders have harnessed this competency in the service of planning as well as scientific and technical innovation. The new scientific mentality and the new perception of the cosmos gave the European civilisation the features that characterise the modern era. These features became the basis of the paradigm that has dominated European culture for the past 300 years. Rene Descartes is usually regarded as the founder of the modern scientific paradigm. The belief is that the certainty of scientific knowledge lies at the very basis of Cartesian philosophy and of the world view derived from it. The Cartesian belief in scientific truth is reflected in

the scientism that has become typical of the Western culture. Thus Descartes arrived at his most celebrated statement, “Cogito, ergo sum - I think, therefore I exist”. The European cultural paradigm can assist leaders to plan and create a memory of the future”

#### **3.4.1.2 East Asian**

According to Mbigi (2003:19), the East Asian cultural paradigm is characterised by an emphasis on continuous improvement to attain perfection. They religious emphasis a pilgrimage into inner perfection. Yoga from Hinduism and meditation from Buddhism have developed from these religious techniques of personal perfection. Mbigi (2003:19) summarises the eastern world view as “I am because I improve” The Japanese leadership expert Masaaki Imai (in Mbigi, 2003:19) states that “If you learn only one word of Japanese make it ‘Kaizen’”. Kaizen strategy is the single most important concept in Japanese management and the key to Japanese competitive success. According to Kotelnikov (2006), kaizen means "improvement". Kaizen strategy calls for never-ending efforts for improvement involving everyone in the organisation, managers and workers alike

#### **3.4.1.3 Westernised**

Mbigi (2003:20) argued that the westernised American world view puts the emphasis on the individual lone hero who through his personal nobility, independence, courage and conviction saves organisations and communities from their otherwise unhappy fate. He defines this cultural world view as “I am because I, the individual hero, dream and do”. Grant (1986) argues that Americans form the habit of thinking of themselves in isolation and imaging that their destiny is in their own hands.

According to Marcelle & Marya (1997), European-Americans tend to focus immediately on the task at hand, and let relationships develop as they work on the task.

This cultural paradigm translates into: concentrate on your self-interest, and you will automatically serve your customers and society better, which in turn will let you serve your self-interest. Therefore, if each individual pursues her or his own selfish personal interest, an invisible force will automatically serve the common interest of the larger society.

#### **3.4.1.4 African**

According to De Liefde (2003:52), the concept of ubuntu is deeply rooted in African culture, and its central values are diametrically opposed to western culture. One can explain this antithesis in terms of the African “I am because we exist” versus the western “I think, therefore I am”.

According to Khoza in Mbigi 2005, ubuntu is an African view of life: that Africans have their own distinctive collective consciousness manifested in their behavioral patterns, expression and spiritual self fulfilment in which values such as universal brotherhood of Africans, sharing and treating other people as humans are concretised. According to Khoza, Africans have their own religion, their own ethical values and their own political traditions. Ubuntu is not just about collectivism, but also about the principles of inclusions, interdependence and reciprocity.

Senghor (in Lassiter, 2003) argues that a uniquely African worldview is focused on what he describes as “being” and “life forces”. He writes, “The African has always and everywhere presented a concept of a world which is diametrically opposed to the traditional philosophy of Europe. The latter is essentially static, objective, and dichotomous, it is in fact dualistic in that it makes an absolute distinction between body and soul, matter and spirit; it is founded on separation and opposition on analysis and conflict. The African, on the other hand, conceives the world beyond the diversity of its forms as a fundamentally mobile yet a unique reality that seeks synthesis...This reality is being, in the ontological sense of the world, and it is life force. For the African, matter in the sense the Europeans understands it is only a system of signs which translates the single reality of the universe: being which is spirit, which is life force. Thus, the whole

universe appears as an infinitely small and at the same time infinity large, network of life forces”

### **3.4.2 Difference between individualism and communalism**

Jenkins (in Lamont, 2001) describes collective social identity as constituted in a dialectical interplay of processes of internal and external definitions. On the one hand, individuals must be able to differentiate themselves by drawing on criteria of commonality and a shared sense of belonging to their subgroup. On the other, this internal identification process must be recognised by outsiders for an objective collective identity to emerge. Jenkins draws an analytical distinction between groups and categories, i.e. a collectivist which identifies and defines itself (a group for it) and a collectivist which is identified and defined by others as a category in it.

Hofstede (1980) argues that individualism involves a somewhat selfish concern for oneself and for a very small number of people who are close to oneself. This is contrasted with the observed dimension of collectivism where the needs and desires of the group are equal to or more important than the needs of the individual.

According to Shavitt (1994), individualism is perhaps the broadest and most widely used dimension of cultural variability for cultural comparison. Hofstede (1980, in Shavitt, 1994) describes individualism and collectivism as the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that prevails in a given society. In individualistic cultures, individuals tend to prefer independent relationships to others and to subordinate in-group goals to their personal goals. In collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, individuals are more likely to have interdependent relationships in their inter-group and to subordinate their personal goals to their in-group goals. Individualist cultures are associated with emphasis on independence, achievement, freedom, high levels of competition and pleasure. Collectivistic cultures are associated with emphasis on interdependence, harmony, family security, social hierarchies, and cooperation and low levels of competition.

Individualistic and collectivistic cultures are characterised by important differences in members' social perception and social behavior. Members of these cultures have very different construal of the self, of others and of the interdependence of the two (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, in Shavitt, 1994). The self is defined in terms of in-group memberships (e.g. family, ethnic identity) to a greater extent in collectivist than individualistic cultures. Moreover, evidence suggesting that members of a collectivist cultural perceive their in-groups to be more homogeneous than their out-groups, whereas the reverse is true among persons in individualistic societies. These cultural differences in the perceived relation of the self to others have been shown to have many other cognitive, emotions and behavior consequences.

The following table describes the differences between individual and communal orientation

Table 3.1: Differences between individual and communal orientation

Alienation from and solidarity with one's fellow person	
INDIVIDUAL	COMMUNAL
I am mutually exclusive from my fellow person.  I prefer multi-racialism.	I am mutually inclusive with my fellow person.  I prefer non-racialism.
I organise funerals by inviting a few family members and friends.  These are not great events.	My funerals are open to all.  The more those who come, the more the deceased was a prominent member of a society.
I have a problem – it separates me from my problem.  It eliminates subjectivity because I can own it, give it away or do what I have with it.	I am troubled and therefore display my relatedness with the experience.
I can have a nice sleep.	I merely sleep well.

I am separate from the function of sleeping.	I experience it sleeping
<p>Four separate individuals get together and form a group.</p> <p>The one with the greatest competency becomes the leader through positional power.</p>	<p>I am a group person from who an individual emerges.</p> <p>Power has been granted to me by the consent of my group based on group power.</p>
prefer to be self-actualised person in the main.	I prefer to be a social person.
I am superior to my group.	I subordinate myself to the group.
Sharing, giving, sacrificing with my fellow person versus owing accumulating and demanding from my fellow person	
Profit for me is derived from self-interest.	Profit to me is a vote of confidence my society gives me for the service I render in that society.
I will only support my brother for a short while in case of his financial embarrassment. Then he must find a job.	The more I earn the more I tend to care for my immediate brothers and sisters for as long as necessary.
I normally have a small family so that we can have a better quality of life and hopefully avoid financial destitution.	I have an extended family to help me during times of destitution.
The more I have the more I am.	I am, therefore the more I am prepared to give and share.
My concern is for production.	My concern is for people.
I am driven by merit and reward for individual effort.	I am driven by group reward for group effort.
I am individually competitive.	I am group-cooperative.

Everyone is my opponent.	are all in this together and assist one another.
Control, status and deadlines versus team cooperation, dignity, respect and common cause	
<p>I want to show you who is in charge by gripping your hand hard when I greet you.</p> <p>I am your opponent.</p>	<p>I want to show my connectedness to you by greeting you with a soft hand and holding it out longer. I am your friend.</p>
I look you in the eye challenging you.	<p>I bow my head with my eyes down,</p> <p>I am showing you respect.</p>
<p>I like job descriptions, status and rank because then I know who has to be in which place.</p> <p>I like to alienate people.</p>	<p>I prefer working in a team working towards a common goal and not be divided from my fellow person. I like solidarity amongst people.</p>
I will command you to be productive.	<p>I prefer to create a climate in which all will be willing to be more productive.</p>
General differences	
<p>I am insecure because I stand outside a group, therefore I react by wanting to control and measure everything.</p>	<p>I am secure as a person and know my fellow persons will assist me in time of need. We therefore like to discuss amongst ourselves how to control the world around us.</p>
<p>My greatest drive is fear.</p> <p>I fear that which I have being taken away.</p>	<p>My greatest drive is hope for the upliftment of all.</p>
I am actually an aggressive type of person.	I am quite a passive person.
<p>My sociological drive is to be rewarded for good deeds and to avoid punishment.</p>	<p>My sociological drive is to be recognised by my fellow person, and my greatest fear is rejection.</p>

(Koopman, 1991)

### **3.4.3 Differences between Western and African world view on healing**

Sobiecki (2003) has been reflecting on the factors that influence people's health conscious behaviors. For example, some people choose herbal remedies and not pharmaceuticals, and some prefer to self-medicate while others prefer to visit the general practitioner.

In any society healing practices form part of a wider system of concepts that constitute the culture's worldview.

Two very powerful avenues for the expression of a society's worldview are the religious and the economic systems operating in that society. In traditional societies, like Bushbuckridge, many elements of nature are believed to be sentient and to contain a spirit. Phenomena such as the sun, rivers or particular psychoactive plants are even considered gods or deities. Sometimes, though, these natural phenomena are responsible for the loss of life or injury, as happens with flooding for instance. Therefore, the gods or spirits used to be seen to be responsible for illness and calamity and were therefore appealed to for protection from sickness and death. The strong influence of religious belief on healing can be seen almost in every society. In indigenous southern African healing traditions the ancestral spirits (Amadlozi: Zulu) are believed to be able to send misfortune and sickness to those who break certain taboos. The Christian tradition believes in monotheistic God who can heal the faithful if appealed to in certain ways.

The economic system and accompanying social structure of a society are crucially important factors influencing healing. In a profit-oriented system such as the prevailing capitalist system, sickness and healing are often treated as commodities. The danger here is that normal conditions that humans experience are reinterpreted and reconstructed as abnormality/disease by the beauty/drug industry in the name of money. Examples include depression, small breasts, extra weight and overexcitiveness. In such circumstances the health profession is in danger of becoming a health industry where being consumer takes precedence over being a sick individual in need of care and attention. This construction of sickness and focus on medication by the health authorities encourages notions of sickness among society members. This is done so as to finance the profitable pharmaceutical machine. This attitude is in contrast with healing in traditional non-western societies. In

these societies, because of the highly valued interdependence of the community, illness is unwanted and needs to be dealt with promptly so that functions important for survival of the tribe, e.g. hunting, are not threatened through loss of individual inputs.

Not only do elements of culture influence healing in general, but the particular culture defines what is or is not considered to be illness. While disease is universal, illness is culturally constructed because it is culturally interpreted.

Worldviews can be broadly divided into two major divergent philosophies, Western and non-western. These core cultural models have a great impact on all aspects of lifestyle, from type of dwellings we live in to how humans make a living, not to mention how to heal (Sobiecki, 2003).

#### **3.4.3.1 The western approach**

Despite the incredible “magic” of western technologies and western medicine’s ability to save lives, there is a fundamental error in its philosophy that is counter-healing. This refers to its origin in the Cartesian model of dualism that separates mind/body, spirit/matter and real/unreal.

Furthermore, the western biomedical approach is highly analytical and scientific, which means that its conclusions rest entirely on empirical data. These factors have discouraged politics and integrated approaches to healing in the western therapeutic settings. This is because biomedical diagnosis excludes emotional/psychological and religious aspects, all of which are fundamental to healing. Biomedicine’s strength is in emergency intervention, sophisticated operative techniques and potent drugs that save lives. Such measures are indispensable when dealing with potentially lethal pathologies and traumas (Sobiecki, 2003).

### 3.4.3.2 Non-western healing

Looking at the numerous problems with western healing system, it is not surprising that alternative healing methods are reviving. Firstly traditional medicine can be understood as the health care practices which are unique to a specific culture (culture bound) that existed before the arrival of western medical practices

(<http://www.wits.ac.za/izangoma/part1.asp#3>). Traditional healing systems frequently have their roots in spiritual or religious belief systems often following principles of animism or shamanisms. Traditional tribal societies, like Bushbuckridge include small numbers of people living off the land without owning the land. These societies used to be characterised by their relatively egalitarian and harmonious ways of living. People in such societies had respect of the earth and for each other, and despite occasional inter-tribal conflict, were less competitive and destructive than today's modern society. Misfortune, including illness, was believed to have spiritual origins regardless of biological causative agents being recognised. It was commonplace to use plants not only to treat but also as prophylaxis. Healing was usually the domain of the shaman who was familiar with community affairs and served not only as a healer but also as a psychologist and community leader. Traditional non-western healing recognised the importance of emotional and inter-personal aspect of healing and frequently drew upon it. Strong psychoactive plants that produce visions were often used as a means of psycho-spiritual cure as well as being a cultural belief reinforce used to keep the traditions of the tribe alive and in memory. Healing was not a function of the monetary system; this was initially avoided so that life remained in balance.

Traditional healers are fully aware of the importance of the mind-body connection and often utilise the power of suggestion in their ritualised healing. This aspect has only been realised relatively recently in western healing systems (Sobiecki, 2003).

### **3.4.3.3 The healer-patient interaction**

What should be realised is that the doctor-patient interaction is a western medical idiom. Healing in many non-western societies involves one's immediate family or community. This is one of the problems encountered with healing in the West in which there is no platform or place where true healing can be effected. General practitioners do not serve this purpose, and psychologies are also usually individually oriented. This is why friends or family members, due to their intimacy with all involved parties, have in western societies filled the role that the traditional community healer or shaman would perform in non-western societies. Often in the West a separation exists between the doctor and the patient. It is therefore difficult to establish a trusting relationships in which healing can be effected. This is especially true when the doctor or therapist is portrayed as the expert and the individual as only an impersonal patient. Of the greatest interrupters of the healing process in western healing is time constraint imposed on the healer for economic reasons. Healing is rarely successful when the patient feels that she/he is just a statistic with five minutes allotted for a visit and a script. Once again money is implicated in true healing (Sobiecki, 2003).

## **3.5 THE RURAL SURVIVALIST CULTURE**

According to Hill (2003), values and norms are the central components of a culture. Values are abstract ideas about what a society believes to be good, right, and desirable. Norms are social rules and guidelines that prescribe appropriate behavior in particular situations and in conformity with the values.

Hill (2003) argues that values and norms are influenced by political and economic philosophy, social structure, religion, language, and education.

The social structure and economic philosophy of the rural survivalist will be discussed in the following paragraphs, which is also applicable to the rural survivalist consumer group in the greater Bushbuckridge area.

### **3.5.1 Social structure**

The components of social structure include ethnicity, language, time orientation, religion education, aesthetical attitudes, beliefs, material culture, social systems and relationship patterns (Mendel, Punnelt & Ricks 1999).

#### **3.5.1.1 Ethnicity**

The term ethnicity is used in a variety of ways. Generally it refers to a group bound together by cultural ties. Similar values and customs, dress code and language link the group. Ethnicity is also often associated with nationality (Mowen, 1990).

Ethnicity of the rural survivalist consumer group is discussed in more detail in the sampling section in chapter 5.

#### **3.5.1.2 Language**

Czinkota, Ronkainen & Moffett (1996:37) describe language as the 'mirror of culture'. Language itself is multidimensional by nature. This is true not only of the spoken word but also of what can be called the nonverbal language. Communication can be verbal, i.e. using words, and non-verbal, where the transfer of meaning is affected by aspects of speech (for example, tone of voice) and through such things as gestures, body position and eye contact. According to Schneider (2002:1), cultural differences and language differences make the communication within an organisation difficult.

Out of 11 official languages in South Africa, this study focuses on isiShangaan, XiTsonga and sePedi speakers. They constitute the main languages of the sample. A predominant number of the sample can express themselves to a degree of English.

### **3.5.1.3 Time orientation**

The rural survivalist consumer group uses a system which might be called “natural time”, based on the natural levels of comfort in the body. This system originally relied on seasonal rather than scientific observations. The system is slow-moving, and stress levels are low for those who operate within it, as illustrated by a traditional Zulu proverb: *Umsebenzi Hawuqedwa* (‘The work should never end.’).

Cultural attitudes toward time shape the way in which people structure their actions (Unusier, 1998:19). The most visible manifestation of this pervasive influence is punctuality in everyday management of behavior. Differences in time orientation, specifically those relating to the future are especially important as they affect long-range issues such as the strategic framework of decision making or the trade off made by organisations between long-term company values and short-term profitability.

### **3.5.1.4 Religion**

Mbigi (2005) argues that perhaps the most distinctive difference between African and Western civilisation regards the religious worldview.

According to Kruger ([www.chico.mweb.co.za](http://www.chico.mweb.co.za)), African religion (religion of the rural survivalist consumer group) entered the borders of the present South Africa about 1700 years ago with the forebears of the present black South Africans. The main features of this religion are the belief in a Supreme Being, the belief in a realm of spirits (including,

particularly, ancestral spirits) and the idea that human life is essentially lived in communion with fellow humans.

Indigenous religion in South Africa consists of the worship of the ancestors. These are the deceased members of the descent group, who are believed to continue to take a concerned interest in their descendants. Ancestors are not only benevolent. They can become angry, particularly if they are neglected in ritual, if their descendants fail to "build the homestead" and, especially, if senior kin are not respected. In such cases ancestors may send misfortune, frequently in the form of illness. This has to be established by divination, for misfortune can also be caused by witchcraft. Ancestrally-sent misfortune points squarely to the moral culpability of the victim: attacks by witches, on the other hand, are blamed on the envy, jealousy and hatred of others (Hammond Tooke, 1998). The effect of this kind of religion, so closely linked to the social structure, is to place enormous importance on the value and integrity of the kin group, expressed through great emphasis on respect for seniors and for authority in general. Individualism and the promotion of selfish interests are considered the total negation of indigenous religion. Not only are worshippers under the authority (and care) of the ancestors; they are under the complete authority of seniors (not only in kinship status but in age). Nothing could be further from the self-centeredness of western man. In particular, the reluctance of Africans to exercise authority over those senior to themselves, is a major problem in administrative and corporate life (Hammond Tooke, 1998).

This kind of religion is still hugely vibrant in the hearts and communities of African people. It is not known how many people regard themselves as belonging to African traditional religion only and rejecting affiliation with any other religion such as Christianity.

Hammond-Tooke (1998) argues further that it is impossible to talk about "African religion" as if it were a monolithic system. Today at least 75% of Africans have been influenced by Christianity, especially of the Protestant variety. Perhaps the majority belong to the mainline churches (or their independent offshoots); orthodox in belief and ritual, but there is also the ever-expanding category of so-called Zionist churches, which have developed a pietistic accommodation with the harsh realities of urban and industrial life. Finally, there are those who have resisted Christianisation and cling to a traditional worldview characterised by an adherence to the ancestor cult. To complicate matters further, many

converted Christians - perhaps most - still retain a belief in continuing ancestral involvement in their lives (even if they do not perform all the rituals).

### **3.5.1.5 Education**

Many South Africans, especially in the rural areas were denied a proper education under apartheid and we, are now in a situation where many people do not possess the necessary skills required in the formal economy. It is imperative that all South Africans are provided with the necessary education and training programmes to acquire the skills that our economy needs.

### **3.5.1.6 Social system**

Social systems encompass a wide variety of structures that dictate behavior in social situations. These systems exist because human societies tend to limit the degree of individual variation allowed within a society so as to ensure an acceptable level of order. Social systems include such diverse activities as courting and marriage rituals, entertainment practices, interaction among people of higher and lower classes, kinship units and business ownership, to name a few (Mendall, Punnett & Ricks, 1995: 93-96).

Hill (2003) posits that the structure of a society refers to its basic social organisation. Social structure differs from the individual one in two main areas – the group dimension and the stratification dimension. In some societies, the individual is the basic building block of the social organisation. These societies value individual achievements above all else. In other societies, the group is the basic building block of social organisation. These societies emphasise group membership and group achievements.

The social system of the rural survivalist consumer group will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Specific emphasis is placed on the following components of the social

system: hospitality, goodwill and reciprocity, in-house authority ranks, the African family, the status of gender, life in the townships, the power of children, social gatherings, African weddings and funerals.

**(i) Hospitality**

In the African Rural consumer culture businessmen find endless time for visits, both at local drinking places and at one another's homes. These visits are where business actually begins; through socialising acquaintances are made and possible alliances secured.

Visits are obligatory, impulsive and unending. Whether in cities, townships or villages, tradition demands perpetual visiting. Everyone knows who to visit, when, and why. Individual deviation leads to general condemnation. Modern influences have blurred these customs to a degree but even westernized Africans in urban settings adhere to them (Fadiman, 2000:71).

**(ii) Goodwill and reciprocity**

According to Fadiman (2000: 71), Africans give and accept favours to enlist allies. In business, this takes the form of providing both personal and commercial services intended explicitly to place receivers under obligation and thereby generate new relationships. This cycle begins when one person does something for another but asks nothing in return.

**(iii) Elderly people**

According to Fadiman (2000:82), age is primarily a tool of African management. American organisations confer authority according to competence and achievement, whether

derived from experience, training or innate talent. African authority flows from old to young, and no exceptions are made on the grounds of expertise. This springs from a belief equating longer life with more experience and therefore, greater wisdom. Africans believe that aging “cools the blood” which allows elders to consider problems more carefully. Mbigi (2005) argues that the elderly also have meaningful religious and spiritual relevance; they have a key priestly role in religious rituals and ceremonies.

The pension system is firmly entrenched in South Africa’s social welfare framework. But as the national employment rate exceeds 40 percent a conventional contributory pension scheme is unworkable.

South Africa’s state pension system mirrors the history of the country. The first pensions were paid to whites in 1928 and extended to blacks in 1940, but huge disparities in the amounts paid to different race groups remained until a year before the first democratic elections in 1994 (Irin, 2004). The number of occupants of a single’ home in rural areas tends to be large five people on average and up to 22 in extreme cases in multi-generational settings comprising young children, economically active adults and pensioners..

#### **(iv) The African family**

The following are the key characteristics of the African family:

- A family is usually more than just two parents and their offspring. It includes other relatives as well.
- Money is shared by a number of family members, except the money designated for luxuries.
- Disposable income is generally lower than in white households, but the sheer number of persons justifies marketing to them.

**(v) The status of women versus men**

African cultures used to be characterised by extreme patriarchies and women were not afforded the same rights as men in community life. A woman was, for instance, not allowed in the *kgoro* or gathering place of men unless she had been called up to give evidence in a certain case (Fadiman, 2000).

According to Mbigi (2005:90), a key feature of African life is gender fairness. Almost all key life decisions in indigenous African cultures require extensive consultation and women have equal representation. This includes decisions on marriage, death, the purchase and ownership of assets, the discipline of children and career decisions.

**(vi) Life in the townships**

The following are the characteristics of life in townships:

- Commuters are forced to leave home early and return late, which makes it difficult to prepare healthy meals.
- Since the liberation from apartheid people have moved to areas where they have no relatives and into neighbourhoods largely inhabited by young people. This has resulted in a boom in crèches and nursery schools. Many parents do not have the time to teach their children about such things as basic hygiene. Companies have therefore a social responsibility in this regard and should consider it as long-term social investment.
- Products are always needed in the townships that will improve the quality of life (Kuzwayo: 2000:21).

**(vii) The power of children**

According to Mbigi (2005), children have an important place in African family and community life, and they are considered innocent and pure without original sin. They are regarded as an important purpose of life on earth.

According to Kuzwayo (2000:23-24,) African children have always had an influence on everything from politics to groceries. Most African families cannot afford helpers or domestic workers so the tasks are divided among the family. Children return home after school and are expected to cook and clean. In a family of boys and girls, the girls usually clean the house and the boys tend to the garden and clean the yard, but in a family with all boys or all girls these chores are divided equally among the family members. Many people applaud boys for doing girls' chores. One of the children's duties is to buy the groceries – especially on weekends. This puts the fate of many FMCG brands in their hands. They are the ones who go to shops or spazas, and in many cases they decide which brand to buy. One could argue that children usually know which brands their parents prefer. But when the preferred brand is not available -- and unless children are under strict orders not to buy an alternative -- it is up to them to eventually decide which product to buy. Furthermore, the high degree of illiteracy among parents contributes to the introduction of new products by children. It is important to target a wide range of family members and to remember that families, rather than individuals, may have developed strong loyalties to certain brands.

**(viii) Social gatherings**

According to Mbigi (2005), African cultures show amazing hospitality to visitors, close and distant relatives, and even strangers. When people arrive at the home of an African person, they are first offered drinks and food. This strong hospitality welcome (mawuya) is entrenched in indigenous African culture. The African mawuya principles are detailed below:

- Unconditional welcome of visitors, relatives and strangers
- Unconditional warmth and caring for people, including relatives, customers, colleagues, subordinates, visitors and strangers
- Unconditional respect of people, irrespective of their race, colour, creed and ethnic group.

According to Kuzwayo (2000), there are many words used to refer to drinking establishments, and they differ from province to province and region to region. In KwaZulu Natal the most commonly used are: tavern, shebeen, spot and joint.

There are generally two kinds of taverns. The one kind is where people buy and drink on the premises. These vary from beautiful locations frequented by the township elite to the dark and dingy. The kind where people buy liquor and move on to parties are known as sit-ins, stokvel or street bashes. Some taverns have a reputation that rubs off on their patrons. These more upmarket taverns are key to capturing local markets.

A high consumption of alcohol takes place in the home, simply because some consumers do not want to be seen at shebeens.

A sit-in or cool sit is when a group of friends and acquaintances come together to enjoy music and drink. These gatherings are considered classy, and attendance is by invitation only.

Street bashes are parties held in the street. People attend these parties to be seen and show off their cars and cellular phones. This is the battleground of the brand. All the latest and most fashionable brands are on display.

A stokvel is a group who assembles in aid of a common cause. It is a modernisation of the old African concept of *ilima* or *lejema*. In the past at harvest time, families would come together to work in the fields of all the neighbouring households. And everyone reaped the rewards of their combined efforts. But in today's economy the stokvel has more to do with money than crops. At stokvels guests buy liquor and food to support their host.

Neighbours and friends who may not be members of that particular stokvel also come to support the host.

It is important to know the social status of various meeting and drinking establishments so that promotions can foster the right associations for the brand (Kuzwayo, 2000).

**(ix) African weddings**

It is important to understand the idiosyncrasies of African weddings. Weddings are open to all, and the family in question therefore buys in bulk to cater for all their visitors and guests. Accommodation is in short supply over the wedding period (Kuzwayo, 2000).

**(x) Polygamy**

One of the preconceptions more popularly held by both academics and lay public alike in regard to southern African rural society is that the indigenous family unit is polygamous in nature. This is only partly true. A broad survey of homestead patterns in the region reveals that whilst a number of polygamous families may still be found in the rural countryside, these are in a distinct minority, and monogamous marriages appear to be the general norm. It could of course be argued that this is a recent development brought about by the work of Christian missionaries, but the validity of such an assumption needs be questioned. Not only do the Christian churches which enjoy the largest following in southern Africa, the so-called Independent Churches, permit their followers to practice polygamy, but although the practice of polygamy was indeed more prevalent during the last century, its presence was not as widespread as various missionaries may have wished us to believe. Lichtenstein wrote of the Xhosa in 1812 that:

*"Most of the Koossas have but one wife; the kings and chiefs of the kraals only have four or five."*

Contemporary visitors to other parts of the country have come to similar conclusions. Livingstone went one step further and in 1857 estimated that approximately 43% of Tswana men practiced polygamy, and then only a very small minority of these had more than three wives. By 1946 an official census revealed that this figure had dropped to 11% with only 1.3% having three wives or more.

The practice of polygamy may, in most cases, be explained in terms of a levirate, a social practice, used to ensure the continued status and survival of widows and orphans within an established family structure. While it is true, therefore, that every rural family is potentially polygamous in nature, we need to question whether such polygamy was the result of "male sexuality and lust", as the missionaries would have it, or merely the enforcement of social obligations intended to reinforce ties between family or clan groupings. Recent data would seem to show that some 27% of rural households are currently headed by widowed or single women. If we were to assume that in the 1850s an equivalent number of women could have become widows and were thus absorbed into the monogamous households of family members, thus making them polygamous, then it will be seen that this form of union could have accounted for most of the polygamous marriages recorded by Livingstone among the Tswana. The remaining group, those with three wives or more, were a distinct minority and their polygamy may be explained in terms of group leaders creating political alliances and gaining control of resources for their own communities.

The general trend away from polygamous unions evidenced since 1900 could therefore be explained in two ways. The growth of urbanisation and the establishment of urban-based political structures have brought about a decreased emphasis upon both regional group identity and the power of the traditional and inherited rural leadership. The need for making unions based upon political expediency has thus lessened considerably. The economics of obtaining a bride in the rural areas has also changed substantially over the past five generations, as women also began to enter the ranks of an industrialised and urban proletariat in increasing numbers after the 1930s.

The conclusion therefore is that the practice of polygamy may have been common in southern Africa up to the end of the last century but that it was never as widespread as has been popularly represented.

**(xi) Lobola**

Lobola is the practice of paying the future father in law with cattle, for a wife. If the wife is deficient in any way, the father in law is expected to make a replacement available or refund some or all of the cattle. The cattle are used to recompense the father in law for the expense of her upbringing and the loss of her services  
(<http://www.warthog.co.za/dedt/tourism/culture/family/lobola.htm>).

What makes Lobola so important for the marriage is that it is based on a process that brings the two families together. Mutual respect and dignity are woven into the process, But like all traditional customs, lobola is open to abuse and distortion in the modern world  
([www.ks.essortment.com](http://www.ks.essortment.com)).

**3.5.1.7 African funerals**

The following are key characteristics of an African funeral:

Many African families are careful to set money aside to pay for a proper funeral, but still a large portion of the African population is not covered by life assurance.

Funerals have changed over the years and have become more festive. These are also occasions to show off.

Cultural sensitivity is crucial from a marketing perspective. These ceremonies may have changed over time, but many people remain devoted to their ancestral traditions and the sangoma is still an important figure (Kuzwayo, 2000).

### **3.5.2 Economic culture**

Focus is on the following elements of economic culture in the rural areas (also applicable to the rural environment in Bushbuckridge): neighbourhood, infrastructure, finances and consumers.

#### **3.5.2.1 Neighbourhood: tribe or class**

Every rural area can be segmented into neighbourhoods that are often in stark contrast. The older neighbourhoods are more likely to be inhabited by people who come from the same tribal homeland, who speak the same language and follow the same customs. This is due to apartheid.

The newer neighbourhoods are defined by social class. Some of these emerged when apartheid-era authorities housed workers from different tribal groups together which in turn created a multithread culture. Most of these neighbourhoods began when people of similar economic status settled together in groups regardless of tribe. Outsiders often view entire townships as one-class shanty towns, populated solely by the poor. In fact, many neighbourhoods display a definite class-based social structure (Fadiman, 2000).

#### **3.5.2.2. Infrastructure**

Fadiman (2000:137) points to the commercial infrastructure that forms the heart of every township. If that heart is healthy, it will be filled with open shops and busy people. But most township cores are hollow. They lack restaurants, night clubs, parks and other

gathering points that draw people who bring them to life. Today most of these centres consist of semi-occupied buildings, dusty streets and idle people passing time. It is also important to analyse public transport, which forms the infrastructure of every township. A significant part of each commuter's day is spent standing and waiting for transport.

### **3.5.2.3 Finances**

According to Fadiman (2000), we should look once more at rural areas' financial infrastructure particularly the stokvels. Research on rotating funds across Africa suggests that borrowers from Western banks default more often and that repayment to rotating funds is near 98%. These money-lending schemes are both successful and uniquely African.

### **3.5.2.4 Consumers**

39% of African urbanites are now under the age of 14. Most leave school to work, but some remain unemployed. Many resort to peddling, and some hustle or work with gangs. Money spent in the rural areas on weekdays comes from the young. These groups are in the pursuit of pleasure, entertainment, excitement, risk; status and care about personal appearance. Women tend to do all the shopping. In rural areas, shopping is not considered a pleasant activity; it is hard, physical work. The shopping commute can be long and tiring, particularly so when it entails carrying heavy purchases. South African shopping outlets often follow European shopping hours, thereby eliminating Saturday afternoons and Sundays as shopping times. The average rural area woman spends 41% of her income on food. With her funds limited, she cannot afford to make mistakes. She is a conservative shopper who seeks safe and reliable brands from reliable sellers/vendors.

Men shop sporadically and usually buy leisure items which can range from cars to clothing, music, cigarettes and beer. Many label every store they patronise as either white

or black according to their perception of each. White stores copy western modes, offering clear-lit interiors, low noise levels, formal product display, high fixed prices and inflexible (or no) credit policies. They attract older, middle-class and upper-middle class African clientele.

African stores follow African models, offering staff informality, informal product display, African music, flexible pricing, and accessible credit. These attract young, single, blue-collar (or marginally employed) African customers (Fadiman, 2000).

### **3.6 SUMMARY**

In this chapter the rural survivalist consumer culture is discussed because of the relevance to the objectives of the research (Refer to paragraph 1.3 in chapter 1). From the discussion it is obvious that distinct differences prevail between Western and African tribal cultures.

The development of corporate image requires that the organisation review its mission statement and overall purpose and promotes desirable characteristics of itself to its stakeholders; desirability defined by both the organisation and its stakeholders. Stakeholders include consumers, shareholders, suppliers and the community or society. As discussed, specific emphasis was given to the rural survivalist consumer culture's influence on corporate image.

According to Hill (2003), values and norms are the central components of culture and are influenced by politicians, economic philosophy, social structure, religion, language and education. Specific emphasis is then given to the various elements of the rural survivalist's culture.