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# SOUTH AFRICAN DAIRY INDUSTRY AND THE USE OF INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION FOR IMPROVEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

The dairy industry is an important part of the highly diverse agricultural sector of South African economy. The industry is a significant contributor to the food security and it also provides many social and economic attributes to the nation. South Africa has the potential to be self-sufficient in milk production, the country currently imports fluid milk and processed dairy products. For the industry to attain a larger world market share, it has to be competitive. A proper and constant intercultural business communication (IBC) with nations that are advanced in the production of milk and dairy products is the key to improving the sector's competitiveness. In this regard, the study examines the role of innovative intercultural business communication for the improvement of South African dairy industry. A systematic review method was adopted for collection and analysis of data relevant to the study. Communication accommodation theory (CAT) was used to explain the role that communication plays in building relationship that will lead to improved production. The study revealed that intercultural business communication has the capacity to build relationships that will lead to improved production for dairy industries. The study recommends regular visitations to more advanced nations' dairy farms and adequate training on language and culture. Based on the conclusion and recommendations, this study presents a platform for the dairy industries to think about an innovative intercultural business communication approach to be at a competitive edge in a global environment.

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## Introduction.

The dairy industry forms one of the numerous agricultural sectors of the South African economy. The industry is a food provider to South African citizens, and it is the fifth biggest agricultural industry (Milk SA, 2018). The industry is strong in the export of dairy products like yoghurt, butter cream, milk, and cream, yet the country is also a net importer of dairy products such as concentrated milk, whey, butter, cheese, and curd. South Africa has the potential to be self-reliant in milk production, but the country currently imports fluid milk and processed dairy products. According to Rozhkova and Olentsova (2020), stagnant milk production as well as a sharp increase in demand for milk and milk

products in South Africa have resulted in net imports in recent years. The estimated mass of imports of dairy products in 2021, is 30.5 percent higher than in 2020s (Milk SA, 2021). The data shows that importation of milk and dairy products increases while exportation decreases.

There are fewer dairy farmers than before in South Africa (Scholtz and Grobler, 2009), and a number of them left because of conflicting price signals. The reduction in numbers of dairy farmers does not affect the industry, as there is an increase in herds and the most recent advanced technologies are in use (Milk SA, 2021). The fact remains that the country still spends lots of money on the importation of milk and dairy products. If money spent annually is invested in the industry, it will improve and increase the production of milk and milk products. For South Africa's dairy sector to improve the production of milk and to compete in the world dairy market as well, it has to be competitive. Proper and constant intercultural business communication (IBC) with nations that are advanced in the production of dairy milk is key to improving the sector's competitiveness. Thus, engaging in business intercultural communication would assist in reacting to shifts in world and local market prices of production.

Intercultural business communication is different from business communication, intercultural communication, and international business. When businesses from diverse backgrounds (cultures) enter into a business transaction, they have their own cultures, but they also step outside their own cultural and business environment and create a new context. According to Nkomo and Adanlawo (2023), this new context can be referred to as "transactional culture". Successful intercultural communication helps with dispensing with communication obstructions like language barriers and generalizations from global business (Ferri, 2018). Effective intercultural communication can be achieved by asking about different societies and using appropriate communication channels, for instance, reflective listening and being liberal. According to Adanlawo, Reddy, and Rugbeer (2021), effective intercultural communication permits workers from various societies to cooperate as a team. The ability to communicate effectively and multi-culturally in today's global business marketplace cannot be underrated. IBC is a tool that is frequently sidelined in the implementation of business strategies, especially in the dairy industry.

When communication across borders is not proficient, goals may not be readily achieved. Opportunities for mutual and production improvement are minimised because the partnership is not informed by mutual discussion. This leads to inadequate production on the part of the industry. When there is a lack of communication between the industry and its counterparts in the rest of the world, the industry tends to decide what should be done when it comes to implementation, irrespective of whether that will benefit the industry and the country at large or not (Jameson, 2017). While it is acknowledged that communication has such a significant role to play in managing industries and their activities, there is a lack of knowledge on how intercultural business communication can be used to improve the dairy industry. This has serious implications for improving the production of dairy products as well as reducing importations of dairy products into South Africa. This study is an attempt to address how intercultural business communication can be utilised to improve the South African dairy industry in the areas of milk and milk products production.

### **The concepts of intercultural business communication.**

Nield (2019) describes intercultural communication as a multifaceted process that contains culture, multi-culture, society, and socio-relational circumstances between people who send and receive verbal and non-verbal messages. According to Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2020), cultures differ from one another, and consequently, the communication practices and behaviours of people from diverse cultural backgrounds will vary considerably. Therefore, cultural feelings and sign methods are sufficiently unique to hinder the communication process between people in an intercultural context. Martin and Chaney (2016) aver that values and practices are the ways in which cultural differences are apparent.

Likewise, a range of communication issues may emerge in intercultural negotiation from the contrasts among qualities and practices among cultures. Consequently, people who transact business interculturally have to learn about those cultures, their values, beliefs, and signs. For example, when business representatives from diverse cultural settings meet and exchange information, they convey with them the qualities, feelings, and practices developed by their societies. Therefore, to accomplish effective business communication within an intercultural environment, the participants have to understand and apply the values, symbols, and rituals of the other culture. As stated by Tuohy and Wallace (2022), cultural differences, awareness, and understanding are paramount in an intercultural

communication environment. Nkomo and Adanlawo (2023) contend that cultural differences may impede the communication process. It is envisaged that misinformation may occur as a result of differences in culture, and if socio-cultural noise persists, it might lead to communication breakdown. In business intercultural communication, participants need to take into account the fact that they are dealing with individuals, and there are always exceptions to every rule.

Washington (2013) and Pikhart (2014) postulate intercultural business communication (IBC) as significant in each circumstance where individuals in business from various cultural backgrounds network every day. It is of extreme significance that these individuals figure out how to acknowledge and endure contrasts relating to language diversities, nonverbal behaviours, perspectives, measures, perspectives, and customs. If such resistance is not accomplished, intercultural business communication is probably going to fizzle, consequently preventing progress and tranquil interrelationships. Previously, conversations on the concept of intercultural business communication have generally centered on intercultural communication utilizing business as a model as opposed to including business as a particular variable (Adler and Graham, 2017). This study discusses intercultural business and communication methodologies that are part of intercultural business communication. It is contended that for intercultural business communication to occur, it is not adequate for every one of the three factors to be available. The three factors interact and form a collaboration that mirrors the dynamic character of intercultural business communication. With this, business communication turns into a remarkable concept that is unique in relation to intercultural religious communication. It would be worthwhile to attempt a working definition of intercultural business communication before moving to the physical context of the study. We concur that intercultural business communication can best be understood by understanding the variables that form intercultural business communication:

**a. Culture**

Nield (2019) declares culture to be the aggregate understanding of a gathering of individuals that incorporates their considerations, emotions, values, practices, and communication. The author attributes that living in the way of life is most likely the most ideal approach to completely welcoming the issues and complexities of intercultural business communication. According to Nield (2018), culture is the sum of information, experiences, convictions, values, perspectives, and assets learned by a huge number of people over a period of time. Porter and Samovar attest that culture assumes a dictating role in human communication. It dictates the level at which individuals encode and decode messages. Lauring (2011) is of the opinion that culture is continuous and should happen in a business setting.

**b. Business**

Adanlawo and Chaka (2022) categorise business exercises into two kinds: internal and external. Among the internal exercises are keeping up and improving the resolve of workers, recommending strategies and systems, reporting approaches and organisational changes, and keeping management updated. The external exercises identify with selling and acquiring products and ventures, answering to the management and the investors on money-related conditions and business activities, and creating a positive atmosphere for leading business. Each action, internal or external, prompts some outcome. Jandt (2017) and Teece (2010) attest that the motivation behind every communication in business is to acquire some outcome. To achieve the objective, Jandt (2017) adds that the language utilized must be plain, brief, and to the point, and the style must focus on drawing attention, stirring interest, or convincing. Teece (2010) highlights the fundamental elements that distinguish business communication as follows:

- i. It manages different business and industrial subjects.
- ii. It is portrayed by certain proper components, for example, business and specialized jargon.
- iii. It is fair-minded, and objective in information dissemination
- iv. It has nearly a high centralization of certain intricate composing strategies and techniques.

For business organisations to viably enjoy intercultural business communication, it is important to make them comprehend organisational structures and management styles (Jandt, 2017). According to the author, organisational structures determine factors such as the division of work and the centralisation of power. To summarise, business communication can be characterized as the utilization of effective language for passing business or industrial messages to accomplish a foreordained goal.

**c. Communication**

Rabab'ah (2016) describes communication as a strategy by which information is transferred and received to achieve an objective, at whatever point individuals communicate together. This definition shows the embodiment of communication, as without communication, there cannot be cooperation. Ferri

(2018) support this view by guaranteeing that intercultural communication happens at whatever point a message maker is an individual from one culture and the message recipient is from another. Barnett (2008) likewise characterize IC as the trading of social information between groups of individuals that are of different cultures. Adanlawo, Reddy, and Rugbeer (2021) identify the major factors of intercultural communication in terms of four major categories:

- i. Ideology, which includes the set of experiences and perspectives of a culture with beliefs and religion as its primary elements,
- ii. Socialization, which alludes to the manner in which individuals get familiar with the legacy, mentalities, qualities, and activities that are fitting to their way of life.
- iii. Forms of discourse comprise two sub-classes: elements of language (information and relationship, negotiation and ratification, group harmony, and individual welfare) and non-verbal communication, which comprises kinesics, proxemics, and concepts of time.
- iv. Face systems, and this involves kinship, the concept of self, and in-group and out-group relationships. This is significant as these aspects all differ from culture to culture, thus making intercultural communication so complex.

This brief explanation of the variables that form intercultural business communication leads to what IBC is.

### **The importance of Intercultural business communication.**

Ernst and Haar (2019) asserts that globalization, internationalization, and the infiltration of foreign businesses worldwide have brought focus to the competitiveness and competency of businesses at home and abroad. Pikhart (2014) avers that an increase in foreign-owned businesses has necessitated the need for business organisations to communicate with their business counterparts from different cultures, resulting in a need for intercultural communication competency. According to Pikhart (2014), globalization is a spatial procedure wherein institutions and geography are key to understanding cultural demands. Pikhart avers that culture has brought about expanded social intrigue, social contact, and varieties of language structures. The significance of intercultural business communication is clarified by Ernst and Haar (2019), who defines globalization and the impact it has on organizations. The author contends that all business is influenced by globalization, in spite of the fact that not all business organisations are international. For business organisations to function effectively in international transactions, it is essential to approach the new international market and make themselves adequate or ideally attractive to consumers.

Kose et al. (2012) assert that global business might be characterized by its capacity to rise above existing limits. This implies that businesses must gain proficiency in the specialty of intercultural communication so as to be at a competitive advantage. According to Hua (2014), intercultural business communication opens up new markets worldwide for businesses of all sizes and sectors to grow their activities abroad at uncommon rates, which requires an expansion in key partnerships and thus intercultural organisations. Scherer and Patzer (2011) affirm that most organisations depend on representatives to be their primary intermediaries in building relationships, and these connections are regularly made with clients from different cultures. Scherer and Patzer (2011) maintain that organisations taking part in intercultural business must be insightful about multifaceted issues explicitly relating to business communication. Chaka and Adanlawo (2023) opine that cordial interactions among individuals from different cultures and backgrounds will lead to globalisation expansion. Thereby, organisations need decent variety to turn out to be increasingly imaginative and open to change. Holbeche, (2018) postulates diversity as a key part of effective people management, which can improve the organisation's profitability. According to the authors, unmanaged diversity in an organisation may become a hindrance to accomplishing management objectives. Consequently, diversity can be seen as a "double-edged sword".

### **Theoretical framework.**

This study incorporates Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) into how intercultural business communication can contribute to improved production and the profitability of South African dairy industry. Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) was developed by Howard Giles in 1973. The theory is incorporated to determine the relationship that exists between dairy industries and see how they have been able to accommodate one another despite diverse backgrounds in terms of



context, language, belief and non-verbal cues. CAT determines if the industry will learn new ideas, improved technologies from one another and incorporate it into their working system for an improved production.

Giles (2016) traced the history of communication accommodation theory (CAT) back to speech accommodation theory (SAT) development, which was developed in the mid-1970s by social therapist Howard Giles. According to Gallois and Giles (2015), SAT tried to clarify the impact linguistics had on interaction between people. Its proponents can likewise be attributed to social therapists' Taylor and Bourhis, who, along with Giles, were unsatisfied with the statement that people change their etymological styles in various conditions. CAT recommends, as indicated by Gasiorek and Giles (2012), that people modify their informative behaviour as a component of their evaluation of their conversational accomplices' open qualities, just as they do their longing to build up and keep up a constructive individual and social character. CAT has been utilized in various fields and contexts with the expansion of behaviours that can be analysed with regards to CAT. The theory is applicable to an extensive variation of sensations (Gallois and Giles, 2015). As indicated by Gallois and Giles (2015), CAT explores the various manners in which we accommodate our communication, our inspirations for doing so, and the effect. Gallois et al. (2005) express the components of CAT along these lines:

The principal part of CAT theory is the socio-historical setting of interaction (Giles and Gasiorek, 2013). Prior to cooperation between two groups, according to Gudykunst et al. (2005), there are pre-built-up relationships between the people and groups to which they belong. In particular, communicators' social belonging comprises cultural and social standards and qualities (Giles and Soliz, 2014). The socio-chronicled setting impacts communicators' direction towards the forthcoming communication, in which the larger social groups with more individuals impact how they will extend the relationship (Bylund et al., 2012).

The second segment of the CAT includes the position every communicator expects with respect to whether they are probably going to see the experience close to home or between gatherings (Gudykunst et al., 2005). One may move toward the association as close to home (in view of one's individuality) or toward the connection of groups in light of one's enrollment in a social gathering (Soliz and Giles, 2014). As for Gudykunst et al. (2005), three factors impact a person's choice to move toward collaboration, either close to home or between groups. As placed by Bylund et al. (2012), the choice relies upon intrapersonal factors, intergroup factors, and a mixed factor. Intrapersonal factors include personal, social, and individual factors (Gudykunst et al., 2005). Intergroup factors include one's own propensity to see experiences in intergroup terms (Farzadnia and Giles, 2015). Intergroup contemplations additionally include one's potential and long-term accommodative motivation toward out-groups (Gudykunst et al., 2005).

Additionally, Giles (2016) notes that the relational history between the two communicators likewise impacts their underlying direction. Regardless of whether an individual adopts cooperation as inter-personal or inter-group, it is an important approach that influences one's convenience decisions and assessments (Farzadnia and Giles, 2015). The third segment of CAT includes the genuine connection. Soliz and Giles (2014) indicate five aspects of the immediate situation, in which the authors state that they are interconnected. Socio-states of mind are identified by the authors as the main viewpoint of the communicators and incorporate individuals' choices to contribute towards joint effort, starting as an inter-personal or inter-group stance based on the socio-verifiable setting (Giles and Gasiorek, 2013). The subsequent perspective is the goal and addressee focus that tends to people's motivations, inspirations, and social necessities.

The third part of the collaboration is the convenience procedures actualized by the communicators (Farzadnia and Giles, 2015). According to Giles (2016), accommodation is the procedure by which each and every one utilizes communication to indicate their perspectives of their communication with others, in this manner creating levels of social separation. Bylund et al. (2012) affirm that people have their own desires and approaches to settlement, subject to generalizations and standards. Gallois and Giles (2015) attribute the distinctive approach of CAT to convergence. According to the authors, convergence is a convenience methodology that can be followed back to the foundation of the hypothesis (Bylund et al., 2012) and is the most examined technique in CAT's history (Hudak, Carmack, and Smith, 2018). Convergence is characterized as a modification of communication according to the communicator's style to be more like the audience or receiver of the message (Farzadnia

and Giles, 2015). Then again, disparity is characterized as a prominence in communication that involves both verbal and nonverbal differences (Soliz and Giles, 2014).

As posited by Giles, non-accommodation methods like counter-accommodation, under-accommodation, and over-accommodation are incorporated into accommodation theory. As indicated by the author, the outcomes of non-accommodation strategies vary depending on the context and the individuals interacting; they may be positive, negative, or neutral (Giles, 2008). Likewise, counter-accommodation is observed as divergence extension, by which a particular person aspires to take full advantage of the dissimilarities that exist between oneself and a communicative partner. According to Giles (2016), the differences are noted frequently and lead to contrary behavior and harsher practices. Over-accommodation can be viewed as an augmentation of combination when a communicator changes an impressive circumstance over an issue to sooth the longing of others (Giles and Gasiorek, 2013). Over-accommodation is most often an after-effect of positive goals as opposed to negative ones (Soliz and Giles, 2014). Similarly, Hudak et al. (2018) ascribe under-accommodation as an expansion of support when a communicator neglects to oblige their communicative partner. According to Soliz and Giles (2014), both over and underaccommodation depend on the recipient's understanding; thereby, they are subjective phenomena.

The fourth part of the collaboration includes the behaviours and strategies of the communicators. According to Giles and Gasiorek (2013), these practices are impacted by each other's behaviour, changing aims and characters. The final perspective includes naming and attributions that happen during discussion and depend on the individual views of people (Giles, 2016). This aspect includes assessments and future expectations (Farzadnia and Giles, 2015). Components of CAT tend to relate to how the communicators assess their informative partner and whether they would pursue future encounters with the individuals (Bylund et al., 2012).

The theory has its critics; Gallois et al. (2005) allege that the extension of CAT from other theories and its application to a range of settings have raised the number of suggestions. The authors declare that CAT has arrived at a phase where these suggestions have raised various concerns (Gallois et al., 2005). Nevertheless, CAT's suggestions cause general suspicions; the theory recognizes that the perception of accommodation and non-accommodation could be negative or positive (Zhang and Giles, 2017), contingent upon the specific circumstances and the communicators (Giles and Soliz, 2014). An analysis in regards to this adaptability, as indicated by Zhang and Giles (2017), indicates that CAT's system could remain advanced. Nevertheless, to fulfill this need, the authors urge analysts to make their own augmentations of CAT so as to relate to their setting of study while retaining the basics of the theory (Pitts and Harwood, 2015).

### **Communication through Media.**

According to Adanlawo and Rugbeer (2019), face-to-face interactions have been contrasted with innovation, which continues to develop new communication media (the Internet and teleconferencing). These new media offer intriguing opportunities for communication studies. According to Luangrath, Peck, and Barger (2017), these new ways of communication can be sound, visual, oral, or written. These new media, according to the author, offer open opportunities where the recipient is obscure (press, radio, TV, and lately, websites and chat groups), circumstances where the setting is diminished to its base, and circumstances where the trade is non-synchronous or even missing (Luangrath, Peck, and Barger, 2017).

For instance, telephone answering machines have become regular methods of communication for a large number of us. It permits us to record members' responses to messages controlled by the scientist, and this is done in what is seen by the members as a natural setting. Hirst, Harrison, and Mazepa (2014) recommend new communication media, especially electronic mail (email). According to the authors, the recommendation of email is based on convenience from the writer to the receiver, as it serves as a tool for disseminating adequate information. As indicated by these researchers, one element of decent variety between people is their inclination for a tangible framework over others. The three essential tactile frameworks are: visual, sound-related, and kinaesthetic (body) detection. These preferred frameworks are reflected in language use through words like "see," "clear," "looks like" (visual style), "hear," "sound," "ringing" (auditory style), and "feel," "grasp," "touch" (kinaesthetic style). (Reddy and Adanlawo, 2018). The authors findings demonstrated that people who received emails that coordinated their preferred illustrative framework revealed more compatibility with the sender than

individuals who received messages that did not coordinate their preferred style. The implication of this finding is that, in the event that one does not have a clue about the recipient's preferred communication channel ahead of time, one should take time to compose a message that tends to the three styles.

#### **CAT's application to intercultural business communication among dairy industries**

The concepts of CAT will be of great benefit if the theory is applied within the scope of intercultural business communication. The significance of hypothetical application to IBC and explicitly CAT's field lies generally in the apparent power differences between inter-group and inter-personal encounters in the field of intercultural business communication (Adanlawo, Reddy, and Rugbeer, 2021). As posited by Adanlawo and Rugbeer (2019), the process of communication can possibly influence business viability. Communication professionals, management, and individuals transacting business across borders can derive benefits by understanding the communication cycle within this setting and more likely upgrading the communicative interactions that take place (Adanlawo, Reddy, and Rugbeer, 2021).

According to Ma et al. (2013), most researchers in CAT perceive interactions between two companies across borders as an experience of group interaction that happens in a mutual way. Duggan et al. (2011) examine the inter-group part of CAT in business representatives' interactions. For example, a representative of the South African dairy industry often perceives a counterpart from Nigeria within their function in a cultural gathering instead of as an individual, and vice versa. The relationships are to a great extent dependent on established standards and generalisations that originated from past inter-group relations (Duggan et al., 2011). To demonstrate, it is generally accepted in Nigeria that Chinese products are cheap and, thereby, not good. Such generalizations may have negative results and constantly influence business dealings between Nigerians and Chinese (Gallois and Giles, 2015). For instance, over-accommodation is a common stereotype attributed to Chinese by Nigerians during intercultural business encounters (Adanlawo, Reddy, and Rugbeer, 2021).

Beside standards and generalisations that exist between groups, accepting an inter-group or inter-personal approach methodology can possibly change the viability of a collaboration as regarded by one or the other communicator in a relationship (Pitts and Harwood, 2015). An investigation of interactions among managers and workers by Speer et al. (2013) revealed that communication approaches may be difficult between the duos. The investigation discovered that employees are bound to move toward an experience with the business that is interpersonal, where manager and worker cooperate. In any case, as was predictable with different investigations, businesses were bound to move toward intergroup interaction, where it is their function as the administration to teach workers and fill in as a defender of the business (Mahadhir et al., 2014).

Notwithstanding one's goal to move toward interaction with an intergroup, how their communicator assesses their position likewise impacts intercultural business transactions. Meanwhile, an adjustment in individuals' directions might pose a challenge to change in a possibly high-stakes climate (Gasiorek and Giles, 2012). In an intercultural business communication setting, business agents and partners may have clashing thought processes and goals for their communication in a relationship. However, during an intercultural business transaction, views of positive versus negative convenience may fluctuate. For instance, studies have proven that business professionals might be seen as over-obliging by misrepresenting their discourse while talking about business matters, regardless of whether the gathering has positive expectations and accepts they are converging appropriately (Gasiorek and Giles, 2012). As indicated by Sammons-Macke (2018), differences in communicators' goals and the observation of the audience are basic elements of communication, which are characterized by job and status contrasts. For example, a big conglomerate company and a small company with little reputation Accommodation strategies can be assessed adversely, irrespective of positive or negative aims; thus, the thought of business partners' observations is significant (Goodwin, 2019).

#### **Conclusion and recommendations.**

Culture and communication are interlinked, as revealed by the study; they play a vital role in intercultural business encounters. In building business relationships, the way people communicate is culturally affected. The study emphasises the need for South African dairy farmers to learn about their foreign partners' cultures, as this will solidify their relationship and lead to improved milk and dairy product production. Communication accommodation theory shows that individuals and business



representatives denote their attitudes and their communicative order through communication, thereby maintaining social distance. To negotiate a successful business deal, the other party must be ready to accommodate. The attitude of the partner towards the other will indicate if he is ready to negotiate business. Sometimes, the stance will create meaning in the sense that the other party will have no choice but to withdraw. CAT emphasises on the issue of culture as it affects communication among businesses across borders. To achieve a successful intercultural business, one must learn the culture of the partner so as to communicate effectively. The notion of accommodating one another is pointed out by CAT. The relationship between the South African dairy industry and its foreign counterparts is perceived as a relational group rather than as an individual. Therefore, South Africans' expectations of interactions with other nationals are largely based on norms and stereotypes established from past inter-group relationships.

There are enormous opportunities available for dairy development in South Africa. There is a market for milk and other dairy products as the market records increasing demand for higher-quality dairy products such as evaporated milk, powder milk, UHT, ice cream, yoghurt, and butter over the last ten years. It is thereby recommended that farmers, including all stakeholders in the dairy industry, adopt the use of intercultural business communication to improve the industry. Moreso, adequate training on language, culture, and attitudinal differences should be welcomed by the South African dairy industry. This will assist the farmers in adjusting to and coping with differences in attitudes and business organisational policies among interacting partners. For dairy farmers and workers to be effective in intercultural business transactions, they need to understand and appreciate cultural differences. Cultural awareness and appreciation are critical for dairy farmers who want to transact business internationally.

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