Sainsbury's in Egypt: The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde?

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Abstract

Purpose – *First, to explore the role of institutional theory constructs in a case of international retail divestment. Second, to examine the potential of constructed metaphors as a means of analyzing and communicating the findings of managerial research*

Design/Methodology/Approach – *the data was generated from participant observations and interactions with stakeholder groups during a three month ethnographic study based in a Sainsbury store in Egypt. Data was analysed and presented via a constructed metaphor – namely Robert Louis Stevenson's story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

Findings – *the case illustrated an apparent paradox between Sainsbury's technical superiority as a retail operator in the Egyptian market, and its social inferiority in its interactions with a variety of stakeholders, primarily customers and employees. The use of the metaphor to organize, analyse and present the findings proves to be a fruitful way to illustrate these issue, and parallels between the two "stories" provide further insights into behaviour – the denial of responsibility for (and the existence of) social inadequacies; and the implicit (and inevitable) existence of the capacity for social inadequacy in any business organization.*

Practical Implication*s – the potential to communicate managerial lessons by telling "stories" (the case) through well known "stories" (the novel) is highglighted.*

Originality/Value *– the use of the constructed metaphor to analyse a case of international retail divestment is, to our knowledge, unique and enhancers our understanding of the legitimisatyion process and the role of socio-moral codes in this process.*

Keywords - *Sainsbury; Egypt; institutional approach, divestment, metaphor*

Paper Type – r*esearch paper*

Introduction

Retailers have experienced mixed fortunes in their attempts to internationalise their operations. Until relatively recently, the retail internationalization literature has focused on cases of successful international investment, whilst under-representing examples of divestment (Alexander and Quinn, 2002; Burt et al, 2003; 2004;

Alexander et al, 2005). However, studies of divestment add value by shedding light on the broader context within which international retail management operates (Palmer, 2004). The application of institutional theory to retail internationalization also widens the focus of investigation by exploring the wider symbolic (subjective) impact of the retailers' technical (objective) internationalisation strategies on all of the social institutions found in the host market (Arnold et al, 2001; Bianchi and Arnold, 2004; Bianchi and Ostale, 2005).

This paper illustrates the value of the institutional approach to retail internationalization by reporting the findings of an ethnographic study of Sainsbury's withdrawal from Egypt. The case illustrates an apparent paradox between the objective *technical superiority* of the company's retail strategy and operational practices, and its symbolic *social inferiority* - the embedded social implications of this superiority. As such, metaphorically, parallels may be drawn with Robert Louis Stevenson's classic story *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in which the leading character possesses a split personality exhibiting both "*outward* (objective) *sanctity* and *inward/secret* (symbolic/subjective) *iniquity"* (Mighall, 2003). By framing the findings in this way, the paper illustrates the role of the metaphor in communicating managerial implications.

Retail Internationalization: The Contribution of the Institutional Approach

Retail internationalization is a multi-dimensional process. Most existing studies, however, have a tendency to focus on a single dimension (eg motives, entry methods, image transfer) at a specific point in time. This implies that researchers tend to adopt a micro-view of retail internationalization, based a specific aspect or incident in the life of the business. Consequently there have been many calls for the retail internationalization literature to broaden its conceptual base to take into account the

multi-dimensional nature of the process. The natural outcome of such a shift in focus is the adoption of a more holistic and macro-based view of retail internationalization.

Country culture has often formed the underlying basis for a wider framework, and the "fit" with host country culture has been seen as a key factor in determining the success and failure of retail internationalization. Dupuis and Prime (1996) argue that culture shapes the behaviour of every aspect in the retail business: customers; staff; the retail marketing mix (communication, merchandise, etc.); the channel mix (e.g. suppliers); and the environment (e.g. public opinion, legal, and political environments). More recently, institutional theory has been applied to retail internationalization (Arnold et al. 2001; Bianchi and Arnold, 2004). This approach argues that the retail industry in every country has its own set of institutional norms, which have been established and evolved over time through the interactions of different social actors within the setting of the local culture. Institutional theory suggests that international retailers have to gain legitimacy and support from the social actors in order to be successful in a host market. Arnold et al (2001) suggest that successful retailers have an "isomorphic" response to both the objective (task/economic) and symbolic (institutional/social-moral) norms of the culture in which they operate. This can be achieved via effective technical performance (e.g. good locations, best price etc.) and effective social performance in "institutional acts" (e.g. support for family; community; nation, etc.)

The major contribution of the institutional approach is its broad macro-perspective, which balances the role of social and moral norms with economic factors, towards understanding the international retailing process. The institutional approach emphasizes the social and ethical values underpinning the behaviour of local market stakeholders. The adoption of a socio-ethical orientation provides corporate

legitimacy for international firms in host cultures, whilst failure to do so implies that a business is pursuing an essentially ego-centric view of the world (Karakowsky et al, 2005; Murphy et al, 2005). Such business egotism increases the vulnerability of the firm as it contradicts the morality of local marketplace and becomes self-defeating (Bowie, 2001).

The study of divestment cases provides the best means for assessing the impact of socio-ethical issues on retail internationalization, as they come to the fore in most of these cases. For example, Marks & Spencer's policy of standardizing its British retail model proved to be a self-defeating strategy in Canada through its failure to recognize differences in clothing cultural norms between the two countries (Burt et al 2002). Similarly in France, the motive for Marks & Spencer's departure, in order to restructure its operations at home, impacted upon the French employees and national retail/business norms, leading to accusations of immoral and unethical behaviour (Jackson et al, 2005)

Social as well as ethical violations of local market norms can also be seen in the cases of the Home Depot, Carrefour, Ahold and J.C. Penney in Chile (Bianchi and Arnold, 2004; Bianchi, 2006, Bianchi and Ostale, 2006). These retailers owing to their financial and technical power as well as their rich international experience, entered Chile as "superior operators" bringing with them their own executives to ensure that business was done in the "company way" without any consideration of the prevailing social norms in the local retail industry. This approach excluded them from the networking culture prevalent amongst retailers in Chile. Such corporate egotism provoked a backlash from local competitors who collectively worked together with Chilean executives to defend their market positions. This encouraged customers to

defect to the local retailers because of their more balanced technical/social offering, which, ultimately, forced these giant retailers to withdraw.

In the case of Wal-Mart, Burt and Sparks (2006) identified the driving forces behind Wal-Mart's business model as an interrelated mix of: culture; supply systems; cost and price control; innovation; and market destabilization. Despite the sheer scale of the business, and its seemingly inexorable growth, when these key elements of the business model proved difficult to transfer because of established economic and social norms of behaviour to a host market – perhaps best illustrated by the German experience – even the largest retailer in the world failed.

As the above cases suggest, transferring successful (objective) business models from a domestic to a host culture is a risky business, which can stumble on the (symbolic) socio-ethical hurdle that provides the necessary legitimacy for the business model to be embraced by local stakeholders. The current literature on retail divestment however tends to focus on studying cases from a strategic (objective) perspective as they tend to be constructed from the retailer standpoint (Alexander et al, 2005; Palmer and Quinn, 2007). The reluctance of retailers to speak openly and comprehensively about their negative experiences abroad (Palmer, 2004; Alexander et al 2005; Palmer and Quinn, 2007) has led to calls for a broadening in the focus of divestment cases to cover the symbolic perspectives. This requires an examination of the wider environment in which international retailers operate, and in turn, improves the 'generative' learning process in international retailing (Palmer and Quinn, 2005; Palmer and Quinn, 2007).

By adopting the institutional approach, this paper seeks to highlight the interplay between the objective and the symbolic side of retail internationalization via an analysis of the divestment of the British retailer J.Sainsbury from Egypt. The case

illustrates the impact of socio-ethical legitimacy, a central tenant of institutional theory, on the stability of an international retailer in a host market. This provides insights into a paradoxical interplay between the retailer's clear objective "technical superiority" and its hidden symbolic "socio-ethical inferiority" from the standpoint of the local social actors. The case also further illustrates the value of the institutional approach to 'generate' learning within the international retailing literature and particularly within the context of retail divestment.

Methodology

Given the symbolic (socio-ethical) emphasis embedded within the institutional approach, research in the area tends be interpretive and qualitative in nature (Arnold et al, 2001). As this paper aims to understand the interplay for socio-ethical legitimacy between the objective and the symbolic behaviour of a retail organization (J. Sainsbury) within a host retail culture (the social actors within the Egyptian grocery retail sector), the relationships between the retail organization and the social actors should be studied through an interpretive and qualitative form of inquiry. Ethnography is commonly identified as the most effective interpretive qualitative method for studying the sociology of organizations in their external environment (Morrill and Fine, 1997).

The Role of Ethnography in Management Research

Ethnography is defined as the art and science of describing and interpreting a cultural or a social group/system (Creswell, 1998; Punch, 1999). The resulting detailed description allows for the dissection of social interactions within a system to form a dialectical interpretation of it (Thomas, 1983). Hence, in management, ethnography has been seen as a potent methodology to decipher the social

consumption (by social actors/stakeholders) of the managerial activities of organizations (Sherry, 1990; Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994; Morrill and Fine, 1997; Brownlie, 1997; Mariampolski, 1999; Elliott and Jankel-Elliott, 2003). This form of managerial ethnography studying the impact of management on society has been referred to as 'ethnographies *on* organizing' differentiating it from 'ethnographies *of* organizing' that tend to study systems of managing organizations (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994). Ethnographies *of* organizing have formed the dominate type of ethnographic study in retail management (e.g. Griod, 2002) and international retailing (eg Quinn, 1999). However, this form of ethnography has been criticized for providing a narrow managerial focus that misses the wider social context within which managerial activities takes place (Brownlie, 1997). The 'ethnographies *on* organizing' approach has seldom been adopted to study the "retail ecology" - the social interdependence between production and consumption of retail activities (Sherry, 1990).

This paper therefore adopts an ethnographic *on* organizing approach to the case of Sainsbury's divestment in Egypt. The ethnographic approach of a locally based longitudinal in-depth study is an ideal method of enquiry for understanding "the experience" (ecology) of retail globalisation as its effects are produced and consumed/ received at the local level (Burawoy, 2001).

Doing Ethnography: the case study

Participant observation is the main tool used in ethnographic research (Creswell, 1998; Punch, 1999). Rather than understanding social interactions from an outsider standpoint via formally structured interviews and official documents, participant observation provides an understanding from an insider standpoint, unraveling the genuine attitudes of the social actors involved - via prolonged informal

direct participation in natural settings (Arnould and Wallendrof, 1994; Mariampolski, 1999, Flick, 2002; Elliott and Jankel-Elliott, 2003). Participant observation is therefore seen as a powerful tool in international marketing studies as it captures respondents' behaviour in-action and with a heightened degree of cultural sensitivity (Pawle, 1999).

Thus, to explore Sainsbury's interactions with the social actors in the Egyptian retail grocery market, a participant observation study was conducted in the natural setting of Sainsbury's flagship store in Egypt - that is the first and largest Sainsbury's store located in Greater Cairo at El-Haram Street, Giza. Direct participation in Sainsbury's interactions with the social actors present in the store (customers and employees) was accessed through this store. Hence, the study focused on understanding the effects of Sainsbury's on the Egyptian retail society from the standpoint of customers and employees. Data on customer and employee perspectives were collected through informal one-to-one and mini group discussions with consumers (individuals and families) and employees both inside and outside the store setting. Further data was generated from a review of the independent (not company sponsored) press reports. The reports used were selected only if they covered the Sainsbury case from the standpoint of local social actors, such as competitors and economic experts, as well as customers and employees. This data was used to explore the macro level effect of the company on the national level. To understand the company perspective, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the British store manager and the British marketing manager (each interview lasting for approximately two hours), alongside a review of official documents (e.g. annual reports, press releases, in-house documents and commissioned research projects).

The study lasted for three months and ended with the closure of all Sainsbury's stores in Egypt. Despite the timing of the closure, which was beyond the researchers control, the length of time spent in the field was long enough to allow the collection sufficient data since one of the authors, an Egyptian national, studied the case in his own culture - which enables researchers to expedite data collection and interpretation (Fetterman, 1998).

Analyzing and Presenting Ethnographic Data: the role of constructed metaphors

According to Fetterman (1998), ethnographers assume a holistic outlook to attain a comprehensive (multi-dimensional) view of a social system. Thus, in ethnographic studies, data analysis and presentation is fully integrated (Fetterman, 1998, Flick, 2002). This integration enables the researcher to simultaneously tap into the insiders' (emic) perspective and place it in the overall external (etic) perspective. This process is known as contextualization, which means placing observations into larger theoretical contexts/insights, and hence made Baszanger and Dodier (1997) believe that 'relating the part to the whole' is the major contribution of ethnography to qualitative research.

The process of linking the part to the whole in ethnography is presented creatively through converting lived experiences (emic perspectives) into memorable stories (etic perspectives) via the use of various artistic genres (e.g. fiction, poetry, music, etc.) (Fetterman, 1998; Atkinson et al 1999; Humphreys et al, 2003). Amongst these artistic genres, the potent ability of fiction to create illuminating insights in the filed of management is well documented (Stanley, 1966; Brown, 1995; Grey, 1996; Watson, 2000; De Cock and Land, 2005). Classical literature is argued to be an invaluable source for critical management thinking (Shaw and Locke, 1993; Cohen, 1998) as it illuminates the social/human side of management ensuring a balanced

orientation between the objective (inhuman) and the subjective (human) orientations to management (Linstead, 1994; De Cock and Land, 2005). The analysis of fictional novels generate crucial '*socio-theoretical insights'* for managerial research since they depict their authors' creative, deep and rich understanding of social behavior (Brown, 1995; Grey, 1996; Watson, 2000). Although the use of fiction in analysis is also criticized as '*self-limiting*' since its generalizations tend to be context-specific (De Cock and Land, 2005), such a limitation constitutes a strength of interpretive qualitative research through its ability to develop- from limited contexts- creative, deep and rich theoretical insights (Sherry, 1990; Gummesson, 2005).

Fiction as an analytical strategy generates constructed metaphors that are not just forms of discourse like literal metaphors, but multilayered discourse strategies that help researchers, through crossing phenomenon, develop new perspectives that enrich their subjects' theoretical base (Morgan, 1980; Cornelissen, 2003, 2006; Wee, 2005). The theoretical contribution of constructed metaphors to retail management studies is well documented (Whysall, 2001; Davies and Ward, 2002). Miles and Huberman (1994) argued that metaphors have an all-encompassing role in integrating the process of qualitative data analysis. This can be illustrated by matching the process of constructing a metaphor (Cornelissen, 2006) to Miles and Huberman's stages of qualitative data analysis (see table 1).

Table 1: Matching the process of constructing a metaphor with that of qualitative data analysis

Stages of Constructing a Metaphor	Stages of Qualitative Data Analysis
Matching: when the researcher outlines general similarities between two different concepts based on the data collected	**Data Reduction**: initial analysis to compress qualitative data under common themes
Blending: when the researcher develops analytically the similarities between the natures of the two concepts that have not been recognized before.	**Data Display**: data presentation in a manner that eases pattern-spotting/comparison
Creating Meaning: when the researcher discusses the contribution of the new perspective that the newly developed metaphor can bring to the concept to which the metaphor is drafted	**Conclusion Drawing**: drawing meanings and verifying them from the data to conclude the research and/or suggest further exploration

Capitalizing on the analytical power of fictional novels as constructed metaphors, the researchers treated the divestment case of Sainsbury's Egypt as an instrumental case study (Stake, 1998) analyzed to provide socio-theoretical insights into international retailers' processes of socio-ethical legitimation through the fictional context of Robert Louis Stevenson's story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Early insights from the case highlighted a contrast between Sainsbury's objective superiority and symbolic/social inferiority in the Egyptian market. This raised the potential for an analogy between Sainsbury's personality in Egypt and the split personality of the main character in the novel, reflecting the *matching* stage of

creating a metaphor. Deeper probing into the case, revealed that Sainsbury's exhibited even more behavioral similarities to that of the main character. These similarities are demonstrated in the paper's presentation of findings section and represent the *blending* stage in constructing a metaphor. Finally, a discussion of the contribution of the lessons learned from the tale to our understanding of retail internationalization process is presented, reflecting the *creating meaning* stage.

The Case of Sainsbury's in Egypt: the background

Before analyzing Sainsbury's Egyptian experience, it should first be placed in the wider context through a brief background to grocery retailing in Egypt, and of Sainsbury's international operations.

Grocery Retailing in Egypt

"*The Egyptian food distribution system is inefficient, expensive, wasteful and unsanitary. Annual post-harvest losses, with an estimated farm-gate value of L.E. 700 million, would fill four columns of trucks bumper-to-bumper from Aswan (the far south of Egypt) to Alexandria (the far north of Egypt). The small scale of most food operations is the principle cause of these conditions.*" (National Co-operative Business Association, 1986, p.iii).

This quote from the mid 1980's summarizes the food distribution system in Egypt and, indeed, all developing countries (Feller, 1986). Although this assessment is twenty years old, it is still felt to be valid, as small-scale food retailing dominates the structure of contemporary grocery retailing in Egypt. Retail Monitor International (2000a; 2000b) provides some more recent views based on the 1993 to 1998 period. In 1998, the grocery-retailing sector accounted for 64.7% of total retail sales, and the vast majority of food retail sales in Egypt were attributed to small, independent and largely family-owned outlets. The remaining grocery retail sales were accounted for by supermarket chains and food specialists, such as butchers, bakers and *Laban* (dairy product specialists). Egypt has a relatively small number of supermarket chains and

supermarket store size usually does not exceed 2500 sq. m. The main chains are Metro, Edge (the chain acquired by Sainsbury) and ABC (a privately owned chain) Socially, supermarkets are regarded as expensive and up-market shops tailored for upper classes (National Co-operative Business Association, 1986; ACNielsen AMER, 1999a; Retail Monitor International, 2000a). The growth of supermarket chains has not however restricted the growth of independent retailers which remain the nerve of grocery retailing for Egyptian consumers. This is reflected in the AC Nielsen AMER (1999b) characterization of typical Egyptian grocery-shopping behavior: the grocery purchase decision-maker in the household is the female; and grocery shopping typically entails on average trips to five types of outlet including specialty stores (e.g. butcher, *laban* etc.), open markets (mainly for fruit and vegetables), and grocery shops.

As small scale retailing is the dominant feature of Egyptian grocery retailing, employment within the sector is characterized by poor salaries, and a small scale workforce that is male dominated (CAPMAS, 1998; Retail Monitor International, 2000a,). The National Co-operative Business Association (1986) described retailers in Egypt as :

"*shrewd traders who operate on the pocket theory, which is if there is more money in my pocket than I started with today, I am doing okay*".(p.12)

Sainsbury's International Operations

Until it was overtaken by Tesco in the mid 1990's J Sainsbury plc was the UK's leading grocery retailer. Despite being founded in 1869, like most British grocery retailers it remained a domestic business until 1983 when a minority stake was acquired in the 41 store American regional chain Shaw's Supermarkets for £13.4 million. In June 1987, Sainsbury's assumed control of Shaws, and its attempts to grow and develop this business have been well documented by Wrigley (1997a;

1997b, 2000) and others (Shackleton,1998, 1996; Muskett, 2000). In 2004 Shaw's, now a business with a turnover of £2.7million and over 200 stores, was sold to Albertsons for £1.18 billion.

Sainsbury's Egyptian subsidiary, Edge SAE, was the company's second international assignment after the US. Edge was established by the El-Nasharty group in 1997 and was listed on the Cairo Stock Exchange in October 1998. In March 1999, J-Sainsbury acquired a 25.1% share in Edge with its 74 stores for £100 million, and raised this stake to 80.1% in October 1999, for a further £40 million. The first supermarket in Egypt to trade under the Sainsbury banner opened in February 2000, and by November 2000 Sainsbury operated 106 supermarkets and neighbourhood stores in the greater Cairo area.

However, on April 9th 2001, only 14 months after the opening of the first Sainsbury store, the company announced that it had decided to pull out of the market and sell the subsidiary to its Egyptian partner. In financial terms the Egyptian investment appeared a disaster. The Annual Reports for 2000 and 2001 showed consolidated sales of £24 million and £80 million, generating operating losses of £11 million and £24 million respectively. The company commented that these losses were due to difficult trading conditions such as trading permit delays, and the deteriorating political situation in the Middle East (the Palestinian uprising occurred in September 2000). Within the context of a poor Group financial performance in 2000 and 2001, a strategic review led to the decision to focus on the core UK grocery business which entailed the sale of the Egyptian operation plus the Homebase chain in the UK.

Sainsbury's Egypt: the early insights

"*….the arrival (in Egypt) of the first major western supermarket chain has caused nearly as much public disquiet and controversy as the recent endorsement of divorce for women (in Egypt)*". (Gordon, 2000 p.1)

According to El-Hamamsy (1977), as Egypt was ruled by foreign superpowers (e.g. Greeks, Romans, French, and British) prior to Nasser's 1952 revolution, Egyptian identity developed a love/hate relationship with foreign "superiors": love for the economic power they brought to the country, but hate for the potential threat to traditional social values. The arrival of Sainsbury as a superior retail operator reignited this old love/hate relationship, but in the realm of business globalization rather than political colonialization. Sainsbury's arrival brought professional management systems to an otherwise underdeveloped retail grocery market and was even viewed by one customer as bringing "*civilization to Egypt*"! Despite the implied support in this statement, the embedded social and ethical implications of Sainsbury's 'civilization' on the wider retail grocery community also stirred other emotions, with many condemning Sainsbury's as a villain.

One Egyptian couple aptly summarized the Sainsbury's experience as: "*Sainsbury's knew what is needed in the market but did not know how to do it*". Whilst Sainsbury's succeeded in addressing the technical needs of the Egyptian grocery market, it failed to deliver these needs within the social context. As a result, Sainsbury was perceived to have a double face: outward technical superiority with inward social inferiority. The lessons learned from Sainsbury's experience in Egypt echoes that learned from the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, which revolves around the central characters split personality of "*outward sanctity*" and "*inward/secret iniquity*" (Mighall, 2003). To *match* the literary metaphor with the case, it can be argued that Dr. Jekyll personifies the Sainsbury strategy of "outward sanctity" in *what*

is offered, whilst Mr. Hyde personifies the "inward iniquity" of the strategy as seen in the reaction of the community to *how* it was offered.

Sainsbury's Egypt: the ethnographic findings

The following presentation and analysis of the ethnographic data gathered from Egypt (the natural setting) will illustrate the process of *blending* the tale with the case through an understanding of the customer and employee standpoint (the social actors under study) in two ways: first the social actors' view of *what* was offered by Sainsbury's strategy - as mirroring Dr. Jekyll's behaviour in the tale; second the social actors' interpretation of *how* the strategy was implemented - as mirroring Mr. Hyde's behaviour in the tale. The analysis will conclude with a discussion of the lessons learnt from the constructed metaphor and its contribution to our understanding the process of retail internationalization.

Sainsbury's as Dr. Jekyll: the outward sanctity in its retail strategy in Egypt

Dr. Jekyll is presented in the tale as a righteous professional who is well-respected in society (Mighall, 2003). Sainsbury's strategy in Egypt was crafted to portray that image of Dr. Jekyll. According to the Sainsbury's Marketing Director in Egypt, a British national, the bedrock of the strategy was to offer *"quality food to ordinary people*". This would ultimately lead to a better life for Egyptians. The Sainsbury strategy was to be customer oriented: offering Egyptian consumers great quality, value for money, helpful service, and real respect for the local culture. Based on commissioned assessments of Egyptian consumer buying behaviour, it was decided that the primary target was the family, and particularly the housewife, as the heart of the family:

"*we developed our stores, particularly large ones, to offer an experience for the whole family. For example, we provide shopping trolleys with calculators and list*

holders for the husband and wife to control their budget and trolleys with plastic cars in front for kids to enjoy". (Sainsbury Marketing Manager, British national)

To reflect this, the communication strategy focused on portraying the family. The brand promise was captured in the slogan "*Everyday is a Feast at Sainsbury's*". This phrase represented a low price promise of food and fun for the family, as a feast in Egypt is associated with eating and fun for everyone.

The Sainsbury strategy proved extremely popular amongst Egyptian customers because they were offered a wide choice of food at low prices in what was otherwise a closed, inefficient and expensive food retailing system. Customers felt that Sainsbury's provided freedom of choice compared to the indigenous system through the wider product range and the self-service system. Customers were able to customize their fresh food purchases via self-selection, which was not traditionally allowed in grocery stores. They could therefore assert their *right to select* the fresh food they wanted, rather than adhering to the traditional - *accepting what they were given*. Several observations at the cheese counter illustrate this point, customers demanded cheese from the display in front of them, rather than accepting pre-cut items from the back of the counter, which is the traditional method. Often customers rejected cheese and meat because they had not seen it being prepared. The Sainsbury's low price offer was also an attractive proposition in a country with low gross national income per capita and high basic food consumption.

Hence, customers bestowed a high regard and respect upon Sainsbury's considering the retailer to be their "*champion"* (Eltahawy, 2000). As a result, when Sainsbury's decided to withdraw from Egypt, several regrets were voiced. Many customers praised the wider impact of Sainsbury's on the local market and expressed pessimism for the future of customer orientation in Egypt (exhibit 1). They believed

that the local "incompetent" business strategies/practices would return to haunt them after Sainsbury's disappeared.

Exhibit One: Customer Disappointment with the Sainsbury Withdrawal

"*At Sainsbury's we saw quality goods and good service on their hands, we hope this continues when it leaves. We really enjoyed well-priced imported goods. I guess that is because Sainsbury's is not an Egyptian. Unfortunately, Egyptians mistreat us*".

"*I'm so sad that Sainsbury's is leaving, it has raised the standard for the local competitors*"

"*The Egyptian grocers are not as honest as foreigners. I see that clearly in any foreign product versus an Egyptian one. I hope honesty will prevail after Sainsbury's leave*"

"*the local retailers cannot do what Sainsbury's did because they are not interested in helping customers but interested in helping themselves*".

With regard to its employees, the Sainsbury Marketing Director argued that the company had adopted a philosophy of leading by example to help its Egyptian staff gain retail experience, whilst taking cultural differences into account. For example:

"*when designing Sainsbury's uniform for women working at the store, we had to take into consideration the Islamic scarf*".

Besides, he stated that Sainsbury's offered the highest salaries in the Egyptian grocery sector. The impact of raising the standard of living of employees is echoed in the words of one Egyptian employee:

"I see this store as my home, which I started and I'm willing to fight for its survival…… it would have been our blessed source of living (should the company decided to stay in the market)".

As the '*blessed source of living*', this Egyptian employee articulates a sense of security and contentment in his job, also reflected in the words "*my home*" and "*fight for*". Pride in the company was also indicated by the fresh food employees who informally called themselves "*chefs" (in English)* on the shop floor to embrace

Sainsbury's foreign expertise and status, and to differentiate themselves from lower status mainstream grocery sector workers, who are traditionally regarded as "servants".

The evident enthusiasm amongst customers and employees for Sainsbury's professional retail strategy of *low priced quality food* for all customers and *well-paid jobs* for employees provided an outward sanctity, encapsulated by Sainsbury's superior technical strategy, when compared to the technical frailties of the existing domestic system. The impact of Sainsbury's superior technical strategy on the Egyptian retail community can best be described as 'culture shock'. The social implications of this manifested themselves in swift and drastic shifts in existing market parameters: as customer consumption shifted from captivated to liberated; competitor market share shifted from secure to vulnerable; employee careers shifted from unsettled to stable; and the nation's retail economy shifted from local to global. Such a significant technical shift in the overall retail culture caused massive market destabilization which was interpreted by both customers and employees as unrighteous - giving rise to Sainsbury's as embodying the unsavoury persona of Mr. Hyde.

Sainsbury's as Mr. Hyde: the inward iniquity of Sainsbury's strategy

Mr. Hyde has been portrayed in the tale as an unrighteous 'social villain'. To illustrate the rise of the Mr. Hyde persona out of Dr Jekyll's righteous persona in the Sainsbury's case, the reactions of customers and employees to Dr Jekyll's persona will be analysed to reveal the socio-ethical impact of Sainsbury's technical sanctity.

i) customer reactions to their liberation

Despite widespread customer appreciation of the new found "freedom" in the grocery sector provided by Sainsbury, Egyptians customers transferred several aspects

of their traditional shopping behaviour into the modern supermarkets setting. This was witnessed via several observations on the shop floor (exhibit 2)

Exhibit 2 : Observations of Customer Shop Floor Behaviour

Observation1: As they usually did with traditional shopkeepers, customers bargained with cashiers to get lower prices.

Observation 2: Rather than looking to the relevant price ticket themselves, customers constantly asked the employees who stocked the shelves about the prices of items, which is the norm in the pop and mom shops.

Observation 3: Although the tipping of staff was not allowed in the Sainsbury store, customers were trying to force tips on staff as this was the norm in the Egyptian grocery system. One customer had to force a butcher, who was torn between the social norm and company policy, to take his tip saying : *"you are embarrassing me… take it….take it"*.
In general customers' argued against the no tipping policy of the store. As a customer said "*I'm in favor of giving tips if it is a kind of appreciation after a work done by an employee for me*".

Observation 4: Although checkouts were located at the store exit, the common reaction to not finding a till on the service counter or close by to pay for the goods, was "W*here can I pay for these products?"*

As these examples illustrate, the majority of Egyptians customers had difficulty in adapting some aspects of their traditional shopping behaviour to the new "liberal" grocery system, and were stunned by the "unnatural" freedom provided by the Sainsbury supermarket. The reaction of poorer consumers was particularly ugly unveiling the socio-economic norms that gave rise to the self-destructive side (Mr. Hyde) of the Sainsbury strategy. One customer summed up the reaction to liberation:

'the Sainsbury's system (organized stores offering merchandise at affordable prices) is good but it doesn't suit our buying habits that mistreat and out smart any system".

This was echoed in another customer comment:

"*the problem with Sainsbury's Egypt is the Egyptians' behavior: they misuse, cheat and steal. I'm so sorry to say that but it is a fact*".

Examples were found, in all areas of the store operation of customers attempting to abuse the system (see exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3 : Cases of Customer Abuses of the System

"*people here (in Egypt) don't taste but eat from the tasting samples. One person can finish the whole sampling pot. Thus we abandoned it*". British Customer Service Manager, on food sampling

"People don't wait till a trolley of special offers items are placed on shelves; they jump into the trolley to grab the stuff". Egyptian Fishmonger

"*People use a trick to fool the cashier. They buy say a cartoon of 24 pieces and add some more from another carton to fool the cashier when using the scanner so as to take a bit more for their money"*. Egyptian Cashier

"*stealing is everywhere, in stores and even warehouses. It has brought Sainsbury's down*". Egyptian Maintenance Employee

"The thieves are too many, the majority of them are poor people but in some cases we caught wealthy people stealing too due to illness that makes them cannot resist the temptation". Egyptian Head of Store Security

The researcher's own observations confirmed several cases of theft in the store. The customer service officers provided further examples of system misuse and cheating, claiming that customers usually drank, ate, or tried goods on display without paying for them, or barcodes were removed to claim a faulty goods discount. Some customers complained about these behaviours at the customer service desk:

" I blame careless customers for the failure of Sainsbury's, they eat the food inside and do not pay the price, I even asked a women to pay the price of what she ate, she said I'll do that when I finish!"

"*I saw customers drinking from bottles and leaving them on the shelf inside the store yesterday…It was mayhem yesterday and disgusting too"*.

The researcher's own observations, when working on the customer service desk, supported these claims: one customer returned cream, because after purchase he had discovered that it had been opened and some of it was missing; whilst another customer returned a baby anti-colic liquid for the same reason.

Such customer in-store behavior created a hostile shopping atmosphere, earning Sainsbury a poor social reputation, particularly amongst the more affluent consumer groups (see exhibit 4) . Those customers who were already acquainted

Exhibit 4 : Customer Perceptions of Shopping Atmosphere

"*the place (Sainsbury's store) is like traditional markets, very crowded and unorganized. It is like EL-GAM'EEIA—the traditional communist-style subsidized governmental food outlets"*.

"*this place is for low classes, it is dangerous to be there, you could even be harassed there*".

"*I cannot shop here with my wife because she could be harassed here…it is mayhem here"*

"*I tried to go to Sainsbury's at midnight or even the early hours of the mourning to avoid the aggressive crowds but my attempts were in vein as it is always….always unbearably crowded*".

with supermarkets and the self-service system were full of remorse and were furious with their compatriots. An Egyptian customer, who lived in the Gulf area, said:

"*Sainsbury's system is world-wide, the Gulf area for example uses a similar system, but here in Egypt, the locals made it unsuccessful because they misuse it. I don't know what could be the answer to why we (Egyptians) have style of our own*".

Another customer, who had experienced supermarkets in the US, was equally harsh in his criticism:

"*Customers here in Egypt are not civilized, strict control over them is needed"*.

The desire for control over customer behavior in the store was a popular request among some Egyptian customers:

"There must be a control over customer behavior in store in order not to spoil the good things at the store—the nice system of 'value for money".

Customers even suggested ways that Sainsbury could exert control. Wealthier customers saw market segmentation as a natural response within an already segregated society:

"Sainsbury's has no clear intentions of what it wants to be. Sainsbury's is trying to target everybody at once. When you go to the stores, it is very chaotic…..You can never shop because people push you, or even bring you down ….. Shopping there is intimidating. This style (targeting the masses) simply is impossible in Egypt because people here are not like that. This style could be successful in their homeland but certainly not here in Egypt". (Marketing Consultant)

Less wealthy customers had an alternative view, based upon the need to educate customers to make them more familiar with the supermarket:

"The bad thing at Sainsbury's is the behavior of the customers, there is a need for strong control over that behavior to make the customers respect the place. I'd like this control in the form of help rather than mere control." (Government Employee)

Whether through market segmentation or market education, the underlying lesson from these comments is that acknowledging cultural differences should go beyond the visible and shallow antecedents of business behaviour typified by the Marketing Manager's comment:

"the respect for the (Egyptian) culture can be seen in presenting the Arabic translation of Sainsbury's brand name on all communications first and in a bigger font than that in English".

… to encompass a deeper understanding of culture and the social embeddedness of culture in societal attitudes and behaviour.

These examples of the misuse and abuse of the supermarket system shed light on the profound impact of embedded socio-economic norms on customers' ability to understand and realize the full benefits of technical superiority. Without this understanding the sustainability of a retail offer in a host culture is under threat. One comment by the Customer Service Deputy Manager about customer (mis)behaviour in the store sums up the situation "*customers will never care as long as they don't lose (technically)*". In other words, the (mis)behaviour of the Egyptian customers was the reaction to a system that technically indulged its customers (good prices, variety, etc.) without adapting to their social attitudes. This imbalance ultimately prevented the company from effectively delivering its promised values. Substantiating this

viewpoint, the British customer service manager blamed the company's desire to standardize its strategy/system at the store level for failing to acknowledge and adapt to the Egyptian retail social norms, commenting that *"Sainsbury's wanted to make the stores too British*" and therefore, she argued, made it difficult to sustain the business in the country.

ii) customers reaction to the local competitors' vulnerability

In a historically closed retail grocery market, Sainsbury's competitors (the independent retailers) were enjoying a stable and secure market share prior to its arrival. The Sainsbury retail strategy had the effect of undercutting prices and breaking the usual supermarket positioning in Egypt by appealing to the masses rather than just the elite. This placed many of the independent food retailers in a very vulnerable position, as both rich and poor customers defected to Sainsbury's, leading to a 40% drop in sales for some independent retailers in the locality (Eltahawy, 2000; Huband, 2000; Bryant, 2000; Drummond, 2001).

Hence, Sainsbury's strategy was seen as a declaration of war by the local traders. Vulnerable to Sainsbury's superior operating strategy, competitors reacted by aggressively asserting their presence, both formally and informally, in an attempt to save their livelihood. They collectively filed a formal complaint to the Egyptian Chamber of Commerce against Sainsbury's pricing strategy, describing it as a dishonourable monopoly act. This intervention forced Sainsbury's to negotiate an agreement not to sell below factory prices (MEED, 2000; Salem, 2000).

More informal methods included calls to religious leaders to portray Sainsbury's as the "*devils' son*", and to customers to boycott the chain because of its devastating effect on the local traders' livelihoods (Eltahawy, 2000). They also capitalised on the September 2000 Palestinian uprising. This event ignited anti-

western feelings amongst Egyptians and fuelled a rumour that Sainsbury's was Jewish owned and helped Israel financially. This direct link between Sainsbury and the 'enemy' (Israel) even led to the stoning of stores by students (Dawoud and Whitaker, 2000; Davies, 2000; Drummond, 2001). These efforts also saw the Sainsbury's brand appear on an informal boycott list of western brands distributed throughout Cairo bearing the slogan "*Boycotting the enemies is not only a national duty but also a religious one*".

By placing their technical struggle in a social (political and religious) context, competitors saw customers react with sympathy and solidarity (see exhibit 5). The Sainsbury's 'value for money' strategy was interpreted by many customers as a politically motivated conspiracy to control and/or damage the food market in Egypt. Although some customers recognized the ultimate motive behind these accusations :

"*the Jewish link with Sainsbury's is used by its competitors because the store was dumping prices and hence taking business away from them.*

the boycott clearly influenced many customers' willingness to deal with the retailer:

"*Sainsbury's offered a flawless system, availability of goods in one place and at good prices. What brought Sainsbury's down is the boycott I guess*".

and the British Store Manager confirmed this view: "*religious issues are the main reasons behind the slow down of sales…*"

Exhibit 5 : Consumer Reaction to Portrayals of Sainsbury as the "enemy"

"*Sainsbury's is reducing prices in a dramatic way. This can only indicate its intention to destroy small retailers or raise suspicion about the quality of its merchandise. In both cases, it is trying to destroy our country and economy".*

"*My husband and I stopped going to Sainsbury's when we found they have a Jewish link. They have a massive power and I think they are trying to control our economy and destroy the Egyptian grocery businesses. Thus, we decided that we would never go there and continue buying everything from the local groceries as we used to".*

"*I never go there and asked my husband not go as well. If we do, those Jews will destroy the poor Egyptian traditional grocer."*

"being Jewish made my wife insisted on boycotting and she never buys from them any more".

After the sale of Sainsbury's to its local partner some customers returned to the stores, justifying their actions within the social/moral framework:

"*the change of management to Egyptians is good because skepticism of being Jewish has been erased. I hope they will be the applying the same system of low prices though".*

One female customer showed her intention to make use of the technical (low price) offer, but only within the correct social context, when she asked a cashier to give her a plastic bag bearing the EDGE brand (the local partner's brand name) rather than the Sainsbury's brand. When asked why by the researcher she replied:

"*I know Sainsbury's has been sold. I'm here now to buy for the first time because I want to buy from Egyptians not Jews*".

In summary, the vulnerable competitors resorted to using social and moral pressure, in the form of politics and religion, to influence customers and to protect their livelihoods against a technically superior foreign competitor. By alienating the incumbent members of the host retail market through technical superiority, an incoming retailer risks instigating a "clash of civilisations" (e.g. closed vs. free market in Egypt), where the hosts aggressively assert their identity through appeals to socio-moral norms. The aggressive reaction of the local independent grocery retailers in

Egypt, helped to change the positive perceptions of Sainsbury's technical superiority into social inferiority in the eyes of the Egyptian customer.

iii) employee reactions to their job stability

As noted earlier, through the offer of higher salaries and foreign expertise, Sainsbury's Egyptian employees developed a strong sense of stability and contentment in their jobs, even describing Sainsbury's as their '*home*'. Nevertheless, saying something is home is different from feeling at home, as Sainsbury's employees became frustrated that they were unable to fully contribute to their '*home'* (exhibit 6)

Exhibit 6 : Employee Reactions to Lack of Engagement

"the English trust themselves only, even if they are clearly wrong. They deprive us from having a say despite our good knowledge of the market. We see clear-cut mistakes but we cannot talk or you may talk but no one will hear you about many serious mistakes that they later paid a heavy price for" (Head Fishmonger)

"*they brought a British butcher to show us some cuts. We said this won't work in Egypt and we were right they had to come back to our style because his style proved a failure".* (Butcher)

"*Managers never discuss …they want things to happen their way, which sometimes is clearly wrong. For instance, they force us to sell things marked on the shelf for L.E. 44 for L.E. 5 because the machine said so, the system is obviously wrong!!"* (Cashier)

"They brought a cashier system from the UK that depends on too much honesty by the cashier and hence the control over the cashier actions was so poor…Due to poverty here in Egypt, as you know, people steal when they find no control over them. We warned against this and kept saying this is wrong but they insisted on it till tremendous losses started to appear and the imbalance of tills is almost a daily problem. Some cashiers were caught putting money in their socks and things like that (with a smile). We showed them that we know this will happen and finally they were convinced that we were right. The imbalance amongst the tills has been reduced dramatically since then." (Customer Service Manager)

The above cases suggest that the British management ignored the willingness and desire of store employees to work with them in order to share local market knowledge. As they became passive contributors, employee morale fell and they retaliated by pursuing immoral activities just to obey orders:

"… we are forced to meet our sales target so we started to reprocess the meat so as to sell it as fresh even when it is edging closer to expire. We did it to meet our sales target on which they strictly judge us." (Butcher)

Managerial arrogance throughout the period in Egypt was regarded by many store employees as the main reason for the company's failure.

It was not just the lack of involvement that threatened the employees sense of belonging to their '*home*' (Sainsbury's) but also broken promises from the management about their job stability. Whilst these decisions no doubt made business sense they also carried socio-ethical implications, as job security is a norm in the Egyptian workplace. A deli employee commented (*with a strong sense of insecurity and helplessness*) about the laying off of hundreds of employees who rejected a switch to part-time contracts instead of their original full-time contracts: "*they made a lot of promises to us when we started but they never kept them*". The British customer service manager substantiated this claim on the basis of the employee rights outlined in the employee handbook "*the shop floor employees were promised a lot in the employee handbook but they(company) never fulfilled….they (employees) have the right to be frustrated*". One fishmonger was amongst those laid off, but he did not want to leave a job that he valued and enjoyed, and thus defended his right to carry on as a full-timer. He stood up for to the management and was reinstated on legal grounds as he proudly put it : "*… those laid off are cowards because they feared standing for the company to defend their right to have their contracts honored but I did…sued them (the company)…I won… and here I am back in the job*"

In summary, despite their higher salaries and the promise of greater professional expertise, Sainsbury's Egyptian employees began to lose morale due to a lack of involvement and engagement. Store management that was perceived by employees as being dictatorial and merely standardizing operations on the British

model, contributed to this. This highlights that two-way communication (i.e. a dialogue) between local employees and foreign management is vital to boost the morale of local employees, and to engage with the valuable market knowledge that they possess. Besides, when promises are made in ignorance of the social norms governing them, a sense of betrayal abounds. As a result, a deep understanding and respect of local work norms and continuous dialog with local employees could ultimately foster the legitimization of company HR practices to effectively deliver the retailer values in a foreign culture.

This sense of alienation and betrayal reflects a perception of disrespect for the local norms which therefore mirrors the criticism of Sainsbury's impact on the national economy in the era of globalization. When it left Egypt, Sainsbury's stated that the need to restructure the domestic business was the prime motive. This infuriated local investment experts who questioned both the credibility of the company and its decision. Abed El-Hameed (2001) argued that despite the government unprecedented support for Sainsbury as the first major western supermarket chain to enter Egypt, Sainsbury let them down as it selfishly wants to solve its home market problems at the expense of Egypt's reputation as an investment destination. Al-Ahram Weekly (2001) added that Sainsbury's presence did not improve the Egyptian economy, but made the situation worse by encouraging higher levels of consumerism, rather than productivity. David Reader, the UK Commercial Counsellor in Egypt, countered that Sainsbury did have a positive economic impact on the Egyptian economy on two fronts. First, it created employment opportunities for Egyptians. Second, it fostered Egyptian exports via the sourcing of some private brand ranges for the UK and the US markets (Fitzpatrick, 2001).

Casting an eye on the charged debate over Sainsbury's impact upon Egypt, it can be argued that it reflects the company's split persona in the eyes of both customers and employees. Two contradicting viewpoints are evident: one is anti-Sainsbury's (i.e. social inequity) when seen from socio-ethical standpoint; and the other is pro-Sainsbury's (i.e. technical sanctity) when seen from a technical/economical standpoint.

Sainsbury's Egypt: discussion and concluding remarks

Framing the ethnographic data and analysis within a constructed metaphor, allows us to communicate the managerial implications arising (i.e. *create meaning)* from this case study. As Dr. Jekyll, Sainsbury's Egypt demonstrated the outward persona of a technically superior retail strategy, but also exhibited Mr Hyde's inward persona of social inferiority from the viewpoint of the social actors in the host culture (customers and employees). This in turn, mirrored the controversial impact of Sainsbury's on Egyptian society as reported in the local media. Analysis of the social lessons learned from the behavior of the novel's lead character can further enlighten the managerial lessons from this case.

According to Mighall (2003), the novel suggests that the good persona did not realize or admit that it was also housing a bad one. This is evident in the Sainsbury's case through the "secret" (i.e. unrecognised) nature of the inward iniquity, which was socially embedded and as such invisible to the company, yet clearly felt by the local stakeholders since it occurred in the shadow of the visible technical superiority. The mysteriousness within the development of Mr. Hyde's persona from that of Dr. Jekyll, as seen through the eyes of the local social actors, indicates that retailers need a more substantial understanding of the symbolic aspects of host cultures for effective

internationalization. The marginalization of deep rooted cultural and social norms has contributed to several cases of divestment by technically superior operators, such as Home Depot, Ahold, Carrefour and JC Penney, from Chile. The business egotism (the outward technical sanctity) of these investors created social inward iniquity amongst the social actors in the host environment that later haunted them and pressured them to withdraw (Bianchi and Arnold, 2004; Bianchi, 2006; Bianchi and Ostale, 2006).

Also, in the novel Dr. Jekyll consistently denied responsibility for Hyde's evil actions. This behaviour is implicit in the assessment made by the British marketing director of the local traders' aggressive reaction to Sainsbury – which he regarded simply as '*jealousy*' - and his distancing of the company from any direct involvement in creating this reaction. Such a denial of an "evil" face may explain the well documented tendency by international retailers to be hesitant, secretive and restrictive about revealing details of their divestment experiences (Palmer, 2004; Alexander et al 2005; Palmer and Quinn, 2007), and to admit "fault".

Looking at the interplay between the Jekyll and Hyde personas in the Sainsbury's Egypt case from a macro viewpoint, the UK Commercial Councellor admitted that Sainsbury's success (as Dr Jekyll) inexorably developed negative social consequences (as Mr. Hyde) within the country, but he blamed these consequences on the generic process of globalisation (Fitzpatrick, 2001). This view coincides with the novels main conclusion that the Mr Hyde character is an integral part of human nature and thus the presence of a split persona is not a unique case but rather an embedded generic feature of social behavior (Mighall, 2003). Nonetheless, in the novel it is revealed that Dr. Jekyll later knew he was housing Mr. Hyde and started deliberately unleashing Hyde when he so wished. This raises the ultimate implication arising from

this case and the constructed metaphor for the socio-ethical legitimization process: if Mr. Hyde, revealed by this paper as the embedded social consequences of technical superiority, is a natural consequence of the globalization process of retailers as superior operators, what should international retailers do about it: continue ignoring it or confront it and proactively think about how to reduce its negative effect?

Some responses may be found in the existing literature. For example, the various efforts on market re-entry via changing the mode of entry (Burt, 1995) or by using private brand 'implants' onto local retailers' shelves (Burt el al, 2005) may help to minimize the '*Hyde effect'* as these actions are not solely based upon superior technical operations and involve collaborative partnerships with local retailers, who naturally possess a deeper social understanding of their local markets. For an ecologically sustainable legitimization process, the case presented here suggests that the contribution of organizations (international retailers) to the (global) environments in which they operate should be broadened from a mainstream capitalist approach to a localized socialist approach (Castro, 2004). This is a process that Thomas (2000) labeled as businesses becoming "citizen professionals", where professionalism honors its lost civic side through balancing social and economic gains.

Adopting an interpretive ethnographic mode of enquiry in this divestment case contributed to our understanding the legitimization process through "*finding* (socio-ethical) *stories we don't know we have lost*" (Behar, 2003 p.17). Furthermore, the use of a metaphor based on a classic novel to frame and present the findings further enhanced our understanding of the symbolic role of institutional pressures and social codes in the legitimization process in host markets, echoing the central tenant of the institutional approach. This case further proves however that these pressures are not optional but rather inevitable for international retailers (especially superior operators)

and must be proactively embraced in order for companies to successfully establish and sustain themselves in a host market.

Finally, as far as future research is concerned, understanding how to maximize the role of Dr. Jekyll and minimize that of Mr. Hyde is an opportunity that can foster a qualitative understanding of social cultures in destination markets as well as developing methods through which retailers can predict, assess and manage the interplay for legitimacy between elements of the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde persona that they (and we?) all posses.

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