Culture and Advertising in the Scenario of Globalization

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Abstract

This paper explains how role of culture as a dominant factor of advertising and the different approaches or strategies that are being employed to execute advertising throughout the world.

It discusses about the Standardization approach, Pattern standardization and localization approach being used in advertising worldwide. Proceeding further it discusses about effect of globalization in Indian advertising and how it is responsible in promoting change in culture and setting up new bench mark in various categories of product and adaption of the new lifestyle. This change is evident in various categories of product including both men, women and children's advertising in India.

Key words: Culture, standardization, Pattern standardization, localization, globalization, international advertising

Introduction

Culture plays a very important role in advertising communications. With the increase in international advertising, there is an increase in demand for more accurate information on cultural and other differences in advertising.

The relationship-building process takes place in a global environment means that the

brand is expected to be able to carry out its dialogue with the consumers in their own native language. After all no brands would dream of asking anyone to purchase in a language other than the one he speak, since only in his language will they be able to truly reach them and persuade them.

Figure 1.Volkswagwagen Advt. India, 2011

Though the basic functions of advertising are similar in all parts of the world, the spe-cific execution and methods of operation vary widely. As a result, it is difficult to discuss universal practices of international advertising. As one move from country to country, one will find that the use and receptivity of advertising as well as its objectives and basic goals demonstrate extraordinary diversity. As firms introduce products on a worldwide basis, their problems range from something product category competition to the much more difficult problem of convincing buyers to change already held habits or even reject previously held cultural prohibited.

In spite of the objective of a particular international campaign, advertisers must deal with a host of situations unique to each country.The cultural dimension of advertising changed drastically during nineteen hundred and twenty and later, in various developed countries.

Agencies no longer conveyed objective facts about the products, but they wanted to link products with a particular lifestyle, inspire them with glamour and prestige, and persuade potential consumers that purchasing an item could be a self-

satisfying experience; just as historian Alan Brinkley describes it, "a personally fulfilling and enriching experience."[1] The images of advertisements try to define the lifestyles of those who bought the products. Many believe that the modern advertising may be the most significant American contribution to global culture.

Andrew Hacker a sociologist of United Stated of America believes that advertising: "this country's most characteristic institution."[2]But this contribution is full of controversy. Critics claim that ads manipulate the public into wasting money on unnecessary products. Cultural critics say that advertising has corrupted holidays within United States of America but which ever country they advertised, they make the festive season a time to materialize rather than celebration. "Brands need to enter the communities, the cultures, in order to gain trust, be accepted and eventually be listened. The only way brands can do this is by respecting the consumers' language, entering their cultural framework as well as by presenting target consumers through positive and realistic imagery (Bernstein, online)."[3]

International Marketing strategies:

There are three basic ways as to how a company or agency can precede in a global marketing and advertising. Most companies can use some aspects of each model in one or more countries or for particular products. There are three basic models of international marketing:-

1.   Standardization: The strategy and execution of campaigns are handled globally with translated copy but no other changes are done in creative or other elements of a campaign. Under this plan, one advertising agency is retained with centralized responsibility to interact with client counterparts at a central office. The strongest supporters of stan-dardization take the view that "globalization will only be possible for companies that exploit a very specific and clearly-defined market sector, with practically no in-ternational differences."[4]

2.   Pattern standardization or Compromise: The pattern standardization orcompromise school believes in a middle-of-the-road strategy that not only recognizes local differences, but believes that advertisingstandardization is possible and as well as desirable to some degree. "Oneway to look at the compromise school is to view the standardization versus adaptationas a continuum."[5] "In this plan a global advertising agency controls the over-all strategies like general creative and general campaign approaches. Whereas the execution is han-dled locally or regionally. Each country handles its own media selection and tailor-ing of campaigns."[6]

3. Localization or adaptation:Localization is quite opposite to the standardization philosophy. It is also called adaptation by many people. Under this management philosophy, each country manages strategy and execution of advertising campaigns with a local focus. Local advertising agencies tailor cam-paigns to each area's culture and needs. Here the organizational control is knowingly decen-tralized.

Cultural change in India due to Globalization and advertising:

Figure 2.Advertisement for colorplus, showing use of standardized ad. and demand of readymade garments.

With the advent of globalization and technology, a great change is seen in the Indian consumer's attitude and lifestyle. Advertisers have attempted to improve the sales of products by changing purchasing behavior, by changing traditional values and creating desires for new products. Foreign advertising is dominated India with more amount of money being spent on foreign products and consumers are purchasing more branded products than before. In the early stages the international marketers targeted rich Indians with large purchasing power and those with high disposable income for repeat purchase consumables and increasingly consumer durables. "Television advertising was seen to play on the foreign obsessions of many Indians in the early 1990s as well as significantly increasing their desires for advertised products".[7]

The National Council for Applied Economic Research has identified the 'very rich and consuming classes' in India as part of an international class with similar lifestyles and consumption habits. "A cross cultural comparison of magazine advertising in the US, and India and other countries in the late 1980s saw more visual similarities than differences in advertising practices of advertisements.

The magazine profile includedBusiness India, Reader's Digest, India today, Femina and Woman's Era".[8]

During two thousand and two, a comparative content analysis of magazine advertising in India and the U.S. was done by Khairullah and Khairullah. It was found that the dominant cultural values in both the countries are similar and thus it supported the strategy of standardization to be adopted by advertising in India."Thedominant cultural values to be similar and thus made the case forstandardizationof advertising, i.e. using advertising in India primarily developed for the American market."[9]

A study by Chandra, Griffith and Ryans, to investigate whether American standardized advertising was suitable for the Indian market in 2002, "found that market segments were similar to the United States, and that India had a strong middle class with western product experience."[10] They recommended the use of American advertising in India, especially in a different market. Values depicted in Indian television were studied by Srikandath in 1991. He found that the "main values being promoted were technology, modernization and consumerism."[11] Baijpai and Unnikrishnan found that "television was playing a significant role in the expansion of consumer values in Indian society, that children are effectively being groomed tobecome future consumers, and that values that were being promoted supported those aims: individualism and the nuclear family."[12]

The study of the portrayal of women in Indian advertising during 1990s was studied by Shoma Munshi.

Figure 3.Figure 4. Fare & Lovely, fairness cream ad. India

It was found that "traditional women's roles in the family were being undermined, and often with absurdity and ironic rebellion, women were being given more power through consumerism. The traditional roles of women as wives, mothers and daughters in law were being modified and changed to reflect social changes in the interests of giving them more consumer power, and equation of liberation with product purchasing."[13]

During the late 1990s Hindustan Lever and Colgate Palmolive fought a battle for the Indian toothpaste market. Previously Indian people have used cheap home-grown products for centuries and these companies have carried out various advertising campaigns to convince people that toothpaste is a superior product. It has been a successful mission, as the penetration rate in cities has increased significantly. Product like this has altered the mindset of urban Indians in a significant way, today one cannot think of using anything else in place of

Figure4. Fair& Lovely products, India

toothpaste as it is also considered hygienic. Advertisers tried to target Indians with better body image with products related to beauty, skin care etcetera. Hindustan Uniliver, previously known as Hindustan Liver Limited, promoted Fair and Lovely skin whitening cream by linking dark skin colour and career prospects, marriage prospectsand host of other problems related to dark skin, and promoting Fair and lovely as the savior.

It believed by many critics that the Indians still have the side effects of the colonial period. Craze for foreign made products or imported products and considering these products as superior also shows the above mentioned reason. Foreign marketers are cashing in on this behavior in Indian market.

As in India dark skin is not well accepted, even if many places in India are prone to climatic conditions due to which people have dark skin. Previously there was no male skin whitening cream found in India.

According to research by advertisers it was found that the major consumers of Fair and lovely were the males who were dark sin conscious. To support this change in behavior, men's skin whitening creams were introduced few years back.

"HUL launched Fair & Lovely Max in the men fairness cream segment exactly a year ago.

It now has a 23% market share. Market leader Emami's brand Fair & Handsome has a 49% share, but has lost almost 11% since Fair & Lovely Max hit the shelves"[14] "Dheeraj Sinha, chief strategy officer at Bates 141, the Asia-based marketing and branding company says in the past, "when it came to marriage, if you were a boy of a certain caste or creed, and you had a sexy job in the government, you would be picked up, no matter how you looked".
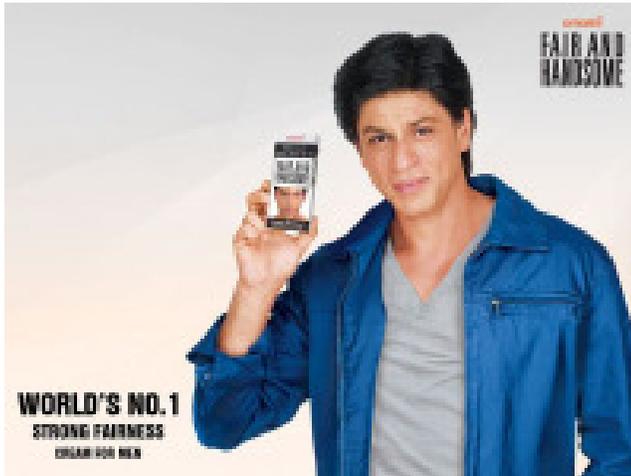
Figure5.Fare and handsome, Emami, advt., India

But now, "with marriages that are love-based rather than arranged, men need a woman's approval, so the need to look good has gone up in a big way."[15]

According to market experts estimate "India's overall male personal grooming products market is growing at about 15 per cent a year. Sales of men's fairness cream are just $44m a year – a tiny fraction of the size of the women's market – but their sales are growing faster than any other product category, at a blistering 40 per cent annually."[16]

Another change is found in the clothing sector with an increased importance given on ready-made clothing for women, rather than the traditional sari. In the cities traditional Indian male dress is rare to be seen and most Indian men seem to have adopted western clothing and traditional dhoti is common only in the villages. During nineteen nineties it is found that "the portrayal of children in magazine advertisements is higher than in other countries, such as the United States and France, and there was also a higher use of illustration rather than photography"[17]

Though this has changed significantly over the years and today digital photography and edited versions of digitally created 3D images are also used in advertising. The Indian consumer profile differs from the west, it is very needs

driven and reinforced by the fact there was no social welfare system, economy and savings arevalued very highly.

This has dramatically changed over the years due to advertising and coupled with increasing disposable income, people are increasingly tempted to spend money.

Figure 6.KFC advt., India 2009

This trend is seen since few year mostly among the younger generations. Children are increasingly targeted by advertisers who are now exercising their decisions on the purchase of items related to leisure, entertainment, electronic goods, houses hold items etcetera. Recently due to more and more women joining the workforce, the purchasing decision of household items has shifted to children.

This is also seen where women are housewife. "Children enjoy greater discretion not only in making routine consumption decisions for the family but also in pestering their parents to buy other products desired by them. Contemporary researchers express that children constitute a major consumer market, with direct purchasing power for snacks and sweets, and indirect purchase influence while shopping for big-ticket items. Indian children have recently attracted considerable attention from marketers as the market for children products offers tremendous potential and is rapidly growing."[18] According to the same industry data, 54% of India is estimated to be under the age of 25 during 2004. The children either purchase a product themselves or select the product to be purchased by their parents. While for other products, which are used by the entire family, they may influence the purchasing decision made by their parents. "There are some products where children wield direct influence or pester power by overtly specifying their preferences and voicing them aloud. For other products, parents' buying patterns are affected by prior knowledge of the tastes and preferences of their children. This 'passive dictation' of choice is prevalent for a wide variety of daily consumed product items as well as

products for household consumption. Also, decision making in households is seen to change with the mere presence of children"[19]

Thus one can notice that the purchasing power and decision making for purchase of Indian children have increased tremendously as they are more tech savvy and influenced by advertising. Advertising is also having an impact on the visual vocabulary of these children, who generally associate Hollywood and Disney cartoon characters with various products as compared to Indian characters with their products. Thus the advertising has created great affection for foreign products due to the use of foreign characters. This way advertising is creating a shift in culture and attitude. Previously male sexual stereotypes in movie advertising and cigarette advertising were very common. Same was the case for women who were traditionally not allowed to make purchasing decisions. They just do the household shopping in middle class homes. With increased literacy enabling women moving out to join workforce, their lifestyles and perceptions are undergoing extreme change.

Figure 7.I-pill exhibition display, India, 2008

Figure 9. Liliput kids ware ad.

Figure 8. Huggies, pack

"During nineteen nineties, the traditional role and status of women was challenged by advertising in 1995 J.W.Thompson, which launched a print campaign for women's rights."[20] Products like sanitary napkin, condoms, anti-pregnancy pills (I pills) etcetera was rare in early eighties and nineties, though with the changing lifestyle and perception of Indian people these products specially the products related to women hygiene are openly addressed and advertised these days, which was once not considered to be discussed in public. Use of baby diapers and other related items related to children are quite common these days due to the result of disposable income and targeted advertising efforts. Brands like Liliput, are being targeted aggressively on children specifically, which was not seen during nineteen eighties.

Many critics believe that traditional Indian values are still seen to be playing an important role in advertising in India where they are used to attach value to products.

It was the language which had a cultural impact on advertising. Indian advertising on television tends to be either in Hindi or English or a blend of these two that is hinglish. "A new language of globalization, Hinglish will soon be heard even more as demographics show there are more English-speakers in India than anywhere else in the world.

The spread continues through satellite television, Bollywood movies, and the Internet, and more people are being exposed to Hinglish each day though ads: Coke has used it for its slogan "Life *ho to aisi"* (Life should be like this); Pepsi has used "*Yeh Dil Maange* More" and Domino's Pizza asks "Hungry *kya*?" etcetera."[21] "**Is Hinglish — that curious mix of English, Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi— fast becoming the language of choice in urban India?**

Figure 10.Domino's Hungry Kya , Use of Hinglish,India

A recent book release, the intriguingly named Chutnefying English: The Phenomenon of Hinglish, proves that the hybrid is very, very, hip."[22] Coke, Pepsi, McDonald, Dominos ad host of other manufacturers are using campaigns that are more in line with youth marketing internationally.

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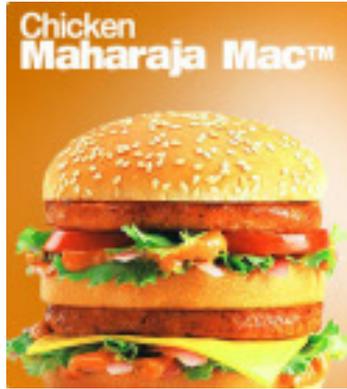
The hinglish language is "now the hippest slang on the streets and college campuses of India. While once considered the resort of the uneducated or the expatriated—the so-called 'ABCDs' or the American-Born Confused Desi(desidenoting a countryman).

Hinglish is now the fastest-growing language in the country. So much so, in fact, multinational corporations have increasingly in this century chosen to use Hinglish in their ads.

Figure 11.Macdonald's Hinglish Indianized menu.

A McDonald's campaign in 2004 had as its slogan 'What your bahana is?' (What's your excuse?), while Coke also had its own Hinglish strapline 'Life ho to aisi' (Life should be like this). In Bombay, men who have a bald spot fringed by hair are known as stadiums, while in Bangalore nepotism or favoritism benefiting one's (male) child is known as son stroke."[23]

Manufacturers use sophisticated strategy similar to campaigns in the United States and Europe, by empowering the affluent youth market, aiming to make them independent purchasers, defining their identities through so called 'cool products'.
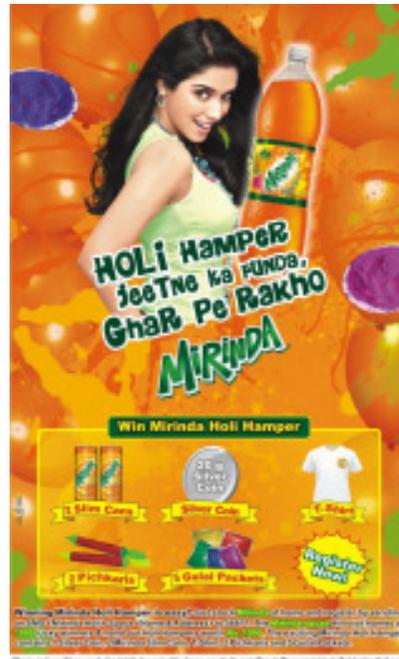
Figure 12, Fanta, Use of Hinglish. India.

These advertising strategies are further undermining the traditional hierarchy of the family or collectivism in Indian society and reinforcing individualism. The fact is that, the children who were exposed to advertising especially television advertising

during nineties are proving to be the potential buyers of the products today, and this young generation is heavy spender and rarely shows signs of traditional Indian mindset. "Advertising in India today has evolved into a highly evocative and arresting medium of portraying society.

It has value- added tremendously to the quality of television programming in the country and has brought with it a new generation of ideas that can only contribute towards the progress of the nation"[24] Over the years, Indian advertising spend has increased substantially and with the change in technology, advertisers are seeking new mediums like internet and mobile phones to target their consumers. The change brought about in the society and culture by the advertising are at some point proving beneficial to the society where as in certain areas it is being condemned. There are many instances where culture also shaped advertising; as advertising caters to the needs of the society therefore it must address the kind of society too. In the process it creates an image for itself and brings about change in the society and culture itself.

Advertising in diverse cultural market: One of the great creative challenges in advertising is communicating to people in diverse cultures are. Communications is more difficult because cultural factors largely establish the way various incidents are being perceived.

In a way advertising and culture influence each other, as advertising has to deliver appropriate advertisements according to the cultural taste and gradually it captures the dreams and desires of the people in a culture or society and guides the culture, thereby influencing it.

Figure 13. 7Up Nimbu Oani, a culturally motivated product launched in India, with its typical symbolic style.

International marketers are becoming accustomed to the problems of adapting from culture to culture.

Knowledge of differing symbolism of colors is a basic part of the international marketer's encyclopedia.

Color is a small part of the communications package, but if the symbolism in each culture is understood, the marketer has an educated choice of using or not using various colors.

Knowledge of cultural diversity must encompass the total advertising campaign.

The concept of "culture" and business has been comprehensively researched by various researchers. Researchers like Greet Hofstede had found the relation of culture both how it affects interpersonal communication, as well as in more general terms such as how it influences business practices, consumer choice and behavior.

In 1991 Hofstede differentiated between five cultural dimensions. These are Individualism and collectivism, Femininity and masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, power distance and long term and short term orientation. More detail can be found in the next chapter under cultural forces acting on advertising environment.

Advertising is of course extremely dependent on culture, with its use of humor, clever remarks, twists on familiar words, and an insider's knowl-edge of a society. The image that is produced by advertising thus has a strong impact on the visual landscape of the society.

There was a time when American based multinational advertisers regularly used word-for-word translations and exported American advertising around the world. Though this process was quick and economical, but it was not always successful. Today, a num-ber of firms have been established, and the inclusion of trans-creators into the creative workforce of international agencies and their clients to develop advertising that takes into account not only language differences, but also the nuances of culture and the ways in which products are used and should be pre-sented from one country to another.

Summary

There are certain good effects of globalization in India related to cultural changes and mindset but there are few side effects too. With the coming of multinational companies in Major Indian cities, cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore etcetera became over populated and there was a big movement of local population towards these urban cities. Globalization affected the cultural aspects of the people as well as helped in building a cosmopolitan mind set mostly in the minds of people living in metro cities and other large cities. Use of Hinglish slogans and

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increasing men grooming products is a change brought about by globalization. Socio economic class of people living in many Indian metro cities have a very similar lifestyle as that of people in developed countries like United States of America and European nations. There was a heavy inflow of foreign direct investment in India. Globalization gave new opportunities to Indian people as many countries outsourced their jobs to India.

Huge scale of disinvestment by Government owned public enterprises is another outcome of globalization. Due to these factors, the gap between rich and poor is increasing in India, as well as the rising prices of various commodities are hitting the Indian public very hard. Though it is not only triggered by globalization but corruption in India is also fueling it. These are some of the ill effects of globalization in India and with the time it has its effects on culture too.

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