

EFFECT OF SOCIAL FORCES ON ADVERTISING.

11

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“Advertising is a non-moral force, like electricity, which not only illuminates but electrocutes, it’s worth to civilization depends upon how it is used.” J.Walter Thompson.

There are various factors that affect advertising, directly or indirectly. In many instances it followed the change and in many instances it brought about the change. The forces that act upon advertising environment are at some point affected by advertising too. One such force is Social force and it has a tremendous impact on advertising environment.

Social forces: There are host of social forces that act upon advertising environment. Even advertising has the capacity to bring about social change but it is also used to promote capitalism by the capitalist industrialists and to promote consumer culture. The society at large has its own norms and values and the collective responsibility of the civil society which can exert pressure on advertising and use it for the benefit of the society. Society has a deep connection with the building cultural attributes and preserving a culture.

Social forces:- “An element of society which has the capability of causing cultural change or influences people.”¹

Society: Society or human society is characterized by a certain patterns of social relationship among individuals who share a particular culture and institution. “The term "society" came from the [Latin](#) word [societas](#), which in turn was derived from the noun socius (comrade, friend, ally; adjectival form socialis) thus used to describe a bond or interaction among parties that are friendly, or at least civil. Without an article, the term can refer to the entirety of humanity (also: 'society in general', 'society at large', etc.), although those who are unfriendly or uncivil to the remainder of society in this sense may be deemed to be "antisocial".Used in the sense of an association, a society is a body of individuals outlined by the bounds of functional [interdependence](#), possibly comprising characteristics such as national or cultural identity, social solidarity, language or hierarchical organizations.”²

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Thus it is the civil society that can question the use of advertising and has the social responsibility to control the way a society is functioning.

Civil Society: There is no general definition of civil society. According to The London School of Economics Centre for Civil Society's working definition "Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups."³ Thus civic society is generally consists of people for a common cause or general upliftment of people in the society and forms the social structure of the society other than government organizations.

According to CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, as part of their research on the state of civil society in over 50 countries around the world, has adopted the following definition as means of dealing with the issue of applying it universally across social and cultural divides., "the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market where people associate to advance common interests."⁴ Thus, one gets a clear idea that the civil society with its different kinds of organizations ranging from nongovernmental organizations, self-help groups, religious groups, charity groups and advocacy groups etcetera can direct and exert pressure upon advertising and the way it is used.

Therefore a Society is directly responsible to culture, as a civic society lays down a code of conduct or a form of civilized behavior which give rise to a particular culture. In a way a society supports the growth of its people in every sense. This support is well recognized by the individuals in the society and they in turn support the growth of the particular society and this gives rise to a tradition of culture.

Culture: Culture is the soul of a society. "The word 'culture' stems from the Latin "colere", translatable as to build on, to cultivate, to foster."⁵ There is no clear definition for culture. "The individual and the culture in which he lives is a complex set of relationships. On the one side, the individual determines its culture, on the other; it is determined by its culture. By contributing to the culture around him, the individual is part of the cultural change."⁶

According to Geert Hofstede, culture is “the collective programming of the mind”.⁷ Fisher defines culture as : “It is shared behavior, which is important because it systematizes the way people do things, thus avoiding confusion and allowing cooperation so that groups of people can accomplish what no single individual could do alone. And it is behavior imposed by sanctions, rewards and punishments for those who are part of the group”⁸

According to the above definitions, one can conclude another definition of culture as the sum of the following qualities of a given group (or subgroup) having shared values, beliefs and basic assumption, as well as any behavior arising from those, of a given group. Culture is understood, in this situation as collectively held set of attributes, which is dynamic and changing over time. A group can therefore be various forms of social constructions like a nation, a supranational and international groups are possible, which are often clearly distinguishable.

Culture defines the needs wants and desires of the people in a society. It is made up of a number of learned behaviors that is interrelated and it is shared by members of a group who define the boundaries. These learned behaviors are aesthetics, education, religion, Language, lifestyle, ethics and moral standards, taboos, attitudes, values and social organization etcetera. These all above forces contributes to the cultural environment. Nationally or internationally these all social and cultural forces have the capacity to exert strong influence on advertising and it’s use by the marketers.

Other than economic factors, culture is possibly one of the most important environmental variables to consider in global marketing. Normally one can easily overlook culture as it is often hidden from one’s view.

Culture as a differentiator: Lots of research has been done on the cultural environment and its effect on advertising and vice versa. One of the major researchers on culture and its consequences is done by Geert Hofstede. He is one of the most useful writers on culture. He along with his two colleagues Franke and Bond tried to explain why culture could be a better differentiator than material or structural conditions, in explaining why some countries gain a competitive advantage and others do not. According to the result of his studies he offered many insights and guides to marketers when dealing with diverse nationalities. They took various cultural variables to find out their results and they are as follows:

This model distinguishes cultures according to six dimensions: Power Distance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Long-Term Orientation, Confucian work dynamism.

- Power distance - The power distance dimension can be defined as the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed

unequally'. In large power distance cultures, everyone has his or her rightful place in a social hierarchy. In large power distance cultures, one's social status must be clear so that others can show proper respect. Luxury articles, some alcoholic beverages and fashion items typically appeal to social status needs.

- Individualism/Collectivism – It can be defined as 'people looking after themselves and their immediate family only, versus people belonging to in-groups that look after them in exchange for loyalty'. In individualistic cultures, one's identity is in the person. People are 'I'-conscious and self-actualization is important. Individualistic cultures are universalistic, assuming their values are valid for the whole world. They also are low-context communication cultures with explicit verbal communication. In collectivistic cultures, people are 'we'-conscious. Their identity is based on the social system to which they belong, and avoiding loss of face is important. Collectivistic cultures are high-context communication cultures, with an indirect style of communication. In the sales process in individualistic cultures, parties want to get to the point fast, whereas in collectivistic cultures it is necessary to first build a relationship and trust between parties. This difference is reflected in the different roles of advertising: persuasion versus creating trust.
- Masculinity/Femininity – The dominant values in a masculine society are achievement and success; the dominant values in a feminine society are caring for others and quality of life.' In masculine societies, performance and achievement are important; and achievement must be demonstrated, so status brands or products such as jewelry are important to show one's success. An important aspect of this dimension is role differentiation: small in feminine societies, large in masculine societies. In masculine cultures, household work is less shared between husband and wife than in feminine cultures. Men also do more household shopping in the feminine cultures.
- Uncertainty Avoidance – It can be defined as 'the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations'. In cultures of strong uncertainty avoidance, there is a need for rules and formality to structure life. This translates into the search for truth and a belief in experts. People of high uncertainty avoidance are less open to change and innovation than people of low uncertainty avoidance cultures. This explains differences in the adoption of innovations. Whereas high uncertainty avoidance cultures have a passive attitude to health by focusing on purity in food and drink and using more medication, low uncertainty avoidance cultures have a more active attitude to health by focusing on fitness and sports.

- Long versus short-term orientation- It is the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future-orientated perspective rather than a conventional historic or short-term point of view'. Values included in long-term orientation are perseverance, ordering relationships by status, thrift, and having a sense of shame. The opposite is short-term orientation, which includes personal steadiness and stability, and respect for tradition. Focus is on pursuit of happiness rather than in pursuit of peace of mind. Long term orientation implies investment in the future."⁹
- Confucian work dynamism- "This dimension looks at a society's search for virtue. It can be characterized by a respect for tradition with a strong desire to save "face." It also implies a need to order relationships by status and to respect the order of that status. Confucian work dynamism fills a void in the content of Western instruments which, not too surprisingly, do not include Confucian values in their constructs."¹⁰ "It reflects the teachings of Confucius that emphasize a social hierarchy or structure."¹¹

This is the most reliable explanation for the difference between the economic growths of different countries. The index explains the relative success of East Asian economies over the past few decades. Value should be given to culture, tradition and social obligations or otherwise it could have negative effect on business and marketing activities.

The Social and cultural environment affecting the International advertising:

As already discussed, culture of a country is another important aspect of the international marketing environment. Culture of a country influences not just the needs and the wants of the consumers but how they go about satisfying them.

Culture and Language: Communicating and marketing products in different cultural settings of foreign country is a difficult task as the marketer has to be develop a sense of understanding and sensitivity towards the particular cultural environment. Advertising is often the most effective way of communicating with potential buyers and create potential markets in other countries. International marketing must be aware if the connotations of words and visual symbols used in their message and understand how advertising copy and slogans are translated or created.

Signs and symbols: Advertisers can also encounter problems with the connotative meaning of signs and symbols used in their message for a particular market. Pepsodent toothpaste was not successful in South East Asia, as it promised white teeth to a culture where black and yellow teeth are symbol of prestige. An American advertising campaign using various shades of green was again proved unsuccessful in Malaysia, where the color symbolizes death and disease.

Local expertise can work well for dealing with language, signs and symbols. Marketers should take the help of local advertisers for dealing with such situations.

Local aesthetic traditions and customs: These are some other considerations that affect products and services. Aesthetics refer to the ideas in a culture concerning beauty and good taste as expressed in the arts -music, drama and dancing and the particular appreciation of color and form. Aesthetic differences affect design, colors, packaging, brand names and media messages. Customs and traditions differ from country to country. In France cosmetics are used heavily by men and women both and advertising to male market is quite common. Cultural differences in grooming and hygiene habit are different in various countries. In United States of America, consumers use deodorants, mouthwash and shampoo daily, whereas in many western countries consumers are not much concerned about personal hygiene, so those products are consumed less. "North Americans tend to be overly eager to touch other people and to address people without using titles and rank - this is uncomfortable to some culture, particularly some cultures in Asia."¹² In western countries white color dress is used in wedding and is regarded as auspicious. While in India, white color is used by widows, instead red is preferred for wedding. Even red has different meaning and application in India.

"Japan is one of the more difficult markets for many American advertisers to understand because of its unique values and customs."¹³ Japanese shows a tendency towards collectivism. They are socially interdependent and are committed to their groups. In contrary to that, Americans are more inclined to individualism. Hofstede has already given his research findings on these types of social characteristics. American advertising stresses on individuality and nonconformity and this type of advertising never work in Japan. "Japanese dislike advertisements that confront or disparage the competition and tend to prefer softer rather than hard sell advertising approach."¹⁴ According to Fam "most Asians found advertising of feminine hygiene goods offensive. Consumers would buy more if personal care product advertisers used indirect descriptions of these goods, including funny, amusing and creative executional techniques, and/or techniques that are simple, clear and relevant."¹⁵

Religion: It is another aspect of culture that affects norms, values and behavior. It provides the best insight into a society's behavior and helps answer the question why people behave rather than how they behave. The advertiser must be aware of various social taboos if they are planning to prepare advertising for Arab countries. The face of women may not be shown in photos, so cosmetics use drawings of women's face in advertisements "India's Shiv Sena

party leader was threatening to try to ban Coca-Cola from the country if the company moved ahead with plans to sponsor a Pakistani cricket team”¹⁶

Religion can affect marketing in a number of ways: Products cannot get access to consumers as shops are closed during religious holidays. There is no economic role of women in conservative Islam. Caste systems in Hinduism and organizational structures makes it difficult for products in getting to different costs for segmentation/niche marketing joint and extended families

Education: Education can affect the advertising and marketing environment in several ways. It refers to the “transmission of skills, ideas and attitudes as well as training in particular disciplines. Education can transmit cultural ideas or be used for change, for example the local university can build up an economy's performance. The UN agency UNESCO gathers data on education information. It showed that in Ethiopia only 12% of the viable age group enrolls at secondary school, but the figure is 97% in the USA.”¹⁷

Education levels or without it can affect marketers in a number of ways:

- Advertising programs and labeling of products are greatly affected.
- In many countries girls and women are ignored from formal education (literacy rates)
- Difficulty in conducting market research of complex products with instructions
- It is difficult for marketers to develop relations with distributors and, support sources like finance, advertising agencies etc.

Values often have a religious foundation, and attitudes relate to economic activities. It is important to know the attitudes of a particular society towards marketing activities which lead profits. Like in Buddhist society profit or material gain may not be relevant. In another way "change" may not be needed by a particular society and nor it is even wanted, and it may be better to relate products to traditional values rather than just new ones. Many African societies do not want to take risk; therefore, entrepreneurialism is not always being relevant. Attitudes are always signs of human behavior and so it is important to understand and do thorough research on these.

Social organizations: Refers to the way people relate to each other, for example, extended families, and, kinship. In some countries kinship may be a tribe and so product as well as market segmentation may have to be based on this. Other forms of groups may be religious or caste or political even governmental. There are many nongovernmental organizations, international Social organizations, religious or ethnic organizations etcetera are working for the development and social cause of the society. They are fighting for the various issues and rights and other causes like blood donation, AIDS awareness, abuse on women, fighting for women right, human rights etcetera. There are some government and self-regulatory

organizations in the advertising industry that constantly check the quality of advertising and its effect on society. All these groups may affect the marketer in their planning of their products. Often marketers associate themselves with these organizations and make non product advertising to spread awareness of such issues. They associate a particular meaning to their own image by doing so. The use of advertising for societal cause promoted many capitalist to utilize this opportunity to target consumers by supporting such cause, but there are many programs launched by other people in the business community that opened up a lot of new ideas of serving the society. Various social organizations have effectively put regulations on the advertising and giving rise to issues like ethics and social responsibility of advertising. These new ideas are the social responsibility of advertising, public service advertising, and cause related social marketing.

Nongovernmental organizations:- There are many Nongovernmental organizations who are working actively for social issues and social cause, all over India and in different countries in the world. There are many regional and national nongovernmental organizations that are fighting for the development of the various weaker sections of the society. Often they protest the unnecessary use of advertised products and the way few products are marketed or advertised, including the idea and even contents. They can affect advertising and marketing programs. Sometimes they gather public stronghold and compel the ruling government to ban certain advertising or products. “NGOs sometimes exert pressure from outside ‘the tent’ on both formulation and implementation of policies, programs and plans. They use campaigning - a visible activity directed at a certain constituency, often media - mediated; and lobbying - a direct and often private approach to individuals or small groups of people, as an attempt to influence the decisions of the institutional elite on behalf of a collective interest. NGOs are supposed to act as counter weight to state power - protecting human rights, opening up channels of communication and participation, providing training grounds for activists and promoting pluralism.”¹⁸

Public service advertising are given by these organizations to support or spread awareness of a cause among the masses. “Public-service advertising is generally sponsored by a nonprofit institution, civic group, religious organization, trade association, or political group. Typically, it is directed at some humanitarian cause, philosophical ideal, political concept, or religious viewpoint.”¹⁹ There are many international organizations like PETA, Amnesty international, Red Cross, World Wildlife Fund, UNO, World Health Organization etcetera. They play a crucial role in educating and developing human society in a large way.

Their efforts can alter the attitude of many business and marketing professionals. In fact many business organizations have openly contributed and even helped these cause related

organizations by donations and as well as created interesting advertisement to spread awareness of the cause, worldwide. As supporting such activity brings them the support of the people and thus they build up good corporate image.

Government organizations:- There are a lots of government organizations apart from private industry organizations that are constantly monitoring the advertising activities in the country like the ASCI or the Advertising Standards council of India INS or the Indian Newspapers Society, MRTP or Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practice, that governs all types of industrial undertakings, The competition Act, the consumer protection act etcetera . Lots of Rules and regulations have been made to keep a check on advertising and business activities. The India government has for a long time depended on the talents of the Advertising Agency and the Advertising Agencies Association of India for social causes. Family Planning is the most successful campaign for a social cause in India which was started by the government India.

“One of the biggest success stories has been the story of the simple birth control pill. A poor country like India faces a major problem with overpopulation. The Mala D commercials and the family planning campaign popularized in the nineteen eighties by advertising agencies to educate the masses were extremely successful. One of the biggest problems facing India today is the rising number of HIV and AIDS related cases. Again illiteracy was the core of the problem. That unsafe sex is one of the most potent ways for it to spread was a fact unknown amongst the masses. The Balbir Pasha campaign did wonders to spread awareness about the problem. Since the inception of the the advertising agencies they have donated crores of rupees worth of time and services to make the crusade a success.”²⁰

Advertising and social responsibility: It is the outcome of the pressure of various social organizations including government organizations, civil society etcetera that the advertising is being regulated and a sense of self-regulation developed among the advertising professionals. They are now aware of the responsibility they owe to the society.

Though there are circumstances where the capitalist attitude of the marketers comes out, but majority of them believe in fulfilling their duty towards society. Promotion of saver, cleaner and sustainable products have begun due to the new outlook of the society and its pressure groups.

“Advertising as a form of social communication, plays a complex set of roles within consumer capitalist societies. By expanding the concept of the "information" conveyed in advertising beyond that of utilitarian product features to include symbolic meanings, the authors view advertising as an influential form of social communication. This approach

provides insights into how commodities mediate social relations and ocuses attention on the cultural impact of advertising and its multifarious social functions.”²¹

Just like all other institutions, advertising has a common responsibility towards society. It fulfills this responsibility by helping to maintain social harmony and exercise of honesty and integrity in all relationships, loyalty to accepted ethical standards, willingness to assist various segments of the society, and the courtesy to respect the privacy of others.

In the United States the advertising industry is part of a large business community. It has played a responsible role in keeping it clean of all shorts of social criticism and thus promoted it to participate and support civic events and supporting local bodies or groups in improving the community.

Cause related social marketing:- These are the marketing activities which focus on the social marketing process to change behavior of the people at large by creating positive social impact. “Social Issues Marketing is very different from the other marketing disciplines. Here the target audience or "customer" is the primary focus in the social marketing process, and behavior change is the desired outcome.”²² “Social Marketing is also sometimes called Health Marketing or Behavior Change Communication, came about from applying general marketing theories or concepts to health and social issues. Instead of marketing products or services, the campaign markets health and social behavior/lifestyle.”²³ In India one can see the joint efforts of NDTV and Toyota in helping and promoting the efforts to keep Indian sea shores clean and preserving its biodiversity. Similarly Procter and Gamble is promoting the idea of education of children by setting up of village schools in India with its advertising for “Siksha” and Aircell protecting tigers. There are numerous such examples one can find these days related to social marketing and corporate social responsibility. There are many concerned citizens, organizations, consumer advocates and special interest groups who constantly put pressure on advertising and marketing efforts when they feel that those activities are against the public welfare.

Thus one can find that advertising has the potential to be used for the service of the society and it can be manipulated and used by capitalist to churn money with the effort it. It is the civil society and the efforts of various social groups and organizations including government organizations that regulate it and constantly put pressure on the marketers to make advertising socially relevant.

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