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EVOLUTION OF INDIAN SOCIETY VIEWED THROUGH ADVERTISING LENS AND AIDED BY HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

Indian society has had rapid changes post liberalization. Marketing post and pre-liberalization has undergone several changes. This research focuses on the pivotal role culture has played in these changing times. The study explores effects of changing values between pre and post liberalization India and contributes to marketing literature. Study highlights culture and value systems that has influenced the way advertisement has changed over the years and the effects it has on consumer mindsets.

Introduction:

A framework of behavioral patterns, values, assumptions and experiences shared by a social group is defined a culture . It is multifaceted and multidimensional which has been defined in different perspective from the most complex to most comprehensive by various researchers (Berry, 1999; Kluckhohn, 1962; Zakour, 2004; Jones, 2007). Hofstede (1980,1991) gave the most popular definition of culture as follows; "*the collective mental programming distinguishing people in one group from people in other groups*", and describes it as "*the software of the mind*". Cultural norms and beliefs act as are powerful forces that helps to shape 's perceptions, dispositions, and behaviors (Aaker and Lee 2001; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). "Appropriate" beliefs and behavioral standards of a society is also determined by culture.

Venkatesh (1995) describes culture values are "*neither pure nor timeless; rather it constantly evolves due to either internal dynamics or external forces across different times and places, some culture change more quickly than others, and some are more open or resistant to change*". Interactions among people as a result of international trade and finance, global media and technological flows,

travel & tourism and immigration results in culture changes. Previous research (Das 2009; Mitchell & Bates 1998) supports the statement that major change in culture is due to globalization. Though convergence in modernization and income levels are seen as a result of globalization, it's not seen to lead to a convergence in cultural values. This is further evidenced in the study by Khairullah & Khairullah (2011) that showed that Asian- Indian immigrants in U.S.A preferred Asian-Indian advertisements over the American advertisements. Qualitative changes in economy, society, culture, and politics have been a result of globalization of market, communication, network, and relations in the contemporary world (Ghosh, 2011).

Cultural values have been noted as probably the single most important dimension of advertising (Pollay, 1983). Two issues are the central themes on most studies concerning cultural values in advertising. The first is the role of advertising in constructing new values or reflecting cultural values; and the second is the need to understand cultural values so that international advertising can be successful (Wolburg, 1995). The interest in international advertising makes the second area popular than the rarely studied first issue. In this realm, paper have examined how advertising influence by Indian cultural values taking the time span of pre and post liberalization era. Various value systems applied in advertising research are derived from works of Hofstede (1980, 1984 & 2001).

The economic liberalization program of the government, has resulted in dramatically changing the Indian television segment. This segment has witnessed rapid rise in international content along with a rise in domestic content. Television has become a prominent advertising medium in Indian society over the years. With Indian TV industry having over 300 channels as of 2010, is estimated to grow to \$9.5 billion in 2010 from \$4.3 billion in 2006 and to overtake print media in size (De Souza, 2006).

Literature Review

Studies on advertisements reveals that culture “*affects perception, attitudes and behavior of people, and their responsiveness to marketing activity*” (Rettie, 2002). Culture influences Communication patterns and thus consumers' media preference and usage behavior. Having a knowledge of cultural differences is often considered a prerequisite for successful global advertising (Belk & Pollay, 1985; Hong *et. al.*, 1987; An, 2003)

De Mooij (1998) asserts that advertising reflects a society's values and that effective advertising and marketing. This makes advertising inseparably linked to the underlying culture of the target group. McLuhan (1964) noted that “*advertisements are the richest and most faithful daily reflections that any culture ever made of its entire range of activities*” (p. 232). A collective knowledge about effectiveness of what advertisements can be given to a country can be gained from studying the distinct features of national advertising. People comprehend messages seen in advertisements by equating them to the shared values or beliefs by them, i.e. culture (Frith, 1997). It has been conveyed that “*advertising transmits cultural values by a simple association of products with*

qualities considered to be “good” within a society, or the use of imagery to reinforce direct comparisons, and the presentation of products and their users in contiguous relationships with idealized values” (An, 2003, p. 41). Advertisements therefore are manifestations of cultural values (Belk & Pollay, 1985; An, 2003). Previous studies used Cultivation Theory and Social Expectation Theory to examine how advertisements affect viewers’ personal perspectives on what values are important in lives (Thurm, 2001). Consumers respond more positively to advertisements congruent with their culture (Srivastava, 2010). Studies carried out on traditional media, reveals that consumers in China related to advertisements with a socialistic (communitistic) appeal (Zhao *et. al.*, 2003) and consumers in Canada found individualistic and functional advertisements more appealing. Research by Orth *et. al.* (2005) reveals that consumer emotional, cognitive and attitudinal response to the framing of advertisements varied between nations. There have been numerous studies attempting to understand association of cultural values and advertising in a western cultural setting. However, the effect in an eastern setting have not been studied much. There have been studies on the cultural values reflected in advertisements from countries such as China (Cheng, 1994; Zhang, 1996; Cheng, 1997; Lin, 2001), Japan (Belk, *et. al.*, 1985; Mueller, 1987, 1992; Lin, 2001), Korea (An, 2003). but such a study in India setting are limited (Srikandath, 1991).

In the Asian context, of late, several studies focused on relationship between dimensions of cultural values and advertisement (Chang, 2006; Triandis, Bentempo, Villreal, 1988; Mathur, 2005; Ewing, Salzberger and Sinkovics, 2005; Singh and Sandhu, 2011). Recent study undertaken by Khairullah and Khairullah (2011) had provided insightful evidence on impact of cultural differences on evaluation of advisements by Asian-Indian immigrants in USA. These works demonstrate that cultural changes are being reflected in advertisements of today’s age. Thus it reinforces the relevance for more culture-based research related to advertisements. However, few studies in Indian context evaluated how change in cultural value in Indian society is depicted in advertising across pre and post liberalization era.

Research Objectives:

The objectives of this study thus boil down to three different perspectives to clearly understand the phenomenon of advertising reflecting cultural change in the Indian context. Before even going into the role of advertisements as a mirror reflecting cultural ethos of India, it is utmost important to figure out the changes that have happened in the culture itself over a period of time. The first objective of the study can thus be quoted as:

Objective 1: To understand the change in cultural values in Indian society

In line with tracking the changes in culture that have perpetrated with time, one important landmark in the India’s history hourglass has been the year of 1991 when India went through sweeping measures of liberalization at the behest of the then Finance Minister. It created a macroeconomic environment when not only the Indian Market but also Indian culture also started to undergo a rapid change. As a logical step, the second objective of the paper is to understand the

change as reflected in the way advertisements were done on television. The second objective can thus be written as:

Objective 2: To compare and contrast the portrayal of Indian culture in advertising through the cultural variables of the Hofstede model in the pre and post liberalization era.

And thus, the learning obtained through the previous objective needs to be understood and patterns traced to be able to predict the emerging trends in modern advertisements and the direction to which they point when it comes to Indian cultural diaspora. The final objective of the paper thus is:

Objective 3: To extrapolate the learning to bring alive the emerging social codes of new India

Hypotheses:

Individualism–collectivism describes the extent to which the society values group-norms or individual freedom. According to Hofstede (1994), individualism pertains to “a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family only” (p. 261).¹⁶

A low score of 48 on the index, implies that India holds a strong sense of community. Individuals tend to put others like his/her friends or family before him/her. A noticeable lack of privacy and a smaller concept of personal space is noted in studies Zhang (1996). Success is enjoyed from the perspective of a group rather than an individual (Banerjee, 2008). Respect given is often subjective to how others perceive an individual. Such traditions of communal values further support the social hierarchical structures. The historical practice of extended families in India also demonstrates Collectivism. Family is expected to provide a comfortable environment to maximize the development of a child's personality and children are not encouraged to be independent and self-sufficient (www.family.jrank.org).

However, changing social values in India today may be resulting in changes to these traditions. Individuality amongst the modern population is encouraged by higher personal goals and tougher competition. A person would be very forthcoming in the work space to earn prestigious rewards though they may put friends before self in terms of personal space. Sinha and Tripathi (1994) found a mix of collectivist and individualistic behavior among Indians depending on their interests and needs. There are increased instances of nuclear families substituting extended family traditions. Sinha and Tripathi (1994) indicate that “new values have emerged in the upbringing system emphasizing a child's psychological separation from his/her family; changes in a woman's status and role have provided her with more egalitarianism and more opportunity to contribute to her family income” (p.123-136).

H1. Cultural value system of India has changed and society is moving towards high individualism and low collectivism.

Masculinity focuses on the degree to which ‘masculine’ values like competitiveness, achievement, the acquisition of wealth and success are valued

over 'feminine' values like relationship building and quality of life. This dimension also deals with the acceptance of certain gender role differentiation in the society. The world average for masculinity is at 51 while Indian scores average at 56. India demonstrates an equally high emphasis on feministic traits as countries with less masculinity. Hence, the index should be taken with caution (Das, 2009). The impact of high masculinity score is counteracted by the importance to extended family systems and high value on relationships (Harwood & Roy, 1999; Perlow & Weeks, 2002).

In terms of the gap between gender roles in a society, India is highly masculine even today. It is not deniable that men still command more respect and power, especially from other men, though women in business have grown to be common in India in the last few years. Women are expected to portray more feminine values such as nurture and respect and less masculine values such as aggression and assertion. Age old beliefs and practices have shaped women's lives. The practices have been discouraging individuality and encouraging service to her family. Brides are still commonly blessed by elders to bear sons, and not daughters. Gender inequality in India has existed "*from its early history due to its socio-economic and religious practices that resulted in a wide gap between the position of men and women in the society*". The Indian media sheds a positive light on the issue. With increasing portrayals of strong female figures, women are shown to "*negotiate her newly emerging position within the context of her household and family life*" and thus, the so-called 'New Woman' reflects two concurrent trends.

H2. Cultural values of Indian society are moving from traditional male female polarities to more diffused gender demarcations.

Power distance is defined as "*the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally*" (Hofstede, 1994, p. 262). The consequences of power inequality and authority relations in society, and how it influences hierarchy and dependence relationships in the family and organizational contexts is reflected in this dimension.

India with a ranking score 77 is much higher than the world average at 56.5. This high index value is indicative of a high level of inequality of power and wealth accepted within the society as a norm. The emphasis is on social status, referent power, authority, and legitimacy (Singh *et. al.*, 2003). However, in terms of power distance there has been a transition in the Indian society and shift from high power distance towards low hierarchical difference and equality. There is a sense of enlightenment from birth led haves to conviction and ability led haves, from age led wisdom to exposure led wisdom.

A new power equation is emerging in the Indian culture, power of think differently; rise of activism, fight back, and give back is depicted in the present advertisements depicting the changed Indian society

H3. The traditional cultural values are shifting towards low hierarchical difference and equality.

Research Methodology:

In contemporary society advertising has become a forum for the communication of social cues and advertisements works on several levels. It has come to play an increasing role in manipulating or reinforcing social attitudes, defining social roles and cultural values apart from conveying information about products and services (Dyer 1995). Several empirical and conceptual studies have explored the impact of cultural change on the advertisement (Chang,2006; Thurm,2001; Singh & Sandhu,2011; Khairullah & Khairullah, 2011).

A primary and secondary research approach was adopted to compare and contrast the portrayal of Indian culture in advertising through the cultural variables of the Hofstede model in the pre and post liberalization era. Primary in-depth interview was also conducted using a selected sample of people to represent a larger population. It will allow researcher to gain knowledge of how cultural values change after liberalization.

Ads of Pre and post liberalization era were randomly chosen across multiple categories of products such as food & beverage, beauty care, household, financial. For each ad we made an attempt to map three dimensions of Hofstede cultural model: power distance, individualism/ collectivism, masculinity/ femininity. The objective of the study is to understand the cultural value that have changed and that have remained relatively constant in their depiction across the timeline under study.

Data Analysis and Results:

H1 stated that cultural value system of India has changed and society is moving towards high individualism and low collectivism. As indicated in table (row-2-6 and column-C,D,G,H) the analysis of the five individual advertisements reveals interesting facts regarding the changing phase of individualism and collectivism in India. Now people have become more individualist rather than collectivist. As depicted from the ads of pre and post liberalization that people believe in "I" rather than "we", more Independent, self-decision maker, immediate family, making decisions based on individual needs as shown in Pepsi, Cinthol soap and Cadbury's chocolate ads. Therefore, the analysis shows significantly high individualism in Indian cultural values, thus the hypothesis was supported.

H2 hypothesized that Cultural value system of India is moving towards femininity to high masculinity. The table (row-8-12 and column-C,D,G,H) shows remarkable results that the traditional values are intertwined with newly adopted values, which are reflected in the advertisements. The Indian women are becoming more Independent, Intelligent and competent, ambitious. The ads reveal that males are doing the same task which was earlier done by women only like in wheel detergent ad. The analysis shows notable high masculinity in the Indian cultural values. Therefore, the hypothesis was strongly supported.

In H3 it was predicted that the traditional cultural value system of India is shifting towards low hierarchical difference and equality. As per the table (row-13-17 and column-C,D,G,H) reveals that after liberalization Indian society is expecting equality which shows low power distance. Now the society is raising voice against injustice and the hierarchical levels are diffusing as shown in Rotomac ad, Tata Tea ad. Therefore, as per the ad analysis Indian cultural value system are adopting low power distance thus, the hypothesis was supported.

Implication of the Study:

Our research contributes to the international marketing literature by demonstrating the changing values between pre and post liberalization India. It also contributes to greater understanding of India as market and its consumers and unique value systems at play here. It puts the focus on the need for more culture based research to understand the influence of culture in developing fitting marketing strategy. It further contributes to literature in the area of media ethnography. This study also shows the role advertising plays in the mind of the consumers

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Appendix:

Table 1: Analysis

S. No	Campaign	Product Category	Pre-Liberalisation Ad-Predicting Culture	Variable	Old Theme	New Theme	Post-Liberalisation Ad-Predicting Culture	Variable	Analysis
1	PEPSI	food and beverages	Collectivism	group cohesiveness, loyalty	yehi hai right choice baby	CHANGE THE GAME	Individualism (high)	Independent, self decision maker, individualistic value system, more self confident	FROM SEEKING APPROVAL OF OTHERS TO REALLY TO REALLY SHOWING A NEW WAY Independent, self decision maker, individualistic value system, more self confident
2	Cadbury Dairy Milk	food and beverages	Collectivism	Group orientation, Emphasis on belonging, "We" mentality, extended family	Asli swad zindagi ka	Shubh Arambh	Individualism (high)	Emphasis on individual initiative and achievement, Everyone has a right to a	Jeans Ad cadbury, lady tries to change her look, trying to modernise with the society, husband supportin

								private life	g his wife making her confident independent, earlier people living in family having chocolate to share joy and happiness and now cadbury is used to build up self confidence
3	Cinthol Soap Ad	Beauty Products	Collectivism	family orientation	Sharukh Kanh with Family - Cinthol taazgi jagaye	Hritik Roshan - 24 hours confident	Individualism (high)	focus on personal achievements and individual rights	Independent, adventurous, confident, decision maker, perfection sharukh with family orientation
4	Wheel powder	Household Products	Collectivism	Decisions based on what is best for the group, Expect absolute loyalty to group	damdar safai bin samjho te aayi	naya wheel phoolo ki khushbu ke sath	Individualism (high)	immediately family, Making decisions based on individual needs	earlier lived in joint family but now trend is changing towards nuclear families
5	Nescafe	food and beverages	Collectivism	greater social mobility	the taste that gets u started on - Nescafe	switch on the best in you	Individualism (high)	"I" mentality, Self-orientation	Earlier more homogeneous groups are enjoying coffee as a energy booster whereas

									in present senario there is more of hetronignity with in the homogenous groups.
6	Wheel powder	Household Products	femininity	Emotional, Cooperative	damdar safai bin samjho te aayi	naya wheel phoolo ki khushbu ke sath	musculinity	Intelligent and competent,	Old ad shows women using the product and also taking care of the family i.e. more on the emotional side but now husband is advicing his wife to use the product and even helping her in washing clothes so diffusion in gender demarcation
7	lux soap	Beauty Products	Femininity	Sex object, Attractive because of physical appearance	surat bhi ha khubsurat bhi ha	khoobsurti ka raaz lux	musculinity	Attractive because of achievement	earlier soap was women oriented now sharukh is the main model along with other actress so focus shifting

									towards male
8	fair and lovely cream	Beauty Products	Femininity	Sensitive, Emotional, Dependent	komalt a se gora banaye	badaiye future ka nikhar	musculinity	Independent, Intelligent and competent, Intelligent and competent, ambitious	Earlier women were portrayed as a housewife and just to be appreciated by her husband but in today's scenario girls using the product because they're career conscious, confident and even males have started using it as society value system is changing and acceptability of fairer ppl is increasing
9	dabour Ambla hair oil	Beauty Products	Femininity	Sensitive, Emotional	sundar balo ka raaj	asli ambla dabour ambla	musculinity	Independent, Intelligent and competent, Intelligent and competent, ambitious	marinda ad question the society that what's the need for a lady like behaviour be strong like man

									and face the world
10	Zandu Chavanprash	food and beverages	Feminity	caring emotional, family bonding	hamari sehat ka rakhwala	raho zindagi ke liye har dum tayyar	musculinity	Independent, Intelligent and competent, achiever	earlier ads portray women being concerned about her family's health, caring nature and now a male celebrity is advising people to be energetic
11	HDFC Standard Life	Financial Products	Power distance high	elders advising kids	sar utha ke jiyo	sar utha ke jiyo	power distance low	no set hierarchy	Elder teaching younger how to secure the future, Peer group teaching each other how to secure the future
12	Krack Cream	Beauty Products	Power distance high	elders advising kids	phati aediya banaye soft rakhe soft	paer happy to aap happy	power distance low	no set hierarchy	Showing that mother is teaching her daughter how to take care of herself and in the present scenario Child is taking care of her mother

13	PEPSI	food and beverages	Power distance high	high level of inequality of power and wealth within the society	yehi hai right choice baby	CHANGE THE GAME	power distance low	no set hierarchy	FROM SEEKING APPROVAL OF OTHERS TO REALLY TO REALLY SHOWING A NEW WAY earlier elders directing kids to drink pepsi n now kids telling elders to change the game
14	rotomac pen		Power distance high		waterproof ink ke saath	likho India ki nayi pehchan	power distance low	powerful people try to look less powerful than they are inequality should be minimized; no set hierarchy	earlier ad portrays the use of the pen but now it shows the rebelous youth who is trying to reduce the inequality in society and raise their voice against injustice
15	Tata Tea	food and beverages	Power distance high		taazgi ka mazaa	Soch Badlo	power distance low	more equality, raising voice for one's rights	earlier ad portrays a group of people simply enjoying tea but now Tata tea is provoking people to "Jaago

									Re' and change the country
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