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Qualitative and quantitative approach to identify the dominant cultural values in durable goods advertisement

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Content analysis of Indian television durable goods was conducted using qualitative and quantitative approach to identify the dominant cultural values. Content analysis established the dominant as well as subsidiary or secondary cultural values in the advertisements. Some of the dominant cultural values identified were: 'technology', 'family', 'enjoyment' and 'economy'. Apart from being the dominant cultural values, 'technology', 'family' and 'enjoyment' also had high presence as the subsidiary values. 'Youth' though was low in its dominant appearance, it had high presence as a subsidiary value. Certain cultural values like 'individualism' and 'sexuality' which were earlier seen less frequently in Indian advertisements now appear more frequently in the durable goods advertisements.

Key words: Cultural values, advertisement, durable goods, focus group, product category.

INTRODUCTION

India is recognized as one of the "Big emerging markets" (Cateora and Graham, 1999; Chandra et al., 2002) and "third largest economy" in terms of purchasing power (Okazaki and Mueller, 2007), following the liberalization of its economic policies. Multinational companies (MNCs) have been eager to sweep the nation with their products in every sector ever since. While this is happening, one of the key things for the MNCs to act upon is to examine if their advertising strategy is in line with the Indian culture or not. Economic liberalization has seen an increase in private sector advertising in India (Hietzman and Worden, 1996), but MNCs have found it challenging to make localized advertisements for a culturally diverse India (Kumar et al., 2007).

"Advertising is strongly influenced by culture, as it is largely based on languages and images" (Usunier and Lee, 2011). Culture in advertisements is represented through narratives, spokespersons, images, actions, symbols and objects (Goldman et al., 2003; Sharma and Philip, 2010; Saussure, 1966; Warlaumont, 1993). Marketers must understand the cultural "meanings" of such "signs" and "symbols" before they design their communication strategy (Banerjee, 2008). For example,

an advertisement that shows the expression of 'gifting gold jewelry by parents to their daughter in her wedding' - can be interpreted as 'tradition', or 'ornamental' cultural value depending on how representation of 'gold jewelry', 'marriage' and act of 'gifting by parents' are perceived by Indians in the era of 'global convergence' (Usunier and Lee, 2011) and 'melting pot' (Lin, 2001).

This study attempts to identify the dominant cultural values in durable goods television advertisements of India in the post liberalization scenario. The images, sign, symbols and objects used in the advertisements are collectively termed as 'expression symbols' in this study.

Cross cultural advertising research has acknowledged symbols like expressions of nature, human convenience, act of gifting, approval from elder, etc., represented and interpreted differently across nations (Belk and Bryce, 1986; Cho et al., 1999; Lin, 1993; Lin and Salwen, 1995; Okazaki and Mueller, 2007; Zhang et al., 1996). In

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American societies, “the body” of the women is in focus whereas in East Asian societies, “the face” is used to interpret beauty and hence the beauty products are aimed at women’s hair, skin and face in East Asia (Frith et al., 2005). Product being shared or personal, its contemporariness and the lifestyle characteristics of people also affect the content of ‘expression symbols’ in advertisements (Cheng, 1994; Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996; Lin, 2001; Zhang and Shavitt, 2003).

In the Indian context, there have been a few studies that either probed the cultural value orientations of Indians or questioned the relevance of advertising standardization in India (Chandra et al., 2002; Kumar et al., 2007; Khairullah and Khairullah, 2013; Singh et al., 2008; Sinha et al., 2002; Woldu et al., 2006). Few research have been conducted on content analysis of Indian TV advertisements. Furthermore, the researches so far in Indian context have not considered other elements of advertisements namely: artifacts, symbols, and aesthetics - which are important component of culture (Khairullah and Khairullah, 2013). Cheng and Kim (2010) called for focusing of advertisement studies in emerging markets like India, which has been “understudied in the past 20 years”.

Of the few advertising research studies from India that we reviewed, Sengupta and Frith (1997) in their study of television commercials identified the presence of ‘expression symbols’ that were Indian or westernized on the basis of whether the company advertised was a MNC or an Indian origin based (IOB) one. A significantly important study by Srikanth (1991) identified dominant cultural values based on “gestalt” or the advertisements’ first impressions of Indian TV advertisements in the pre liberalization era. In a study of Indian TV advertisements, Sharma and Philip (2010) analyzed the *Chlormint* advertisements ever since it was launched in 1997 and stated that the change in its advertisements was not in the product changes but instead changes in images, symbols and signs associated with the product. The present study however has a wider scope of identifying the dominant cultural values in the durable goods advertisements of India.

Thus the following research questions were framed for this study:

RQ1: What are the dominant cultural values in the durable goods advertisements of India?

RQ2: What are the subsidiary or supporting cultural values in the durable goods advertisements of India?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Taylor (2002), in his review of advertising research, called out for a trial of more varied methodologies such as discourse and textual analysis to achieve deeper understanding of consumer and advertising. Qualitative

approach has a distinct advantage of receiving in-depth responses to explore concepts of Asian culture where “strong oral tradition” is a crucial element (Fam and Waller, 2006). Also, according to Maxwell (2005), *quasi statistics* (Barton and Lazarsfeld, 1955) qualitative research can establish “claims that are inherently quantitative”. Hence this study uses a mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative approach. As cited in Brannen (2005), one of the useful outcomes of using mixed methodology is “*Complementarity*”, that is, qualitative and quantitative research together “generate insights”. In the present study, the participant respondents were first engaged in Focus group discussions (FGDs) and then coded cultural values of the sample advertisements. While the FGDs achieved internal group consistency amongst the participants in interpreting ‘expression symbols’ as cultural values, the coding of advertisements established the frequency and strength of cultural values used in durable goods advertisements of India.

Sample advertisements

According to Chandra et al. (2002), “durable goods were negatively related to advertising program standardization” with regard to Indian advertising and therefore localization strategy is more relevant for advertising of durable goods in India. Hence, durable goods advertisements were chosen to identify dominant cultural values themes for this study.

Advertisements of popular brand durable goods that were repeatedly broadcasted during 2011-2012 on Indian television channels (Entertainment - Star TV, Sony, Setmax; Sports - ESPN, Star sports; News - NDTV, Aaj Tak, Zee TV) were selected for the content analysis. Duplicate advertisements broadcasted on national holidays and festivals were discarded. Hence a total of 100 television advertisements grouped in three categories of durable goods, that is, automobiles, electronics and personal accessories, were selected.

Coding process

Two focus groups with five participants in each group were formed for discussion and coding of the cultural values in advertisements. First focus group included faculty members (aged between 46 and 50 years) and the second group consisted of M.B.A. students (aged between 21 and 24 years) as participants. Both faculty and student participants were from leading business schools of Dehradun (capital city of Uttarakhand, India). All faculty participants (FGD1) held PhD degrees in different disciplines of management and had at least twenty years of work experience. M.B.A. students who had at least one year of industry work experience were chosen as participants for second focus group (FGD2).

The choice of participants thus ensured homogeneity within the focus groups with respect to age, ethnicity and purchasing power.

To aid FGDs and coding of cultural values in the advertisements, the participants were provided with a code book which included a list of cultural values along with their operational definitions given by Pollay (1983), Mueller (1987, 1992) and Cheng and Schweitzer (1996). Since it was difficult to conceptually recall all the cultural value terms given by the researchers cited above, the list in code book was condensed by the authors to a smaller list of 26 cultural values on the basis of common operational definitions and relevance of the cultural values to the durable goods. This list of cultural values formed the universe of cultural values for FGD participants to refer to while attributing and coding cultural values to each of the advertisement. The participants of each group discussed to build a consensus on interpretation of 'expression symbols' used in advertisements as cultural values. The discussion for each group lasted for about an hour followed by the coding of advertisements by the participants. The FGDs and coding process was conducted at the first author's university lecture room equipped with power point projector and audio system. While the discussion to build consensus on interpretation of 'expression symbols' as cultural values was a group activity, the participants were given the individual freedom to attribute the cultural value for all the sample advertisements.

Coding scale of 0 to 3 adopted from the scale given by Lin (2001) was used for coding the advertisements (Table 1). The participants were allowed to attribute and code more than one cultural value for an advertisement hence the subsidiary or supporting cultural values were represented in the content analysis process. The codes given by the participants for all cultural values ranged from 1-3 (Table 1). The values that were not attributed for an advertisement were coded as '0'. Thus a total of 1000 codes were obtained (10 participants \times 100 advertisements=1000) for each cultural value on the coding sheet.

Participants were allowed to use the code book while attributing codes to the cultural values on the coding sheet. Code book included the coding scheme explained in Table 1 along with the definition of "culture" given by Spencer-Oatey (2000) and the definition of "value" given by Roakeach (1973). Figure 1 gives a detailed outline of the methodology used for this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of 26 cultural values identified in the literature review, 24 were recognized by the participant coders in the advertisements. The codes specifying the strength of 24 cultural values for 100 advertisements were analyzed using frequency charts and chi square tests with the help

of SPSS software. The frequency of cultural value representations as 'weak', 'moderate' and 'strong' in advertisements was found to be significantly different ($\chi^2=2.989E3^a$, $df=92$, $p=0.000$).

'Technology' was found to be the most dominant cultural value, in the advertisements as its presence was rated as 'strong' 180 times out of 1000 (18%) by the participant coders (Table 2). 'Technology' also appeared most frequently in the advertisements since its overall presence as 'weak', 'moderate' and 'strong' altogether was 51.8% (518 times out of 1000). In a study by Srikandath (1991), 16% out of the 200 Indian advertisements analyzed had "hightech" value. "Hightech" had similar definition in the code book used by Srikandath (1991) as the definition given for 'technology' in the code book used for the present study. Khairullah and Khairullah (2003) also found 'technology' value frequently appearing in the Indian print advertisements. This somewhat establishes that technology has been consistently appearing as a dominant cultural value in the Indian advertisements. 'Family' was coded as 'strong' 114 times (11.4%) and was thus seen to be the next most dominant value in the durable goods advertisements. 'Family' was also the second most frequently appearing value (32.3%) after 'technology' (Table 2). Dominance of family value in Indian advertising has also been widely established earlier by researchers (D'Cruz and Bharat, 2001; Mandelbaum, 1970; Mehta and Belk, 1991). Hence we can safely deduce that the position and importance of 'family' values in the Indian society is also consistent across generations and would remain unchanged.

'Enjoyment' (9.2%), 'economy' (7.7%), and 'tradition' (6.9%) were the other cultural values that had high frequency as dominating or 'strong' presence in the advertisements (Table 2) with 'enjoyment' value being highest in its overall presence (29.4%) as well among these three values. Advertisement 'expression symbols' showing a horde of new gadgets, vehicles and personal accessories as instrument of fun and happiness represented 'enjoyment' value. Representation of "fun" (having same connotation as enjoyment) was also high in Indian advertisements in the study conducted by Srikandath (1991).

'Economy' was present in only 1.5% of advertisements in the study conducted by Srikandath (1991). Khairullah and Khairullah (2003) also noted that 'economy' was emphasized more in U.S. advertisements than in Indian advertisements. This indicates that a liberalized consumerist society has a stronger concept and orientation towards 'economy' as increased spending may motivate people towards budgeting and economizing. In this study, it was seen that due acknowledgement and importance was given to economic concepts through expressions of 'better mileage of cars' and 'electric efficient gadgets' in the durable goods advertisements and the overall presence

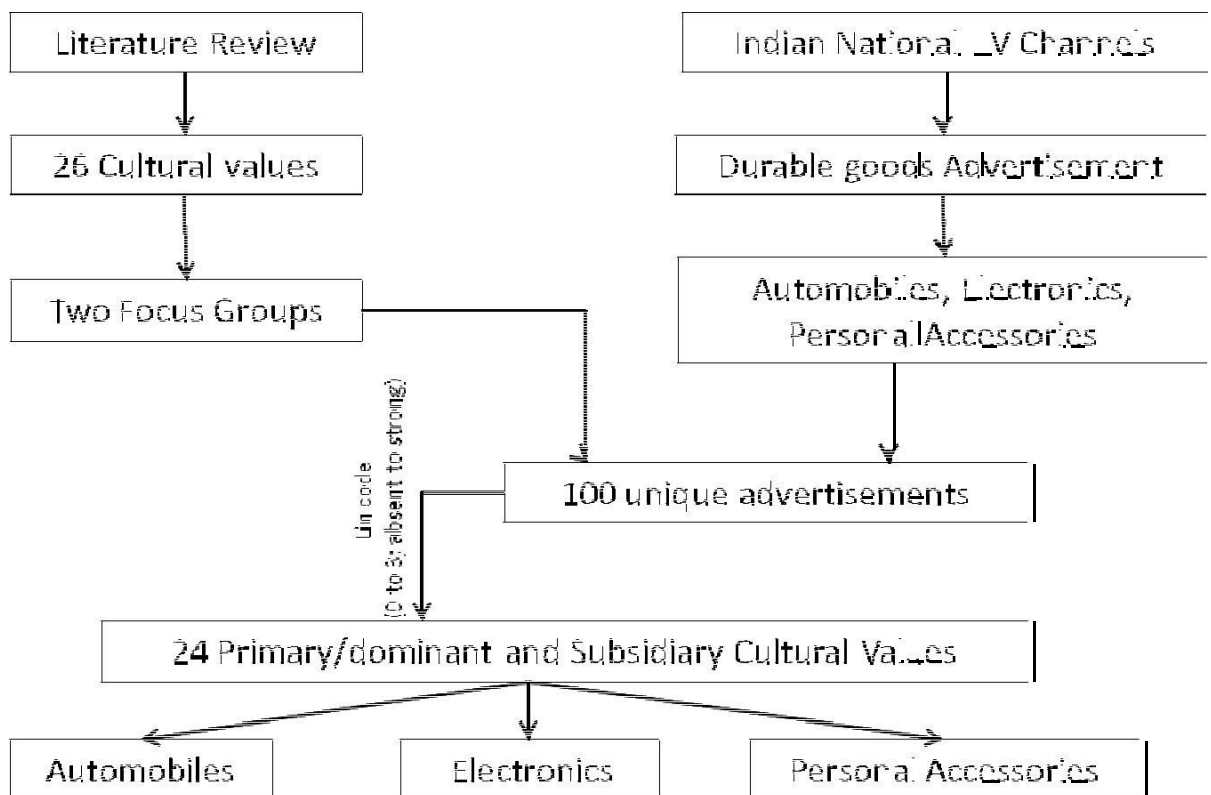


Figure 1. Schematic representation of methodology followed for the present study.

Table 1. Coding scale adopted from Lin (2001).

Scale	Interpretation
0	Absent (Cultural value not present)
1	Weak (Cultural value expressed through subtle and indirect symbols as secondary or subsidiary theme)
2	Moderate (Cultural value expressed directly though still not the dominating theme)
3	Strong (Cultural value expressed strongly and as a dominant theme)

of 'economy' ranked at 14% with 7.7% of the times 'economy' being coded as a dominating value. Castree (2004) noted that "economy plays an important role in shaping the material culture" and economic liberalization of India has fueled the drift of Indians towards a consumerist and materialistic life style.

According to Sengupta and Frith (1997), 'tradition' was seen as a dominating value in Indian origin based advertisements. Traditional 'expression symbols' like *sindoor*, (which is a symbol of marital status of women in India) have been identified in Indian advertisements in other studies as well (Banerjee, 2008; Chaudhari, 2009). However, Sen Gupta and De (2007) conducted a longitudinal study based on content analysis of Indian advertisements targeted at urban middle class Bengalis

and found that traditionalism had waned, and modernism and westernization had increased its influence on Bengali Indians. Overall, the presence of 'modernism' with this study was 7.4% and in only 1.7% of the times it was ranked as a dominant value (Table 2). Hence this study does not support the belief that traditional value symbols are getting replaced with symbols of modernism in Indian advertisements.

Although 'youth' did not establish itself in advertisements as 'strong' or dominating cultural value, its overall presence as supporting or subsidiary value was seen to be significant (24.6%). This shows that 'youth' is not used as a dominating cultural value theme but is considered important as a supporting or background theme in the durable goods advertisements. 'Safety' (2.7%), 'nature'

Table 2. Percent representation of cultural values under the categories of the scale.

Cultural values	Scale				Total (%)
	Absent (%)	Weak (%)	Moderate (%)	Strong (%)	
Adventure	91.1	3.8	2.1	3	100
Collectivism	87.8	7.4	3.1	1.7	100
Competition	96.4	1.4	0.6	1.6	100
Convenience	87.9	4.3	2.7	5.1	100
Economy	86	4.5	1.8	7.7	100
Enjoyment	70.6	13.8	6.4	9.2	100
Family	67.7	14.5	6.4	11.4	100
Health	94.7	1.2	0.5	3.6	100
Technology	48.2	18.8	15	18	100
Individualism	93.1	1.1	1.2	4.6	100
Modernism	92.6	5	0.7	1.7	100
Nature	96.5	2.2	0.9	0.4	100
Ornamental	94.7	1.6	1.2	2.5	100
Quality	82.1	10.5	3.2	4.2	100
Respect for elderly	90.8	3.2	1.6	4.4	100
Safety	97.3	1.2	0	1.5	100
Sexuality	90.3	2.7	1.2	5.8	100
Status	89.9	4.4	1.9	3.8	100
Tradition	88.3	3.7	1.1	6.9	100
Uniqueness	81.8	9.1	2.5	6.6	100
Wealth	94.7	2.2	1.1	2	100
Wisdom	89.7	6.3	1.7	2.3	100
Work	95.2	2.2	0.3	2.3	100
Youth	75.4	14	5.1	5.5	100

(3.5%), 'competition' (3.6%), 'work' (4.8%) and 'health' (5.3%), had least overall presence either as dominant or subsidiary theme in the Indian advertisements (Table 2).

Presence of 'individualism' was coded as 'strong' 46 times (4.6%) as compared to 'collectivism' which was coded 'strong' only 1.7% of the times (Table 2). India has always been termed as a collectivist nation (Hofstede, 1980), but there appears to be a sudden surge of dominant individualistic values in the Indian advertisements. This change is reiterated in the study by Sen Gupta and De (2007) which states that "focus was rarely on individual consumer" in Indian advertisements earlier, but will become "focus of advertisers' consideration in the years to come". On the other hand, though 'collectivism' appears fewer in advertisements as a dominant value, the overall presence of 'collectivism' (12.2%) was seen to be higher than 'individualism' (6.9%) indicating that 'collectivism' is used more as a supporting value. Sinha et al. (2002) established that Indians are collectivists or show "mixed collectivism and individualism", but rarely show purely individualistic behavior and patterns. 'Individualism' highlighting itself as a more dominating theme than 'collectivism' and 'collectivism' representing a

wider presence than 'individualism' perhaps underline the "mixed collectivism and individualism" in the Indian advertisements.

'Convenience' had an overall presence of 12.1% in the advertisements with 5.1% of the times appearing in the dominant form. Khairullah and Khairullah (2003) found that "convenience" value appeared less in the Indian advertisements compared to U.S. advertisements but stated that with growing middle class and growing income, the "convenience" value is going to be more important for India in the future.

It was interesting to see 'sexuality' coded as a dominant value for 5.8% of the times. This is not a very high percentage but is significant since India is known to be a traditional country and sexual issues are considered to be a taboo in the society. As noted by Nelson and Paek (2005) in their study of sexual advertising content in transnational women's magazine, the magazine usually has sexual identity by depicting a woman with 'remarkable hair' and 'not too much clothing' however, the sexual content for India is toned down. Although Karan (2003) noted that in Indian magazines western women models were portrayed as 'sex kitten/sensual'

Table 3. Dominant cultural values within product categories, based on their percentage presence in 100 advertisements.

Cultural values	Product categories			Chi-sq	df	Sig.
	Automobiles (% presence)	Electronics (% presence)	Personal accessories (% presence)			
Adventure	16	0.2	8	67.66	2	0.000*
Collectivism	11.6	13.2	11	0.544	2	0.762
Competition	6	1.5	0	17.44	2	0.000*
Convenience	14.2	12.5	0	15.62	2	0.000*
Economy	21.8	7.8	0	53.65	2	0.000*
Enjoyment	33.8	26.8	18	14.54	2	0.000*
Family	23.2	38.8	52	51.26	2	0.000*
Health	0	13.2	0	83.95	2	0.000*
Technology	50.6	65.2	4	122.9	2	0.000*
Individualism	7.4	5.8	9	1.603	2	0.449
Modernism	9.4	6.5	1	9.112	2	0.011
Nature	4.8	2.8	0	6.924	2	0.031
Ornamental	0.6	0.2	49	424.9	2	0.000*
Quality	22.4	13.5	13	11.76	2	0.003*
Respect for elderly	9.6	5	24	36.97	2	0.000*
Safety	3.8	2.5	0	4.798	2	0.091
Sexuality	8.4	9.2	18	9.858	2	0.007*
Status	16	4	5	39.75	2	0.000*
Tradition	11	7.8	31	42.11	2	0.000*
Uniqueness	26.8	11	4	54.75	2	0.000*
Wealth	8	0.2	12	36.09	2	0.000*
Wisdom	10.6	11	6	2.667	2	0.264
Work	4.8	3	12	14.81	2	0.001*
Youth	31.8	18	15	34.24	2	0.000*

* Significant at 99% confidence interval.

forms, in this study, Indian actresses were also seen representing brands in the sensual manner leading to the significant presence of the value in the dominant form.

Fam and Grohs (2007) stated that 'respect for elderly' is important for Indians and advertising programs showing children disobeying their parents are disliked. However, 'respect for elderly' was coded as dominant value for only 4.4% of the times. "Indian society is not hardcore competitive" (Banerjee, 2008) and quite expectedly 'competition' value was attributed with 'strong' coding for only 1.6% and its overall presence including subsidiary themes was 3.6%. Similarly, 'health' value was seen to have few attributions as a dominant theme (3.6%). Khairullah and Khairullah (2003) also found in their study that 'health' value had higher frequency of appearance in U.S. advertisements than in Indian advertisements.

Dominant cultural values in product categories

Chi-square tests established significant difference in the

cultural value presence in the dominant form with respect to the three product categories, that is, automobiles, electronics and personal accessories (Table 3). Out of the 24 cultural values that were attributed against each advertisement, 18 cultural values significantly differed in their percentage presence based on the product category advertised (Table 3). For the present day youth automobiles provide 'adventure', 'enjoyment' and 'quality' at a good mileage and thus these values had significantly higher presence in automobiles' advertisement. Also most of the automobiles tend to target their product as 'convenience' and 'quality' oriented, yet 'economic' in terms of mileage. An automobile is often seen as a status symbol representing 'wealth' of a family, and hence 'wealth' is represented significantly higher in automobiles' advertisement. Both 'technology' and 'convenience' were seen to be dominant in the Indian advertisement for automobiles and electronics (Table 3). Thus, the findings of this study agree with the findings of Srikanth (1991) in which the dominant values for gadgets were seen to be 'hightech' and 'convenience'. 'Health' appeared only in

electronic items, since these products depicted safe drinking water, purified air and clean clothes. It is known that the advertisements connoting family values, customs, bonding and emotions are accepted readily (Khare, 2011) and thus for all the three product categories, 'family', 'tradition' and 'respect for elderly' had high presence, but these values were significantly higher in the 'personal accessories' category, depicting closer association with these values. It is noteworthy to mention that ornamental value had a significantly higher presence in 'personal accessories', since this category of products are associated with enhancing one's physical appearance.

Conclusion

Impact of India's economic liberalization was seen in the form of cultural value themes that were used in the advertisements of durable goods. Globalization and liberalization of Indian economy has led to several cultural and lifestyle changes (Sen and De, 2007) along with the change in organizational and work culture of Indians (Biswas, 2009). These changes transformed the "fiscal" mindset and culture of Indians, which gets reflected in the Indian advertisements pre and post liberalization (Barthwal and Gupta, 2012; Mukherji, 1999; Sengupta and Pashupati, 1996).

Technology, family, enjoyment, economy and tradition were found to be the dominant cultural values, while collectivism, modernism, quality, uniqueness, wisdom and youth were found to be the subsidiary values. However, dominance of 'technology' as both primary and secondary value in the durable goods advertisements was not a surprise as it is most relevant in the durable goods category. Moreover, India is experiencing a technological revolution in automobile and electronics industry and the dominance of 'technology' is seen more in these two durable goods categories as compared to personal accessories. High attribution of 'enjoyment' value indicates that Indians relish the variety and choice of brands of product features that is made available to them as a result of globalization. Though 'modernism' and 'technology' has been surfacing in the Indian advertisements rapidly, the significance of 'traditional' value was not particularly seen to wane in this study. Research indicates that globalization has resulted in local customs coexisting with imported culture vividly expressed as the "melting pot" metaphor (Barthwal and Gupta, 2012; Cheng, 1994; Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996; Lin, 2001; Robertson, 1995) thus modifying the indigenous cultures with time (Lin, 2001; Tung, 2007) and the same can be said for India which is known for a very rich heritage and has seen some age-old traditions still continuing as part of Indian culture even in this age of modernism and technology. Thus what Cheng (1998) expresses with regard to China, that is, "Chinese

advertising is not a matter of more Chinese or more Western" but a blend of Eastern and Western values holds true for Indian advertising as well.

Values like 'youth', 'individualism' and 'sexuality' were seen to have greater presence in the durable advertisements included for this study. According to Mueller (2008), cultural values of young people are changing and it is yet to be understood how future generations will perceive advertising messages. India seems to be undergoing the same change and advertisers need to be receptive to these changes in order to design advertisements as per contemporary culture of the country.

Most of the studies on cultural value identification have studied cross-cultural advertisements, through the use of trained coders, however the present study has applied mixed methodology to identify dominant cultural values in TV advertisement on the basis of expression symbols. The study used two groups of coders different in age, qualification and professional experience to identify dominant and subsidiary cultural values in advertisements. The discussions helped participant coders to brainstorm on interpretation of expression symbols which established the individual differences in establishing cultural values from 'expression symbols' in the advertisements. Nevertheless, the coding of cultural values to measure their strength of appearance ensured the natural process cognition and interpretation that a consumer goes through during viewing advertisements and not as trained coders would. Therefore, the scope of this study was beyond identification of dominant cultural values as the study identified the cultural themes appearing in the Indian durable goods advertisements in the dominant and subsidiary forms. Presence of more than one cultural value in an advertisement also supports the theory of primary and subsidiary values used by Srikandath (1991) or dominant and secondary values used by Mueller (1992).

Cultural amalgamation as a result of 'melting pot' (explained earlier in the foregoing) was also seen to be one of the reasons for coexistence of cultural values particularly if they are respectively established to be more dominant in Eastern and Western cultures. For instance, 'family' and 'tradition' values (more dominant in East) were seen to be represented along with 'technology' and 'modernism' (more dominant in West) in the same advertisements which indicated amalgamation of Indian traditions with modern technological changes. However, it is recommended that advertisers practice judiciousness in using cultural values that align well together; in the same advertisements, a particular cultural value needs to be highlighted as a dominant or 'gestalt' cultural value. Using 'family', 'tradition', and 'technology' together may dilute the emphasis on product design or scientific explanations in case it needs to be pronounced as a 'gestalt' message. Indians are religious, traditional and

love of their families; though these values are still liked, they can distract an Indian consumer who also value technologically advanced products. Hence amalgamation of non-aligned values with the indigenous culture of India as a result of 'melting pot' may present new challenges for the advertisers to communicate the intended 'gestalt' message.

This study focused on dominant and subsidiary cultural values in the durable goods advertisements of India coded by two groups that were different in age, qualification and work experience, and marital status. It would be interesting to conduct content analysis of Indian advertisements using participant coders of different religions and different regions of India. This would help researchers and advertising practitioners in understanding Indian culture more comprehensively and would enable them to evaluate the implementation of advertisement localization strategy in India more effectively.

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