

The Uncommon Sense of Advertising – Understanding Contemporary Advertising Appeals in Press of Top Advertisers in India

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This paper reviews the advertising appeals of India's top advertisers and relates them to the nature of products advertised. The role of advertising in formulating culture is reviewed with special emphasis on Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The findings of a content study of 200 advertisements, using Pollay's 42 advertising appeals, are reported. The study covers both high involvement and low involvement products where decision making is rational or emotional. The appeals used in each element of advertising were classified using Pollay's 42 advertising appeals. By relating these finding to the cultural dimensions developed by Hofstede, the paper presents a framework that can help advertisers to determine the role that both culture and advertising appeals play in the effectiveness of advertising campaigns.

Key Words: cultural dimensions, advertising appeals, high involvement products, low involvement products, emotional, rational

Introduction

Advertising is a key element in the promotional mix. Effective advertising works towards fulfilling the marketing or corporate objectives set by an organization. Creative advertising uses many forms of advertising appeals that consumers respond to. These appeals are conveyed in the advertising through various forms of conventional media such as Print, Television, Radio, the Internet and various forms of unconventional media such as promotional events, van-operations and fairs, to name a few. This paper covers the medium of newspapers and magazines (termed as Press), and is a content study of Press advertising of top advertisers in India. Press advertising in India accounts for an estimated 47% of total advertising budgets (FICCI-KPMG Media and Entertainment Industry Report, 2011) and accounts for the largest share of advertising budgets in the country. Every major city in India has a combination of English and Regional language newspapers and magazines. Since English is one of the national languages in India, and is the common language for business in India, the present study was restricted to English publications.

Culture is a term that is often used loosely – a person is seen as uncultured when not behaving in a particular manner. Culture is reflected in the way groups of people live, in language, art and music, and in their value and belief systems. According to Hofstede (1980), culture is “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another”. Culture determines the identity of a human group. Hofstede distinguishes ‘values’ as individual and ‘cultures’ as societies.

Objectives

The objectives of this content study are :

1. To identify the key appeals being used in Indian Press advertising.
2. To assess the appeals that dominate different product categories based on the products having high involvement and low involvement in consumer decision-making, and purchases that are done on rational and emotional buying behavior, and associate this with earlier studies of Hofstede's Cultural dimensions.
3. To develop a framework that reinforces the role of cultural appeals in creating effective advertising.

Indian culture is reflected in Indian advertising, where an ideal world tends to be portrayed through depicting a loving husband, wife, mother and child, success, love, achievement, fantasy, family unity and other consumer aspirations. The content study will examine the appeals used to assess the cultural aspects of such appeals. The findings of the content study will give directions for further research in this area, so that advertisers can determine the kinds of appeals that would be effective for each product category. This will help advertisers make better decisions concerning advertising appeals that work in the market place.

Scope of Study

The study synthesizes findings and draws lessons regarding various cultural stimuli that are used in Indian English Press advertising. The advertising selected are from leading national magazines and newspapers. The study integrates findings from a review of secondary research, the views of advertising professional experts and the content study of the 200 press advertising selected in the categories given below. 50 ads of top advertisers were selected in each category.

Table 1

Types of Advertisements Selected

Product Categories/ Consumer Decision Making	High Involvement Products	Low Involvement Products
Rational	High Involvement Rational ads (HIR)	Low Involvement Rational ads (LIR)
Emotional	High Involvement Emotional ads (HIE)	Low Involvement Emotional ads (LIE)

Involvement theory research led to the notion that a consumer's level of involvement depends upon the degree of personal relevance that a product holds for that consumer. Laurent and Kapferer (1985) have indicated that consumers behave differently towards products depending on their levels of involvement. Kotler et al, (1991, pp 426-427) define emotional appeal as an: "attempt to stir up either negative or positive emotions that can motivate purchase and rational appeal as that which

“relate to the audience’s self-interest” and produce desired benefits. Four types of product advertising categories, of different involvement emerge :

High involvement /rational

This category includes expensive purchases, for example, financial services, purchase of a home or car or major appliances and electronics. Products of this kind usually require advertising which is copy driven with clear explanations of features and benefits.

High involvement /emotional

For consumers, this includes jewelry, weddings, and holiday travel plans. In India, the marriage market like matrimonial advertising for the selection of a husband or wife will also fall into this group. Advertising in this category tends to focus on visual, music and emotional appeals.

Low involvement/rational

Low involvement products of this kind are bought out of habit or with very routing decision making processes that require only minimal amounts of rationalization. These include FMCG products that are purchased spontaneously like shampoos and detergents. Advertising plays an important role in terms of positioning and loyalty building.

Low involvement /emotional

These products are purchased on an impulse and offer the benefit of emotional or sensory gratification. Soft drinks, sweets, an entertaining magazine, or a birthday card – all products purchased spontaneously.

The advertising challenge is to build the differentiation in imagery and create strong brand positioning and focused communications.

What are the Dimensions of Culture in Indian Advertising?

Advertising reflects the lifestyle, popular culture and aspirations of the consumer, while communicating the value proposition of the product. The Indian consumer’s culture is influenced by many factors, including diversity in religion, geographic location, social class, family structure, occupation and economic status. Taking Hofstede’s cultural dimensions as a basis, this study will assess the cultural stimuli used in Indian advertising, as explained below.

The first cultural dimension, Low versus High Power Distance (PDI), may be observed in the advertising. Do the advertising appeals used reflect the unequal distribution of power between less powerful members and more powerful members in the country? How autocratic and paternalistic are the creative treatments in the advertising, vis-à-vis treatments being consultative and democratic. The former would be expected, though Indian families are going through major transitions including the changing role of patriarchy.

The second cultural dimension is Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV). Though Indian culture lays great emphasis on family, village and community, Hofstede’s research did rate India as moderate on Individualism. Advertising creates aspirations. Are Indian aspirations that are projected in Press advertising promoting a sense of individualism or collectivism?

The third cultural dimension, Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS) is reinforced by projecting aspirations with values like success, money, assertiveness, competitive and materialistic. Feminine qualities are projected as being modest, nurturing and caring. Success is depicted with symbols like a child bringing home a trophy or getting a good job. Does advertising project the male as macho, adventurous and as the economic provider of the family – while women are projected as nurturing, gentle, kind, loving and focused on being a wife or a mother?

The fourth cultural dimension, Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) may be assessed when Indian icons are depicted as being uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. The ability of Indians to improvise and to save has been much written about. Is this reflected in the advertising?

The Long-Term versus Short-term orientation as a cultural dimension was added to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, keeping in mind Asian markets. Does Indian advertising project s respect for tradition, fulfilling of social obligations, and the quality of thrift and perseverance ? This dimension will not be covered in this report because it was not reflected in the earlier research (which is the basis of this paper) undertaken by Albers-Miller et al (1996) correlating advertising appeals with Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

With a culture that goes beyond 5000 years, and is known on one hand for its mysticism, spirituality, diversity, and on the other for its history of invasions, trade, democracy and IT boom, it is a challenge to go beyond the tip of the ice berg in dealing with this subject through a content study.

Literature Review

Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede (1980) identified the dimensions of culture across different countries and created a basis for much research that followed. Hofstede's study also found that the perceptions and behavior of people in collectivist cultures are different from the perceptions and behavior of people in individualistic cultures. In Hoppe's(2004) interview with Hofstede, he appreciated the applications of 'Culture's Consequences' to various phenomena in societies, such as language structure, in savings rates, consumer behavior, in corporate governance, in medical practice and other fields. While the cultural dimensions defined by Hofstede are comprehensive, one must remember that these were developed in an organizational context, and not social or individual. Yet it forms an interesting base for so much research not only in the field of organizational behavior, but also in advertising. India has a score of 48, 40, 77 and 56 for the dimensions of Individualism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance and Masculinity (vis-à-vis the USA scores of 91, 46, 40 and 62).

Belch and Belch (2003) have reinforced how advertising has a major impact on society, because ads help in establishing norms in a society, and the social and ethical responsibility of advertisers – be it ad agencies or the marketing departments of organizations. *Advertising Age* columnist Bob Garfield (2003) coined words such as "advertiscacies" and "shockvertising" where he gave his opinion of campaigns he considered were unethical, such as Benetton's social issues campaign, political advertising and sexism. Other ethical issues in advertising are 'puffery,' targeting children and teens, sex appeal and unfair manipulation. However counter to this is that consumers are intelligent and are able to filter commercial information.

Culture is also conveyed in advertising through the use of symbols and logos. Watson (1997) noted that McDonald's golden arches are viewed as symbolizing American culture, and associations of Individualism. Tavassoli et al (2003) and Wharton (2000) have researched that language is also an important carrier of culture associated with an independent self. Culture is not only about beliefs,

values and norms of a social group, but also provides individuals with an interpretive frame to construct meanings and form social impressions and judgements.

Drumwright and Murphy (2004) interviewed industry and academic leaders to study their perspectives on the current state of advertising ethics. The ethics of the advertising was distinguished in the context of the advertising message from the ethics of the advertising agency business. Pallab, Roy and Mukhopadhyay (2006) studied how a person's interpretation of ethics is also influenced by the cultural background. Culture therefore affects what is perceived as right or wrong. The differences in interpretation of ethics across cultures was studied and associated with Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

Bing (2004) has given examples of practical applications of Hofstede's dimensions in consulting and business practices, with special reference to the areas of employee orientation, leadership training and development, cross border Mergers and Acquisitions, development of global competencies and the impact of culture on change strategy. Orr and Hauser (2008) recommended that Hofstede's cross-cultural dimensions need to be redefined within contemporary cross-cultural and business environments.

Triandis (2004) has noted that individuals in societies rated high on Individualism or Collectivism, can think in an 'idiocentric' manner (similar to those in individualistic cultures) or 'allocentric' (like those in a collectivist culture).

Singh (2004) proposed a three dimensional framework, where culture is analysed at three levels : perceptual, behavioral and symbolic, to study and analyze culture in totality and get a meaning over time. Phillips and McQuarrie (2009) found that the use of figurative metaphors in advertising results in modifying consumer beliefs. The study recommends to advertisers to develop metaphors that are incongruous and unique, in order to bring about desirable levels of persuasion and belief.

Guzman and Paswan, 2006, reinforced how brands are symbols in popular culture, and studied how in emerging markets, cultural roots and lifestyle (for example the popularity of Bollywood, Indian weddings) play an important role in the building of brand image.

Singh, Srinivasan, Sista and Parashar, 2008 made a case for multiple national cultures in India. Based on a cluster analysis, they identified 10 different clusters of states similar in culture. The study argues for five antecedents to culture viz., Social Identity (mass public culture, language, religion, literacy, sex ratio and territorial mobility for members),historical context (myths, historical memory, historical territory or homeland, colonization, external influences), economic parameters, institutional factors and geography.

Zhang, 2009 undertook a study of the Chinese Generation X (young adults, aged 18 to 35) to study the impact that advertising plays to promote more Individualistic values (compared to Collective values that would normally be associated with China). Zhang researched that advertising that endorsed either individualistic or collective values can function as cultural cues embedded in the social context. GenX members in China were researched to find that because of being bicultural (with western influences) they incorporate both individualistic and collective frames

Mooij and Hofstede (2010) have pointed out that many of Hofstede's dimensions when applied to global branding and advertising strategy and research must take into consideration that it is not easy to recognize values in advertising as advertising appeals may reflect both the desired and desirable. In individualistic cultures, advertising must persuade target consumers, whereas in collectivistic cultures, the focus must be on relationship building between buyer and seller. The latter appeals focus on in-group benefits, family and harmony, whereas the former on individual benefits, preferences and personal success and independence. Lam, Lee, and Mizerski, 2009 applied

Hofstede's four cultural dimensions on Word of Mouth behavior and found that marketers should monitor the cultural values of their markets to bring about appropriate Word of Mouth brand communication strategies. Indeed, Hofstede's Cultural dimensions are used extensively for cross cultural research of advertising appeals.

Advertising Appeals

Pollay (1983) identified a comprehensive list of 42 advertising appeals. These appeals have been used for many further studies, especially on cross cultural aspects of advertising. Pollay described advertising as a 'carrier of cultural values' and as a "distorted mirror." He proposed a set of 42 appeals relevant to advertising viz., adventure, affiliation, casual, cheap, community, convenient, dear, distinctive, durable, effective, enjoyment, family, frail, freedom, healthy, humility, independence, magic, maturity, modern, modest, morality, natural, neat, nurturance, ornamental, plain, popular, productivity, relaxation, safety, security, sexuality, status, succorance, tamed, technological, traditional, untamed, vain, wisdom, youth. Pollay (1986) further assessed that advertising appeals used causes conformity, social competitiveness, envy, false pride, anxieties, insecurities, disrespect for age, experience, tradition and history, reduced family authority and sexual pre-occupation. Advertising therefore becomes a "mirror" that reflects the mosaic cultural values and behaviours of consumers.

Pollay et al (1990) studied Print advertising between 1900 to 1980 and Television commercials between 1970 to 1980 and found that the key cultural value manifested was 'Practical', connoting the advertising appeals, effective, durable and convenient. The study reinforced that content studies as a research methodology can be used to assess cultural values reflected in advertising.

Albers-Miller et al.(1996) designed a study that highlighted how systematic differences in advertising content mirror predictable differences in the culture across countries themselves. Advertising appeals vary predictably across countries and there is an association with a country's work culture to a wide range of appeals employed in the country's advertising in business publications. The study looked at the relationship of Pollay's 42 appeals with Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and narrowed the appeals to 30 appeals. The advertising appeals of Independence, Distinctive and Self-Respect were positively co-related with the cultural dimension of Individualism while Popular, Affiliation, Family, Succorance and Community were negatively correlated. For the cultural dimension of Power Distance, the appeals that were positively correlated were Ornamental, Vain, Dear and Status, while Cheap, Humility, Nurturance and Plain were negatively correlated. The Cultural Dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance was positively correlated with Safety, Tamed and Durable, and negatively with Adventure, Untamed, Magic, Youth and Casual. With the Masculinity Index, Effective, Convenient and Productivity were positively correlated, while Natural, Frail and Modest were negatively correlated. The research indicates how certain appeals are related with Hofstede's Cultural dimensions

Klaus Krippendorff (2004) defined content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. Gerbner, 1994, looked at content analysis for mass media in terms of : Frequency with which a system's components occur, or 'what is'. Further, the order of priorities or 'what is important'. The affective qualities or 'what is right'and the proximal or logical associations between components of 'what is related to what'.

Research Methodology

Content study was undertaken with the following process.

1. Press Advertising was selected from three published lists viz., the AdEx India Analysis 2010 & 2011 , Pitch Media Brandometer survey, 2010 and Power Brands 2010-2011 published by Planman Media. Press Ads belonged to the four categories mentioned:

High Involvement Emotional- This included expensive purchases which tends to focus on visual , music and emotional appeals such as jewelry , weddings and holidays travel plans.

High Involvement Rational- This included expensive purchases which are copy driven with clear explanations of features and benefits like- purchase of home or car, bank loans and other financial services.

Low Involvement Emotional- This included product such as soft drinks, sweets, birthday cards involving low cost and gratify emotions.

Low Involvement Rational- These included products involving very low cost and are purchased spontaneously such as Fast Moving Consumer Goods like toiletries, personal products etc..

2. Two experts in from the advertising profession looked at each ad to see the key appeals being used in the advertisements.
3. 6 pairs of coders were administered the 200 press ads based on the four types of product categories and involvement.
4. Six pairs of coders coded the different elements of the advertisement viz : headline, sub headline, visual, sub visual, baseline, body copy, flash, logo and others against the 42 appeals developed by Pollay. Coders were asked to rate the elements from 1 to 5. Where 1- very weak, 2- weak, 3- Average 4- strong, 5- very strong (very weak to very strong) against the appeals they find to be most appropriate. The coders were provided with the set of ads, list of Pollay's 42 advertising appeals with their description and the chart sheet on which they had to rate the elements.
5. The professional experts looked at each ad and gave a weight age to each element of the advertisement.
6. The average of each element for all six coders was calculated and then the percentage of certain percent marked against each element on the average was computed. Thereafter the computed percentage in each element was summed to get the final weight-age of each appeal in an ad. This way all 200 ads with all six coders were analyzed and computed. This computed data was then entered into the SPSS Statistical tool for further Statistical Analysis using non parametric tests (example, chi square, binomial, k-related samples).

Findings

The two professional experts studied 50 ads each belonging the High Involvement Rational (HIR), High Involvement Emotional (HIE), Low Involvement Rational (LIR) and Low Involvement Emotional(LIE) categories. The frequency of key cultural stimuli was observed for each ad, and percentage indicated, in the table given below

Table 2
Frequency of Key Cultural Stimuli for Indian Press Advertising

Cultural Stimulus	HIR	HIE	LIR	LIE	Total	%
Sari /Indian clothes	2	4	1	1	8	4
Environment	2	1			3	2
Celebrity -Profession	1			1	2	1
Bollywood	2	9	8	5	24	12
Cultural Stimulus	HIR	HIE	LIR	LIE	Total	%
Hinglish	1	1	2	8	12	6
Modern Male	5	11	4	5	25	13
Wild Life	2				2	1
Style & Western living	5	3	1	6	15	7.5
Romance	2	5	2	1	10	5
Technology	16	3	1		20	10
Modern Female	8	13	15	8	44	22
Friends	3	3	1	2	9	4.5
Family	9	4	9	10	32	16
Vacation	7	7			14	7
Value for money	10	4	23	14	51	25.5
Humor		1			1	0.5
Hindu symbols	2	1			3	2
Patriarchy	2		1		3	2
Indian patriotism	2	2	1	2	7	3.5
Festive			1		1	0.5

Note: HIR refers to High Involvement Rational product advertising, HIE is high involvement Emotional. LIR and LIE refer to Low Involvement and Emotional respectively.

The stimuli used in advertising, are the appeals used and become the creative elements in the advertising. For example, when advertisement have models dressed in traditional Indian clothing like the sari, one may observe that traditional appeals are being used in the advertisements. The Indian film industry popularly known as ‘Bollywood’ also has celebrities that become icons for consumers. These are commonly used in advertising. Since both Hindi and English are popular languages in India, the fusion of both languages together in a word or sentence is common, and is termed as ‘Hinglish’. India is a country with a per capita income as low as \$1400. Value for money or affordability also becomes a stimuli that advertisers use to persuade consumers. Clothes, language and attitude towards spending all reflect culture. Other aspects include concern for the environment, portrayal of the male and female models as modern and westernized, western living, wild life, vacations, depiction of friends, family, romance and technology, all become cultural stimuli in advertising.

Value for Money

The appeal that is used widely is price value and affordability. Indian consumers are very price sensitive, primarily because of low disposable incomes. Over 25% of the ads used this appeal.

Communicating the appeal of ‘value’ plays an important role across product types, though plays an even more important role in rational products – especially when they are low involvement products.

A traditional society

India is known for its highly traditional culture, where communities live according to the rules set by generations. For example, even today, amongst many communities, marriages are arranged, and dating per se is not encouraged. Families would rather use marriage portals and arrange marriages to ensure similarity of community and rituals. While the term ‘caste’ as a concept is seen professionally, as an ugly word, marriages are usually profiled on caste and community. However, within these behavioral patterns, exists an aspiration to be modern and cosmopolitan in outlook and is the image which advertising in India, tends to depict consumers as.

A Secular culture

With India being ruled by foreigners since almost 1000 years, and Hinduism, the major religion in India being known to be tolerant of other religions, India is a secular nation with over 15% of its citizens belonging to Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism and other religions. Indians are accustomed to have a public holiday for Christmas, Id, the Sikh saint, Guru Nanak’s birthday besides for Diwali, the major festival in India. Media that allows for segmentation (like a Regional Television channel or a religious channel) does have advertising with ethnic cues. Along with this are festivals in every state, usually based on the lunar calendar and with origins in Hinduism. However, such festivals, like Onam in Kerala, get celebrated by all communities, though having Hindu roots.

Only 2% of the advertising selected had the use of any direct religious (ie Hindu) cues. Festive ads were not reflected in this sample, but however appears, especially with the visual of the traditional lamp.

Since the religion that is practiced by the majority of Indians is Hinduism, the influence of the rituals of Hinduism become a strong cultural force, influencing Indian markets and the visual impact of advertising. Hindu festivals like Diwali and Dussera become important. Symbols like the marriage chain (‘mangalsutra’ – similar to the concept of wedding bands), red cosmetic powder on the parting line of a married woman’s hair, dot on the forehead (bindi), all symbolize a married woman. Advertising uses these appeals. A husband applying red powder on his wife’s parting of hair, symbolizing protection – a symbol used smartly by ICICI prudential life insurance, with ‘we cover you at every step’.

Traditional Attire

Only 4% of the ads had models using Indian style of dressing like the sari for women, or the traditional Indian male attire. This is really not surprising, since western clothing is becoming more popular in India, especially in the metros. Western clothing seems to represent more modern clothing, and since advertising tends to appeal to the aspirations of consumers, the ads selected, tended to have the models dressed in western clothing. Most of the ads depicted the male or female models as modern (13% and 22%).

In the advertising that was researched, only 4% of the ads, had the models dressed in Indian traditional attire. While ‘romance’ is a common appeal in most markets, only 5% of the advertising selected used this appeal. That is because, being a traditional society, public demonstration of romance amongst young couples, is not common.

A ‘Bollywood’ culture

India is the world’s largest producer of feature films. ‘Bollywood’ movies are not only popular amongst Indians living in India and abroad, they are becoming well known by people all over the world. The music and dance depicted in Indian movies have become part of Indian festivities at weddings and family functions. Film celebrities have high fan following and are commonly used in Indian advertising. Humans have a “prestige bias” (Heine, Steve J, 2008) that make them imitate those they view as prestigious. 12% of the advertisements researched had used Bollywood celebrities. Film Celebrities depicted are often not what the average Indian consumer is like – celebrities are usually fair in complexion, most Indians are shades of brown, lifestyle depicted (like polo, sailing, mountain climbing) are often not understood by many and overall, the western looks depicted in the ads are not usually what most Indians look like. However, the Bollywood world of magic is a means of escapism from relatively difficult living conditions, and plays a key role in making consumers feel that this is a culture which they aspire towards.

Language

India is a country with many languages. Advertising is usually created in English or Hindi, or in the regional language where the advertisement is produced, and then translated in 12 to 16 languages and sometimes in dialects (especially in rural communications). When ‘Hinglish’ is used in advertisements, there tends to be a greater local flavor in the English communications, and the message becomes more appealing. No wonder, 12% of the researched advertisements used ‘hinglish’ in the text.

Role of family

The concept of family in India is not limited to the nuclear family, but includes uncles, aunts, cousins and the extended family. The term ‘country cousin’ is specially relevant in Indian villages, where being a member of a village gives a sense of being related. The joint family is popularly depicted in Indian cinema and television to depict the melodrama of members all living together under one roof. Parents are given importance in Indian culture. Mastercard credit card had a famous advertisement in their global ‘Priceless’ campaign of a son gifting a vacation to parents. Raymond’s suiting shows a mother stressed because of her grown up son getting a job abroad, but happy that her son has organized her travel papers to go with him. This would mean a ‘Mama’s boy’ in many cultures, but not in India – he becomes a complete man - part of Raymond’s very famous ‘Complete man’ advertising campaign that has run for over decades. Family therefore is an important appeal in Indian advertising, and appeared in 16% of the advertisements reviewed.

Patriarchy

With joint families still being an important characteristic in Indian society, the advertisements were looked at in terms of whether containing any patriarchal elements showing male domination. Only 2% of the advertisements showed any characteristics of patriarchy. This may be due to the notion that it is more fashionable to project a society that is male enlightened than male dominated, and therefore advertising projects a perfect picture.

Technology as culture

With the boom in Information Technology and in mobile phone usage, the touch of technology plays a key role in Indian living. Advertisements of high technology products, like computers and mobile phones, tend to visually depict product details. Hence the appeal of technology was used in advertisements especially in high involvement rational products. Indeed, the IT software success of

India, the mobile phone going to the bottom of the pyramid, all have added a dimension of technology to culture in India.

Patriotism

This appeal also appeared in only 7(3.5%) of the advertisements. India's political ideology is one of a democracy, where there is (popularly referred to as) 'unity in diversity'.

The findings indicated that the key appeals that are being used are value for money (25.5%) and modern female (22%). At the next level is the use of 'family' (16%) as an appeal, and then the use of the modern male (13%) and Bollywood celebrities (12%). For each product cell, the following appeals dominate:

High involvement / Rational : Technology and Value.

High involvement / Emotional : Modern male or female and use of celebrities from Bollywood.

Low involvement / Rational : Value, Modern Female and Male and celebrities from Bollywood.

Low involvement / Emotional : Value, Friends, modern female, use of 'Hinglish'.

Advertising in Press appeals to aspirations of Indian consumers to be modern in outlook, look modern and the stimuli of using celebrities is very popular especially in high involvement emotional products and low involvement rational products. Value for money is an important stimulus for all segments except high involvement emotional products. This study however is only an observation of the stimuli used. A detailed content study was also undertaken of the advertisements using the 42 appeals developed by Pollay.

Content Study of Ads using Pollay's 42 Appeals

The findings of the Content study undertaken by the coders gave further light on the advertising appeals of Indian Press advertising. The appeals used in advertising are manifestations of culture. The advertising message would reflect the ideas that are widely shared within a culture. The top 4 appeals contributing to every advertisement in the four product types were studied and given an index depending on the degree of contribution. The following table gives the details.

Table 3

Top 4 Advertising Appeal Index of Product Categories

Product Type Appeal	High Involvement Emotional	High Involvement Rational	Low Involvement Rational	Low Involvement Emotional
Effective	79	105	129	124
Distinctive	52	28	22	25
Modern	36	33	28	33
Status	30	10	8	2
Technological	15	57	24	6
Healthy	2	4	37	60
Wisdom	15	28	30	16
Enjoyment	5	12	35	35

Effective as an advertising appeal, according to Pollay, indicates feasible, workable, useful, pragmatic, appropriate, functional, consistent, efficient, helpful, comfortable, tasty , strength, and longevity of effect. It is a very functional appeal, and is not surprising that this is used in advertising aimed at consumers in India, who are known to be price conscious, and therefore needs a strong ‘reason why’ to purchase a product. This is the strongest appeal in all the product types including high involvement emotional products.

Distinctive refers to appeals that are rare, unique, unusual, scarce, infrequent, exclusive, tasteful, elegant, subtle, esoteric, and handcrafted. This appeal is strong especially in high involvement products, but is also used in low involvement products. Status however is strong only in high involvement emotional products.

Modern is an appeal that goes across all product types, while status is used primarily in high involvement emotional products. Technological appeal is used for Rational products, especially those that have high involvement, while healthy and enjoyment are used in low involvement products. Wisdom is a strong appeal for low involvement rational products like cooking oil, kitchenware, shoes, baby food and engine oil.

Hofstede looks at culture as an onion, where the outer visible layer is the manifestation of symbols, and as one looks inward, are Heroes, Rituals and Values. While Indian advertising uses each layer, is it reflective of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions in India? The content study of the 200 samples of advertising selected, gave a weight age between 1 to 5 for each ad, depending on the strength of the appeal. Only those appeals have been selected that have been given a weight age greater than equal than 3, A binomial of significance was conducted and the significant appeals were superimposed on the earlier study conducted by Albers-Miller et al (1996) showing the relationship of Pollay’s appeals to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. The significant appeals of the ads selected were incorporated as per the Cultural dimensions of Hofstede. This provides a macro picture of advertising appeals that seem to emerge in the selected list of press advertising in the 4 categories and is depicted in Table 4.

Table 4
Macro Appeals as per Hofstede’s Dimensions

	IDV	PDI	UAI	MAS
High Involvement Rational	Distinctive			Effective Convenient
High Involvement Emotional	Distinctive	Status		Effective
Low Involvement Rational	Distinctive			Effective
Low Involvement Emotional	Distinctive			Effective

Note: IDV refers to Individualism, PDI to Power Distance, UAI to Uncertainty Avoidance and MAS to Masculinity.

The content study reinforces the observational study and the findings of the Top 4 appeals, because the appeals that are very dominant are ‘Distinctive’ and ‘Effective’. ‘Status’ and ‘Convenient’ also

emerge as important appeals that are being used by advertisers. Indian Press advertising therefore uses a combination of rational and emotional appeals in all categories, with a greater emphasis of ‘Status’ in High Involvement Emotional products, and the appeal of ‘Convenience’ in High Involvement Rational Products.

The advertising appeal of ‘Distinctive’ appears across all product cells, implying the use of advertising appeals that project an Individualistic society. India is a country known for strong family ties, joint families and community living. Yet advertisers are recognizing a highly individualistic appeal across advertising. Not surprising when one studies the research done by Hofstede where while India is not seen as an individualistic society, India still is not as collectivistic as countries like Pakistan. USA had a score of 91, Pakistan a score of 14 and India a score of 48. India is therefore is a bit middle of the path. This may be influenced by the fact that the majority religion in India, Hinduism, is a highly individualistic religion, which is a way of life in a social structure revolving around the family.

As may be expected, High Involvement Emotional products have advertising appeals connoting ‘status’. This reflects the high levels of Power Distance prevalent in Indian culture. This dimension however may be looked at differently in the advertising context, vis-à-vis the research undertaken by Hofstede. Advertising after all gets developed with an intention to appeal to the aspirations of the target audience.

Both the appeals of ‘Distinctive’ and ‘Status’ used in the advertising reflects the ‘High-Context’ nature of Indian society, where ‘sensory’ cues dominate and which embodies some of the following characteristics: importance of hierarchy, rank, status and elders and formality. Indian advertising uses such cues to appeal to consumers.

‘Effective’ is again an appeal that would be used in a market that is high value-driven like that of India. India is an emerging economy where disposable incomes are still limited, and the middle-income groups are just emerging. The functional aspects of the products are therefore given importance by advertisers, especially in the Press medium. This appeal therefore, just like ‘Distinctive’ is used across all product categories. ‘Convenience’ as an appeal is dominant in high involvement rational products, may be because of the value proposition that needs to be clearly described for such expensive products.

An Independent samples T test was conducted to check if the appeals were significantly different for each pair of product categories : high involvement rational and emotional product advertising, and low involvement rational and emotional product advertising. Table 4 depicts the appeals that were significantly different between high involvement and low involvement categories, the appeals were compared for rational and emotional decision making. In High Involvement Emotional and High Involvement Rational advertising, there were many more appeals that were significantly different than in Low Involvement Rational and Low Involvement Emotional product advertising.

Table 5

Weighted Means for Product Categories with T test significance <0.05

	High Involvement			Low Involvement	
Appeals	High Involvement Emotional	High Involvement Rational	Appeals	Low Involvement Rational	Low Involvement Emotional
Ornamental	4.80	2.96	Ornamental	4.61	2.29
Distinctive	7.09	5.38	Productivity	4.53	4.25
Dear	4.14	1.76	Sexuality	1.20	0.63
Youth	4.25	2.53	Effective	4.15	6.74
Productivity	2.43	2.11	Technological	4.80	2.06
Morality	0.51	0.31	Wisdom	4.53	4.25
Freedom	2.89	1.96	Humility	0.14	0.44
Vain	3.26	0.49	Security	2.00	1.04
Sexuality	1.95	0.52	Status	2.13	1.34
Family	3.99	2.21	Community	0.31	1.56
Modesty	0.87	1.30			
	High Involvement			Low Involvement	
Appeals	High Involvement Emotional	High Involvement Rational	Appeals	Low Involvement Rational	Low Involvement Emotional
Casual	0.87	0.61			
Healthy	1.46	0.70			

It is interesting to note that in the case of Low Involvement Rational and Low Involvement Emotional product advertising, there is significant difference in the key appeal that has shown in the analysis, Effective. The other appeal, Distinctive, has no difference in significant between emotional or rational product advertising, for both High Involvement and Low Involvement products. Ornamental and Productivity appeals are significantly different for the pairs of product categories. In Low Involvement products, Technological also stands out as significantly different between Low Involvement Rational and Low Involvement Emotional product advertising.

Conclusion

Is there an uncommon sense in Indian Press advertising ? Nonsense ! There is sense in the appeals used and the cultural dimensions that are reflected. The question arises whether Indian Press advertising reflects the cultural norms of India, and whether it can be more effective if it projects these norms. This may be further taken forward to question whether effective advertising needs to be stimuli to contribute to change in a society or perpetuate cultural norms that may discriminate against certain sections of society.

Advertising is essentially a marketing tool that primarily helps in selling a product or bringing about a change in attitude or behavior. The advertising selected, indicates that Press advertising in India tends to be hard-working and effective, in order to convey a value-for-money proposition. This goes across all product categories and reflects a culture that tends to be male-dominated and individualistic, where competitiveness, assertiveness, money and success are the values communicated.

The culture of Individualism is reflected strongly in High Involvement Rational and High Involvement Emotional product advertisements. In the former, the appeal of Technology is also

dominant. This is of special significance for a country that is showing relative high growth rates and is an emerging economy experiencing ‘leap-frogging’ of technology. Technology also contributes to projecting a culture that is modern, organized and growing – images that influence the concept of culture in a traditional society. High Involvement Emotional products seem to set greater levels of imagery in the Press advertising, with the use of attractive visuals of modern Indian men and women. The cultural dimensions of Individuality and Masculinity gets reinforced with greater visual appeal.

Both Low Involvement Rational and Low Involvement Emotional product advertising uses stimuli depicting value-for-money and have visuals of modern women. The former also focuses on Family while the latter advertisements have used copy written in ‘Hinglish’. Both categories are pragmatic in their communication, and use Effective appeals. In fact the significance of the two appeals Distinctive and Effective in both these categories, indicate again, a cultural dimension of Individualism and Masculinity.

The advertising appeals used in the Press advertisements selected seem to suggest that advertising appeals reflect strongly the cultural dimensions of Individuality and Masculinity. Indian advertisers may wish to question whether these are the cultural dimensions they wish to promote in the Print medium. Or should these dimensions be further evaluated so that advertising appeals can be developed using a mix of different cultural dimensions and working on communicating appeals that reflect a society that has a culture that is not only rich but also enlightened. There is a need for advertisers to reflect on the cultural dimensions that get reflected in the advertising appeals. The research has indicated that Indian advertising likes to project a world where consumers find the relatively high cultural dimensions of individualism, masculinity and power distance as appealing. Advertising needs to also become enlightened in its communications and play a role in creating a society that is ideal in all sense. By controlling the use of these cultural dimensions in Indian advertising, advertising developed can be more unique, create strong brand positioning and also project dimensions that not only fit in with existing cultural norms, but also bring about a cultural change that looks after all sections of society. Advertisers can consider looking at the concept of desirable cultural dimensions. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and advertising appeals may be therefore looked at in the form of a grid, where existing appeals (similar to Polly’s appeals) are assessed through consumer research, and the advertiser is able to modify the level of the appeal to make it culturally more desirable and effective for target markets. This will not only create advertising that is more enlightened, but also more appealing.

Table 6

Desirable Advertising Appeals & Cultural Dimensions

Advertising Appeals	Existing Appeal	Desirable Appeal
Cultural Dimensions		
Individualism		
Power Distance		
Uncertainty Avoidance		
Masculinity		

Only then will advertising bring sense and change in this complex and emerging world of India. Advertising will then not only be a marketing tool for organizations but contribute to the change that is the essence of Indian culture and tradition. As is stated in the ancient scriptures of the Rig Veda, 2500 years ago, “Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions” (1.89.9).

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