

An Analytical Study On ‘Culture And Tradition In Contemporary Marketing Communications: Reflection Of Indian Society’

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Abstract

This study identifies different marketing communications initiatives adopted by varied multinational firms and business organizations to achieve the organizational objectives of these firms in the contemporary Indian Marketing environment. It attempts to study how Cultural and Traditional elements trickle into the creative conceptualization and Visualization of different marketing communications initiatives. Here, besides the ingredients of contemporary marketing communications especially ‘Advertising’ is in focus. It has always been the favorite tool of marketers as it facilitates and incorporates the in-depth analysis of factors like ‘Culture’ ‘Tradition’ ‘Art’ ‘Religion’ ‘Attitudes’ and Beliefs. This enables them to successfully design advertising messages and themes which penetrate the Target Group, resulting in Behavioral modifications and finally leading to the end sale of the ‘Product’ ‘Service’ or ‘Idea’.

Keywords

Culture, Tradition, Indian Society

Introduction

When the world has shrunk into a global village, by the vice of the ‘Information Explosion’ and the Marketing barriers, have been open like flood gates from the emerging new economies and the relaxed economic policies of different nations have resulted in Globalization, Liberalization and Privatization. India has witnessed the advent of Multinational corporations in varied sectors, resulting in cutthroat competition and a rat race for Profit Maximization. In such a competitive and sensitive contemporary scenario, having Head honchos from other Nations and hence resulting in a cosmopolitan culture, a Challenge emerges for the Companies to develop a deep understanding of the potential target consumers, both in terms of understanding and hence analyzing their Psychographics and Demographics profiles, so that their Product and Brand is accepted in a foreign Market named ‘India.’

This influx and fascination with Technology, and growing ‘consumerism’ has pushed Traditional themes and Culture to the backseat. Here emerges a calamitous need for a Communication strategy, which is both Cognitive and Curative, to drift the potential buyers from their Loyal brand to the adoption of the New Brand. The need for an effective Medium to reach and connect to target audiences is done through the integration of Marketing Communications tools like Public Relations, Advertising and CSR, which extends the desirable responsibility of tapping the Minds and Soul of Millions in one go!

The marketing strategies engaged by MNC's in the Indian cultural context adopt multiple approaches. These create customizing and localization of messages to ensure that they are

relevant to local customs and values, often leading to the translation of material into regional languages.

With respect to segmentation, brands often choose to market messages and products to specific audience categories based not on geographical location but on socio-economic status. Such products can have customized messages for target consumers who will view them relevant. Customization would also relate to the offering. For example, vegetarian options exist in the menu of McDonald's to suit the local food habits. Digital marketing also comes into play with the companies using social media and e-commerce portals to engage with consumers, often by regional influencers. Multinational corporations have different ways of adapting marketing strategies suited for Indian customers in different cultural contexts. It can sometimes create local customization and localization of messages so that they are relevant for local customs and values, which often leads to the translation of material into regional languages. Segmentation, on the other hand, has been when brands decide to market products and messages to some specific audience categories not on the basis of geographic location but on socio-economic rate. Such products can have customized messages for target consumers who will view them as relevant. Customization would also relate to the offering. McDonald's, for instance, provides vegetarian options on its menu to align with local food habits. Companies are leveraging digital marketing in this regard, often using social media and e-commerce portals to engage consumers and sometimes employ regional influencers.

These organizations further use digital marketing strategies and engage with the public through social media, e-commerce, and many more avenues, mainly with regional influencers. Make the Campaigns around Indian Festivals: Emotional Touch Points for Reaching Consumers at Their Spending Peak. A local partner will help in entry into the market and consumer behavior insights while competitive pricing would make products more accessible, particularly in rural areas. Most commonly, they use local dialects and cultural references to resonate with audiences. Corporate social responsibility goes a long way in establishing brand credibility and loyalty within communities. And building from current trends - health, sustainability, and customization - will ensure that you are still around when India goes to the changing market east.

Interpretation of Culture and Tradition

'Culture' in an oversimplified manner could be stated as the way that we do things. It relates to a National Culture, Subculture, or culture existing in an organization, i.e., Corporate Culture. Guess it's rather learned and is not 'Innate'. It combines all that everyone is doing in a particular manner and setting in a particular group, all that we learn in terms of 'Value' and 'Norms' Beliefs and religion, customs and Tradition, rituals and Tangible symbols of culture. It's a selective, man-made way of responding to experiences.

India is a land of rich cultural and Art diversity. Hence, the changes in Art forms, language, Customs, and Beliefs are quite evident even in a span of 100 Km. Indian Art scenario comprises different Art forms like Dance, Music, Paintings, and Cloth Weaving Patterns that vary in every region. Tanjore paintings are from Tamil Nadu, Madhubani Art hails from Bihar, Rajput and Shekhawati paintings hail from the state of Rajasthan, and Kalighat paintings are from W. Bengal. The same diversity is evident in different dance forms like Garba, Kathakali Bhatratnatyam, Etc.

Glimpses of Culture and Tradition in Indian Marcom Activities

The maze of communication designed by Marcom's pool of expertise manages to bring change to the attitudes and preferences of people by reflecting 'Proximity' and Cultural sensitivity in their advertising. So, In order to pulsate sensation amongst the culturally absorbed 'Target Audiences', the absorption of 'Culture, Art, and Tradition is extensively assimilated in the Integrated Marketing Communication programs. It all happened in years of carefully mastered communication strategy, which, through the effective and widespread medium of Television, entered Indian homes by sending the message that ' We Care for you and your Values.'

PR Campaigns, Events and their Sponsorships, Political Campaigns, Print, TV, Radio, Online Advertising, and even Corporate Social Responsibility activities try to bank upon cultural art and Traditional elements. Smart marketers have attempted to capitalize on this essence in developing theme-based restaurants and resorts like ' Chokhi Dhani' 'Chettinad restaurants, Chor bizarre, etc. Now all the Occasions and Celebrations are recognized as effective instruments of 'Social Engineering'. This revival of Culture and Tradition has infused new energy amongst the Marketing and Communication strategist. Surprisingly this resurgence of Culture and Tradition infusion is an urban phenomenon. Mumbai every year celebrates 'Ganesha Mahostav' with full zing and sponsorships.

Marketing Communication Activities of MNCs and Key Business organizations are frequently visible in the form of sponsorships of different Art festivals like GAIL sponsored Khajuraho Dance Festival a few yrs . back, the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival in earlier years was sponsored by Cadbury's, Bank of America, Surf Excel, The Times of India, etc., and the Konark Dance Festival was sponsored by MGM group. A similar trend is apparent in the sponsorships of the Celebrations of Festivals like Dandiya – Which is mostly sponsored by Local Key players like Kanpur- Dainik Jagran, Red Chief ,Ghari, etc. Likewise applies to Durga Pooja Pandal sponsorships, In Kolkatta Main Pandal are generally Sponsored by Airtel, The Telegraph, Anand Bazar Patrika ,The Times of India and even by a American Media Group . , in addition to sponsoring pandals, various ground activation activities are also undertaken to engage the potential buyers directly and to send a PR oriented message across .

According to Ware's study has mentioned that the advertisement spend by advertisers in India is projected to grow by 11.9% in the year 2024, with a significant contribution from festive advertising campaigns that enjoy most of the increased consumer spending in this period. Such growth indicates a general trend toward ramping up marketing activities by brands in anticipation of heightened demand during festivals.

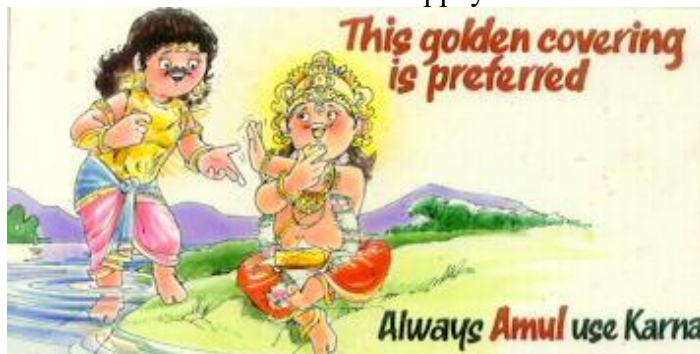
The Message rendered through participation in aforementioned activities also serves the extension of Corporate Social Responsibility which is relatively a young mantra amongst the marketing communication minds. This definitely reflects the changing marketing orientation of the corporate sector and an ever increasing popularity of below the line activities.



Culture and Tradition In Advertising and Entertainment Industry

Presence of ‘Culture ‘ and Tradition as an Indispensable ingredient in Advertising, Media and Entertainment industry is quite visible since last few years. Popularity of Mythology Based serials like Ramayana ,Mahabharata, Mahadev, Shri Krishna,Jai Hanuman and Inception of animated movies like Bal Ganesh, Eklavya ,Panchantatra , Chotta Bheem etc. reflects that variables of Culture and Tradition is deeply rooted in the Indian Society, Irrespective of the western influence.

The same Thumb Rule applies to the Advertising Industry ,which is kindled by the spirit of Glocalization and has an wide array of Ads . based on the Cultural and Traditional themes. ‘Ayurveda’, ‘Festivals and Celebrations’ , Different Dance styles , Symbolic use of Religion based symbols and attributes are often seen in different Advertising initiatives. The sole approach is to entrap the culturally inclined and traditionally bound prospective consumer .Cadbury’s in it’s TVC depicts a Raksha Bandhan theme and shows a Bharat Natyam theme ,Coca Cola , Asian Paints,celebrates Deepawali, Amul in it’s ever popular series has frequently used Mahabharta , Ganesha Utsav and also commemorated the classical music and dance festival way back. Ads of Ayurvedic products from the stable of different companies liberally use visuals of Rishi Munis, Himalayas etc. Sony Bravia uses Kathakali characters ,Rajasthani folk singer was seen in a TVC of Cadury’sBournvita ad competing against an urban schoolboy. Dabur Sona Chandi used ‘Kalaripayattu’ dance form in their TVC’s.



Mc Donald's in one of their Indian Advertising effort placed their logo 'Golden Arch' inversely as a 'Tilak' on a stereotyped Brahmin. KFC in their nascent advertising pointedly told that they abstain from the use of Beef etc., usage of which worldwide by the brand was widespread rumored



Mythology provides food for emotional stir, besides, use of Culture, Mythology and Tradition is evident in the political advertising too. In the election campaigns of, a political party in their Campaign, used the Mahabharata depicting National Leadership as Pandavas, and few Years back 'Panchatantra' symbols were been used in Telegudesham Party.

In the 2024 Lok Sabha election campaign saw various political parties making use of mythology in their digital as well as print advertisements. The Hindu mythology was popularly advertised by the BJP party in its advertising campaigns. The advertisements of the party often featured figures like Lord Ram, especially about the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. Then, slogans such as Modi Ki Guarantee were associated with images of mythological themes to relate it to the Hindu electorate. The BJP added to this with AI-generated imaginations rendering Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the garb of Bhishma Pitamah from the epic Mahabharata in a bid to further his image and arouse religious sentiments.



Festive Marketing is also extensively used in marketing communications for brand building. 'Amul' a popular Indian Dairy product brand has consistently, the company has celebrated the festival of Janmashtami, which is known as the birthday of Lord Krishna, through clever advertising. The ads would typically use ancient settings, supplemented by modern issues in society, showcasing the playful nature of Krishna, full of love for butter. More often than not, the image of the Amul girl comes as a "Makhan Chor-moderne," thus connecting this deity with the Amul flagship product. The ads wonderfully create the context of Old Dahi Handi to elaborate such trends, where groups of people are made to form a human pyramid for the purpose of breaking curd or butter-filled pots, making these closer to home and appealing to all ages.



Conclusion

Thus, it's quite evident that the Indians are still rooted in their Cultural and Traditional values irrespective of the various developments. And Changes around us carry a very strong n powerful unspoken message with them. Marketers have realized this change and have adapted to it using Tradition and Culture to attract. The Concept of luring customers by evoking cultural dimensions has gained considerable momentum. In this ever-changing industry and its fashion, we hope to witness more Marketing Communications efforts coming to us reaped from our rich culture And Kudos ! to Smart and Radical Advertising.

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