Chapter 7 : Results, Discussions & and Update of Research

7.1 : Introduction

This section will summarize the research results of the 3 phases and raise points of discussion. Advertising is an impersonal form of mass communications mainly because it is not interactive or engaging. However, the creativity in advertising moves this form of communications beyond a mere commercial form to one where societal culture is reflected or influenced. This depends very much on the quality and nature of advertising created in a society. This research followed a mixed form in methodology where not only was there qualitative and quantitative research, using the personal interview and survey technique, but there was also content analysis which gave a basis for this ‘mixed research’. Content analysis helps in studying the social standards, lifestyles and situations of society, and looks at the creation of advertisers. Interviews with advertising practitioners give a view-point that belongs to professionals who interact with opinion leaders in industry and therefore give a focus to the culture that gets reflected not only in advertising, but also in society. Surveying the consumer takes this research forward in terms of providing a quantitative analysis of different hypothesis that coorelate the types of product categories with the different dimensions of culture. Because of the dynamic nature of this subject, a response was also got from a group of 54 students, exposed to the theories of advertising communications, to give in an essay form, an answer to the question, ‘Advertising reflects the culture of a society and also creates culture’. The respondents were asked to explain both these aspects in the context of Hofstede’s 4 dimensions of culture, viz. Power Distance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity and Uncertainty Avoidance, and give examples of advertising seen to explain the answer. The purpose of doing this was to get an update of consumer views regarding advertising and culture, and also to find out whether advertising besides reflecting culture of the society, also influences it. This data was exploratory in nature but was tabulated and assessed.

The content study undertaken reveals the manner in which advertising manifests the cultural values that exist in society. As a country, India has been liberalized only since 1990. Advertising however did play a role in Indian media, though initially, with the emergence of television, advertising tended to get limited to programs by national channels like the
Doordarshan, where the two most popular programs were the Hindi Feature Film, on Sundays and the Chitrahaar (music videos of films). Print media was however considered to be very important, accounting for the major share of advertising spending. This continues to be a major medium for advertising. Indian advertising has been active in reflecting the cultural norms prevalent in India. Amul as a brand was founded in December 1946 and the Amul baby was born in 1967. Indian culture is tends to value children. Jawaharlal Nehru was called ‘Chachha Nehru’ because of his love for children, and India has a unique day dedicated to children on the birth anniversary of this leader. The creation of such a mascot reflects a culture that shows affection to children. It is interesting to observe that while Indian culture tends to hesitate in demonstrating romance and affection between couples, the demonstration of love to children has a very socially acceptable. It is common to smile at children in public in India, or even reach out to carry a child. This is not acceptable in some western societies. The major advertising campaigns run during the pre-liberalization phase of India’s growth tended to be that of the FMCG sector or of consumer durables. The use of celebrities was made popular by Hindustan Unilever Ltd. Through Lux advertising. Celebrity usage in advertising continues to be very common in Indian advertising. The influence of the disciplines of major advertising agencies like J Walter Thompsons, Ogilvy and Lintas gave expressions in advertising that were both British and American. Many research studies have shown that British advertising tends to be implicit while American advertising tends to be explicit. Indian advertising therefore was influenced by both styles. Freshness depicted implicitly through a girl in the waterfall for Liril (the freshness soap) or when Surf washes whitest.

7.2: Major Finding of Content Study : Appeals of Value, Distinctive, Status, Convenience, Technology and Modernity

The content study looked at 50 advertisements of top advertisers with each of the identified product categories, viz high involvement with rational consumer decision making, low involvement with rational consumer decision making, high involvement with emotional consumer decision making and low involvement with rational consumer decision making. The study indicated the presence of some of the major cultural appeals used in advertising
The most prominent appeal that was used in the advertising was ‘Effective’. This indicates the importance of ‘value’ in the minds of Indian consumers. This is a rational appeal. The dominance of this appeal however tends to bring down the imagery of advertising. When advertising becomes a means to communicate aspects like value-for-money or price-value, the ability to build fantasy and build aspirations tend to be minimized. This results in the communication of functional messages and a decline in the building of aura and imagery. With a pre-occupation of building ‘value for money’, Indian advertising could suffer in the building of brand equity and intangible image creation. One must remember that India is an emerging economy which believes in democracy and better standards of living. Indians however have grown on a mixed economy system, leaning on socialism, and earn the Rupee currency that tends to make them as consumers cautious about spending large amounts. Advertising seems to reflect this value system. The Boost advertisement says proudly, ‘100% Tasty or 100% Money Back’.

The Indian consumer in advertising is seen as more quality and price conscious. Though the consumer is seen as modern and sophisticated, there is the importance given to price-value. When Hindustan Unilevers (then Hindustan Levers) launched ‘Dalda’ in 1939, the advertising showed a bride’s father substituting pure ghee for Dalda, to save on his budget, without affecting taste. Even today, brands tend to give more to the consumer like additional services or value added services. India’s 1.2 billion population promises to be a market that will match that of China in the coming years. Global companies are therefore interested in projecting ‘value’ in Indian markets. Take the example of organizations like Nestles, Hindustan Unilever and Dabur. While each company markets brands across all price points, the need for value pricing is recognized as a necessity especially for brands targeted to middle-income households. Indian consumers also tend to go for products produced locally and regionally and sometimes follow behavioral patterns influenced by regional markets. For example, in Reetha Hair wash powder instead of shampoo or the use of coconut oil in Kerala or mustard oil in West Bengal. In some categories like cosmetics, prices in Indian markets have been kept low as an entry strategy. Because of the hot weather in India, Indian women have tended to use limited amount of make-up. Today with the common presence of air-conditioners in Indian offices, it is actually feasible for cosmetic companies to bring about greater usage of make-up for the professional look for the working women. Price is a major concern for increased usage. After habits get formed,
branding will play a greater role. Various studies have taken place in popular magazines to reinforce that Indians are price conscious. The content study undertaken of the select advertising has reflected this.

‘Distinctive’ was another appeal that emerged in the content study for all product categories. In some ways this appeal is very different from the ‘effective’, which focuses on value for money. The ‘Distinctive’ appeal works through associations and is an emotional appeal. The use of celebrities in advertising is common for the emphasis of this appeal. Brands are a form of self-expression for the consumer. When a consumer wears a Raymond’s he states that he is a ‘Complete Man’ and using Axe deodorants create an Axe effect. This appeal is conveyed in the modern and westernized form of clothing, lifestyle and status. Girls and boys are shown in youthful shirts and jeans, and shown to have fun and good times. Language is also used with modern, Americanisms. Dabur Honey shows a celebrity actress being fit, active and glowing, with a headline that says, ‘Hi Honey, Let’s Stay Young’. Even advertising which does not use models but only shows the product (in this case Maggi soup) or its uses will use a word commonly used by young people like, ‘Awesomest’. Distinctiveness is also reflected in a jet-set lifestyle like ‘9.00 am meeting. Is breakfast losing out to your moning meeting?’ (Tropicana juice) or ‘I have no time for pain’ (Volini). The depiction of models in the advertising is cosmopolitan and urban.

Status is also an appeal that emerges in the advertising selected. In traditional Indian culture, status was often perceived in terms of honor, propriety and position in the community. With liberalization, status is perceived through the use and consumption of consumer goods. Even weddings and festivals are traditional events but now transformed into celebrations involving the purchase of branded products. For example, the purchase of Cadbury’s chocolates for Diwali or Tanishq jewelry for weddings.

Technology is an appeal that is used for rational product advertising of both High Involvement and Low Involvement products. While Technology as a stimulus also contributes to a modern and distinctive image in the advertising, it is representative of modern, liberalized India and linked to the growth of information technology in India. The depiction of technology happens
either in a direct or indirect manner in advertising. For each product category, the depiction of technology has its own characteristics.

Status, modernity and convenience were also some of the key appeals.

For High Involvement Rational product advertising, the direct approach is often required to be shown. For example, ‘Just touch the HP Dream Screen’, showing the main visual of a touch screen. Some ads have a model or celebrity displaying the product – ‘More Color’. More Style (Sony Vaio). Technology messages often are highlighted in the headline. For example, Videocon announcing,’India’s First Tilt Drum Washing Machine’. Product depiction is important even for products not obviously seen as technology focused. For example the visual of a credit card or a Sleepwell Mattress with ‘Advanced Flow System’. Technology can also be highlighted with the use of visual buttons. The Havells advertisement has 3 visual buttons that say : Easy to clean features, Best food grade material and Features to ensure better hygiene. Car and bike advertisements tend to highlight the features of the product. Car advertisements like Chevrolet and Volkswagen focus on the visual of the car. So also car ancillary products like JK tyres and MRF tyres (Nylongrip Zapper). The use of technology in the advertisements of this category of products tends to create communications that are myopic and product oriented rather than consumer and marketing oriented. When advertising is creative and has a big idea, there is greater brand building and differentiation. The advertising of this category of products by focusing mainly on the product tended to not bring about differentiation between brands. The advertising therefore tended to lack a big advertising idea and consequently result in boring and ineffective communications that could get lost in the clutter of advertising in media. Advertising that focuses on only the product can work tactically to meet the objectives of a specific promotion. However, the task of brand building tends to get diluted.

Low Involvement Rational product advertising also tended to have technological stimuli in the advertising. A brand like Gillette Fusion has a headline, ‘Breakthrough technology on the Front and Back. On the Front. 5 Blade Shaving Surface Technology. On the Back. Precision Trimmer Blade for those tricky places. The technology message is indeed loud and clear. Technology is also indicated through Power. ‘Why Settle for less when you can get 7 times more power?’ says Mortein PowerGard Vaporizer. A personal product like Vaseline
Moisturizing lotion also incorporates technology by using technical terms like the lotion having, ‘stratys 3’. Mobile and internet service providers like Airtel and Reliance because of the technological nature of their service tend to incorporate technology in their communications. Since these are low involvement products that tend to be priced as a grocery item on the higher side, the role of technology, overall (in shampoos, coffee, deodorants etc) tends to be low.

Products that are bought based on an emotional appeal do not tend to use any technology cues in their communications. Premium watches have been categorized as a High Involvement Emotional product because of the high price of premium brands and the role of the brand in purchase decisions. Her again, technology tends to be depicted by showing a close-up of the product. An occasional low involvement product like a writing pen could have a stimulus of technology. For example, the brand ‘Add Gel’ shows a visual of Einstein with a headline, ‘Genius is Revolutionary’.

Technology is such a relevant appeal for Indian consumers. There are almost 1 billion mobile phones in India. So in many ways, most Indians are touching technology, despite lower standards of living. The challenge for advertisers is how to communicate technology effectively. Vodafone’s ‘zoo-zoo’ campaign has been a good example of the creative depiction of technology in this product category. Here there was a ‘Big Idea’ that made the campaign that much more effective. This campaign was able to touch an emotional nerve in a product that is normally purchased on rational appeals. The set of advertising for which the content study was undertaken however did not project technology in such a creative form. This could also be due to television being an important medium for many such brands, and therefore Print playing a supportive or a tactical role. Print however is used for rational products in a significant way because of the importance of this medium not only in terms of reach to target groups but also because the medium is static in nature and therefore allows more cognitive stimuli.

Advertising seems to play a role in showcasing modern India. Modernity is depicted through various means. Dress is an important stimulus. Advertising tends to depict the modern woman as dressed with westernized attire and having a lifestyle that is that of a nuclear family, independent and free. Earlier models like Surf’s Lalithaji would have the key woman model dress with a sari, usually do their hair as a bun, show a mangal sutra, and wear a bindi. Today
advertising usually shows a woman with short hair, wearing a dress, shirt or kurti, and playing an intelligent role in family decisions. Women are also sometimes sexually depicted. In the advertising selected, there was no direct sexual stimulus. Many of the advertisements showed women wearing short dresses or wearing low-cut blouses were shown, but were seen by the experts of having acceptable dress standards. Women are portrayed as confident, busy with activities (like work, either at home or the office) and celebrities like Kareena Kapoor, Neha Dhupia, Madhuri Dixit are shown as role models. Indian men are dressed in westernized clothing and shown as powerful.

7.3 Practitioner’s Study : Waves Transforming Indian Culture

Practitioners were upbeat about how advertising reflects culture of Indian society. They recognized the film industry or ‘Bollywood’ to play a role in terms of consumers perceiving culture in terms of rituals, lifestyle, heroes and villains. The music and dance forms promoted by popular film also creates new rituals in Indian lifestyle. For example, dance performances in Indian weddings. Television programs and advertising were seen to vary in terms of influencing consumer culture. Television plays a role in the drama of traditions, joint families and religious rituals, thereby enhancing the role of traditions in Indian culture. Advertising plays the ‘modernity’ role of building aspirations and portraying the joys of success. ‘Change’ was the central theme that seemed to dominate the in-depth interviews conducted amongst practitioners. Five waves of change were seen as dominant in the Practitioner’s study. Change will happen to Indian consumers because there will be a better lifestyle, greater success, change in traditions, and a new perception of the concepts of globalization and value for money. Advertising seems to be playing a positive role in society, in bringing about a level playing field amongst diverse segments of consumers in India.

**Technology:** A culture of technology is now gaining significance in India. Advertising tends to be product-focused in terms of communicating the benefits and features of new products. No wonder products like cellular phones have created new lifestyles amongst Indians also belonging to the poorer income groups. Immigrant workers now can communicate with ease to their families back home and also transfer an urban way of thinking in rural villages. Advertising therefore plays an important role in communicating in a manner that is easily understood, the
benefits of ease of using technology products. This becomes in fact, indirectly, a role of imparting education that advertising takes on. Elder citizens also get to realize the value that technology products can bring into their lives – be it with the use of the internet or smart phone. The use of various services from buying a railway or air ticket to ordering a LPG gas cylinder also now requires an understanding of technology. Advertising therefore plays a key role in transforming a society that was otherwise termed as ‘third world’ and ‘backward’ to leap-frog in their understanding of technology products.

**Women’s Role:** Indian society is based on a patriarchal system, where women officially leave their home to stay at their husband’s parental home. Rituals like ‘kanya-daan’, ‘doli’ or ‘vidhai’ all are rituals that define a girl’s home as that belonging to her husbands’. Indian women were often not given that much importance in a home that she has come into, and was often treated badly by her mother-in-law (the success of ‘Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi’ is a good example of this phenomenon). Indian advertising on the other hand has changed with the times. Earlier advertising of brands like Ariel or Vim had the daughter-in-law nervous about the mother-in-law’s approval and therefore resorting to such brands. Today’s advertising tends to project the nuclear family and the empowered woman. The woman in Indian advertising is seen as intelligent and dealing with family and work issues. The role of the woman in Indian advertising seems to be given importance. She is an equal partner in household decision-making. In fact for a brand to be seen as contemporary, it becomes important for the advertising to portray a contemporary woman who is independent and respected. After all, such qualities get associated with a brand. Advertising messages therefore in some ways can be seen as helping women progress towards equality.

**The Indian Attitude:** Practitioners feel that advertising has contributed to Indians becoming more confident, having higher aspirations and aiming for success in their fields. Standardization in ‘Indianess’ is also a phenomenon, since India is such a diverse nation with so many states, religions and communities. Cricket and Cinema provide platforms for advertisers to promote their products, and create greater unity in the way consumers think. Social issues like the empowerment of the girl child, anti-dowry, gender equality, class equality and sometimes
treated as ideas in advertising, and the ethical issues addressed. Advertising therefore make people judge life in a just manner and creates parity.

On the other side, advertising questions the concept of globalization and boundaries. Western apparel tends to be perceived as no longer western but Indian. Just like cricket is perceived as more Indian than British. Indian families are projected in advertising as more liberal thinking and not tied down with traditions. This could influence consumer attitudes on the concept of family. Keeping up with changing lifestyles, where one has to live in a city other than one’s home, especially to study, Indian advertising has also included the importance of ‘friends’ in a person's life.

Though many changes are projected in Indian ways, the concept of hierarchy in family is still maintained. Blessings from older generations, respect for parents and love for siblings are all sacred to Indian way of living. Indian advertising creates interesting stories around this and builds brand differentiation. For example, a complete man from Raymond’s will take his mother with him to Singapore when he gets a transfer in his job.

Practitioners believe that Indians love their celebrities. That is because Indian cinema is a major form of entertainment for the average Indian. The ability of this celebrity to live an affluent lifestyle and yet maintain the traditions of family make these celebrities meaningful to the Indian consumer. Celebrities bring in notice ability of advertising campaigns and bring about strong image associations to the brand. Cricket and Cinema tends to provide most of the celebrities used in Indian advertising. Celebrity advertising is sometimes termed as lazy marketing, where because the advertising has no central creative idea, a celebrity is used. However, India is a country where aspirations run so high, that celebrities play a role in conveying these aspirations to consumers.

7.4: Consumer Survey

The third phase of the primary research was to assess from consumers whether they see cultural dimensions being reflected in advertising, and if so, whether there is any difference between the cultural values of the four product categories being studied in terms of the four dimensions of culture and in terms of advertising ethics and appeal. The study was quantitative in nature and
brought 150 respondents in groups of 50 each to initially get their perceptions of advertising in general, and then specifically to find out their responses to stimuli of print and television advertising that they were exposed to. The findings reinforce that culture is reflected in Indian advertising. A Factor analysis undertaken indicated that in all cultural dimensions for each product category, there was indeed eight to ten factors that contributed towards the reflection of culture in the advertising. In all product categories, there were more than 8 factors that caused a perception in cultural dimensions. The findings indicated that advertising plays a key role in reinforcing culture in a society. The research findings indicate that Indians have aspirations for success. Advertising tends to create a world of ‘Ad Heaven’, where society functions in an ideal manner. The research at one level identified factors contributing to each product category and advertising in general, and at another level looked to see whether there was any significant differences between the perceptions of culture between the different product categories. The findings may be seen at a glance as follows:

Figure 10 : Factors Contributing to Cultural Dimensions for Advertising in all categories

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<th>General</th>
<th>HIR</th>
<th>HIE</th>
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<td><strong>Power Distance</strong></td>
<td>Conformity</td>
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<td><strong>Masculine/Feminine</strong></td>
<td>Male Power</td>
<td>Male-Female roles</td>
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<td>Male Power</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Individualism/Collectivism</strong></td>
<td>Group Ambitions</td>
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<td><strong>Uncertainty Avoidance</strong></td>
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It may be seen that Power Distance is a phenomenon in Indian advertising. On one hand, advertising shows those with power as being more powerful, and yet projects a society where
everyone is treated with respect. It would therefore not be considered proper for advertising to show class differences in a negative manner. Male and Female roles are very clearly defined and men are generally shown to have more power. Respect for elders and hierarchy is clear in the advertising, and yet there is an individualistic desire to succeed and aspire for a better life style. Uncertainty avoidance was another phenomenon that was reflected across all product categories of advertising. Fear of failure, pessimism and worrying about the future are all aspects of Indian living. India is a developing nation that has been liberalized only since 1990. Indian consumers are now exposed to a materialistic market place, where all kinds of products are available at all kinds of prices. However, since it has not even been twenty years since liberalization, Indian consumers are still risk averse, and sense this in advertising of all product categories.

Figure 11 : Factors Contributing to Appeal and Ethics for Advertising in General, HIR, HIE, LIR and LIE.

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<th>General</th>
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<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Social Responsibility</td>
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<td>Environment</td>
<td>Ad Positivity</td>
<td>Ad Positivity Environment</td>
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Another phenomenon that emerged in the factor analysis was that advertising is generally liked by consumers and found to be entertaining. Advertising plays an important role in the life of a consumer and this has been termed as Ad Salience. Advertising is informative, promotes a social lifestyle and in factors puts across a pretty picture of life. A world that is like a heaven is therefore projected in advertising. This can be seen in the table given below.
The hypothesis that there are differences can be accepted in the case of the dimensions of appeal, ethical advertising and Power Distance. The null hypothesis however is accepted in the case of the cultural dimensions of uncertainty avoidance, depiction of individualism/collectivism and masculinity/femininity. The study indicated that only in the dimension of Power Distance, there was a significant difference between high involvement and low involvement product advertising, and on the overall opinion on the likeability of advertising. In fact high involvement product advertising were seen as more likeable. Advertising in general reflects conformity in a society where there are ethical values, group decision making and harmony between the powerful and the powerless. In HIR, possessing products are seen as a privilege for those who are more powerful. This is an interesting aspect of advertising where a society is projected as class-free, and yet the powerful have privileges of products. This is reflected in both HIE, LIE and LIR products.

7.5 Contemporary Advertising Update

Advertising reflects the culture of a society and also creates culture. 50 respondents were asked to comment on this statement and also give examples of advertisements that reflect this. The nature of this research is such that the advertising scenario is so dynamic and therefore one wants to be confident of how consumers are assessing the nature of culture in advertising. Respondents were asked to write on how Advertising reflects the culture of a society and also creates culture. They were asked to explain both these aspects in the context of Hofstede’s 4 dimensions of culture, viz. Power Distance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity and Uncertainty Avoidance and to give examples of advertising seen by them.

The respondents were students who had undertaken a course in Advertising and were therefore exposed to the analysis of advertising. All respondents answered that culture is reflected in Indian advertising and that advertising also influences the culture of a society. The advertising that respondents could refer to as examples were primarily Airtel (47 references). Other advertising campaigns referred to by 6-8 respondents were, Cadbury’s, Naukri.com’s television film on ‘Hari Sadu’, Raymond’s, the complete man campaign, Fair and Lovely, Idea, ICICI and Ceat and insurance company advertising. These brands seem to be seen as reflecting Indian culture and influencing Indian culture, whether it is the Power Distance of Hari Sadu and ICICI
or the collectivism of Cadbury’s and Airtel or the gender bias of Fair and Lovely or Raymond’s and the uncertainty avoidance of Ceat or advertising of insurance companies. A qualitative feedback of respondents towards brand that affect each dimension of culture is given below.

Airtel television ad on ‘Har Ek Friend, Zaroori Hota Hai’ promotes friendship and a culture of collectivism. On the other hand, Mahindra Scorpio uses elements of masculinity and individualism. Harley Davidson creates a culture of building communities and bringing a masculine culture. The Harley Owners Group (HOG) which is a bikers club of Harley drivers builds a sense of community. Dove ads use femininity and natural beauty to showcase women of today, as one portraying elegance and independence. Thumbs Up advertising uses Akshay Khanna as the macho personality to reinforce a culture of masculinity. Raymonds advertising is an interesting manner in which the ‘not being typically masculine’ makes one a ‘complete man’. One respondent felt that this in fact reconfirms that Indian society has a culture where the male is very dominant. Insurance companies tend to use the element of uncertainty avoidance prevalent in Indian culture to sell insurance policies through ‘negative motivation’ in some ways. Van Heusen women’s ‘Diva collection uses elements from culture like feminity, individualism to promote its range of clothes, and also portrays women as modern. Advertising therefore plays a role of preserving Indian culture and sometimes making changes in Indian culture.

Another advertising campaign that was “a mirror of what is happening in society” is the Axe Effect advertising campaign. One respondent felt that it depicts women in a degrading manner and in a way shapes thoughts and beliefs about women amongst young men. Idea cellular service provider with the advertising of IIN, also reflects the current stresses in Indian society where a young students who does not get admission in a desired engineering institution can learn from the internet and in fact make a drone. The use of a transgender, who cannot get admission in any college and therefore studies through mobile internet and gets educated and lives a dignified like also brings dignity to a segment of people who in the past have been categorized as ‘hijras’ who are feared with superstition. Here advertising plays a role that is positive in liberal thinking. Advertising today also sometimes emulates an irreverent attitude with a touch of humor, common in western television serials (like Friends, Modern Family, etc). The Airtel My Plan advertising shows a youth showing affection to his father only to be rewarded by his father.
with an Airtel Plan. Advertising can play a role in changing the rules of hierarchy that tends to dominate the parent-child relationship in India.

Respondents felt that products are made in India with the concept of sharing. Cadbury’s Perk promoted Poppers—multiple pieces that can be shared. In fact advertising is influenced by the culture prevalent in society and also influences the culture. One respondent mentioned that though Indian advertising tends to reflect high levels of Power Distance, a reference was made to a Titan watch advertisement where Amir Khan, as CEO of a computer company repairs his own computer, bringing about a reduction in Power Distance and promoting a “MNC culture”. The change is being seen in advertising also in terms of the dimension of collectivism. Many advertising campaigns, like that of Saffola cooking oil, showcases the nuclear family rather than a joint family. Quite different from the days of the Ariel launch, where the daughter-in-law was so busy trying to impress the mother-in-law, by using Ariel or Vim or whatever household product. A very common appeal in advertising, during those days.

Collectivism as a dimension in Indian advertising is sometimes shown through the Indian culture of using ‘pet names’ that are used from childhood. Cadbury’s advertisement says, ‘Pappu Pass ho Gaya’. The family culture of a pet name and the communal phenomenon of a community celebrating because a child has passed the examination. There is also a change in the way women are depicted in advertising. Earlier, women were shown wearing traditional saris and a mangal sutra. Today’s women are shown in western clothes, working and giving advice to their husband. There is a view that advertising helps make a difference to society. Class differences are reduced and women are empowered. Havell’s advertising was mentioned, where the maid servant was asked to sit at the table and share a meal with the employer’s family with a theme, ‘Hawa Badlegi’. Brands leverage social movements that happen in society. For example, Tata Tea’s campaign against corruption raises social issues. Or the advertising showing a politician at an airport who refuses to wait in the line, by mocking the privileges given to politicians. In this way, advertising reinforces and showcases the culture of a society and also brings about change. ‘Why should Boys have all the fun?’ is the headline of TVS scooter ad. Or in the case of the Fewikwik advertisement that shows collaboration between two countries at the border, thereby promoting harmony.
Advertising in India commonly uses celebrities, especially, film stars. While the celebrity is used mainly to bring attention to the communication, the ‘Bollywood’ culture of glamour, aspirations and escapism tends to get reinforced in advertising. The lifestyle of the celebrity gets promoted in advertising like that of Royal Stag, creating aspirations to ‘Make it Large’. Advertising also tends to emulate an individualistic lifestyle of independence and being able to take charge. Advertising in some ways creates traditionally female needs for men and vice versa. For example the success of Fair and Handsome brand and the need for scooters for females. It is also common now for advertising to shape the mindset of the consumer to not give up and live in fear. Mountain Dew advertising says, ‘Darr ke Aage Jeet Hai’, to encourage consumers to be fearless. Or the Tumbs Up advertising, where the protagonist is seen jumping from high rise buildings doing stunts in the air and the tagline is, ‘Aaj Kuch Toofani Karte Hain’. Such advertising encourages Indian consumers who would typically have a high degree of Uncertainty Avoidance to be adventurous and take risks. Another advertisement encourages a son to refuse a Government job and take a job with a multi-national that is more risky.

Respondents felt that the Indian values of abstinence was giving way to hedonism and materialism, and there is a tendency to promote a westernized culture of materialism and consumerism, along with a sense of independence and openness to new ways of thinking. Advertising therefore brings about a degree of value reorientation and duality in Indian culture, with the mix of traditions and modernity.

The importance of family to Indian culture is also used as an appeal in many advertising. The Honda Mobilio advertisement and Maruti Ertiga show family enjoying riding in the car. This is in fact used in many car advertising. At the same time one has advertising promoting an online product with the line, ‘Go Solo’. /This in fact depicts the dual name of Indian society where family and collectivism is significant in the culture, but also individualism is projected as a desire for consumers. The most popular advertisement noticed by respondents which reflects this is the Airtel smart phone advertising campaign depicting the female as the boss of her husband at work and insisting that he works late to meet the deadline. On one hand the advertisement shows the woman as the boss at work and on the other hand, she takes on the stereotypical role of preparing food for her husband. Such advertising could create confusion on what role definitions are all about.
Women tend to be portrayed in a modern way thereby encouraging women to dress differently, use a variety of personal products, indulge in jewelry, beauty products, vacations and fun and overall look after themselves rather than only thinking about the family. This changes women’s perception of their role, the concept of beauty and a desirable lifestyle. Fair and Lovely was a brand that was launched in the 1970’s with a focused brand promise of beauty with a fair skin. Advertising of such a brand was taken at its face value initially and made the brand in fact the amongst the largest selling creams in the world. Advertising also could have played a role in consumers and NGO’s realizing that brand advertising of this kind results in a prejudice towards darker skin (the complexion of majority of Indians) and is not socially acceptable. The brand therefore had to move to a campaign that promised women’s empowerment and continues to fight battles with NGO’s and consumer bodies. The brand created a Fair & Lovely Foundation to work on women’s empowerment. So strangely, while the brand reinforced a stereotype, it also created greater consciousness of this promise not being socially acceptable. The Fair & Lovely communications also initiated a male consumer need of fairness. The market leaders of this market typecast the stereotype of the male and female in India: Fair and Lovely, and Fair and Handsome. Many advertising campaigns of today reflect the changing position of women in Indian society. OLXs advertisement shows a woman driving an SUV/Jeep and goes to purchase a used car. While jewelry advertising tends to project a traditional and beautiful woman, be it an actress or any model, Indian women are these days not only being projected in a dainty and delicate manner, but also as bold and beautiful. One of the Titan Raga television commercials has a story of where a woman (played by celebrity, Katrina Kaif) is denied a vacation by her husband, independently calls her mother and goes for a vacation by road. When advertising projects such behavior, it tends to influence women who possess financial resources to behave in an independent manner.

Indian advertising uses family as a stimulus. The Raymond’s television advertisement shows how a son gets a job in Singapore and surprises his mother with not only this good news but also a passport and ticket for her to accompany him. In western cultures, like that of the United States of America, this would be quite ridiculed by young people, where the son would be made fun of as a ‘Mama’s boy’. In Indian culture, there is an appreciation and understanding of the parent’s role in the life of a grown up child. An Airtel advertising says, ‘Dad Kush to Aap
Khush’. However, family is a creative plank for many campaigns. Maruti Suzuki’s SUV ‘Ertiga’ advertising focuses on the large space inside the vehicle to fit a large family. Hyundai Santro was launched in India with the tag line,’ the family car’, with the actor Shahrukh Khan going for a family picnic. A family car, a family insurance, family tour packages, and as an ICICI advertisement says, ‘Bande ache hain’.

The advertising of insurance products tends to focus on the aspect of uncertainty avoidance. India is still and emerging nation, with high levels of unemployment and low disposable income. The fear of failure, the fear of the future tends to get reflected in advertising that follows a problem-solution approach. Usually, the male is responsible for the security of the family and is the provider, reflecting the masculine culture of Indian society. Kotak life Insurance ad shows that if the bread winner of the family is absent, the family would be strongly impacted. HDFC Standard Life Insurance focuses on safety of the family, with the line, ‘Jindagi ke Saath bhi, Jindagi ke baad bhi’. Even an Airtel advertisement says ,’Bas Papa ko khush karo. Who tumhe bahut khush kar sakte hain’. Another advertisement of Harpic shows that in India we do not take risks in case things are not available, and therefore shop at a time for a whole month. Vodafone realizes that customers like to keep only a sufficient balance. Therefore they promote a texting service where they could provide immediate credit for the same.

Indians are also raising their voice in today’s times. The advertising of Tata tea’s ‘Jaago Re’ reinforced a culture of democracy and being active as a citizen of India by going and voting. Health awareness is also reinforced with advertising be it the communications of Tata salt for iodised salt or Saffola for a healthy heart. A campaign created by Pepsi, ‘Change the Game’ encourages Indians to change from conventional thinking and promoting football besides cricket. The ‘Oh Yes, Abhi’ campaign reflects the change in attitude of young people towards wanting things right now rather than having a laid back attitude. Advertising therefore takes this cultural phenomenon of aversion of risk and change and creates a campaign idea in it. Tide’s advertisement calls for a change in traditional male-female roles and emphasizes that both men and women should share the household work and that this work is not only for women. In fact in the television commercial, a mother-in-law brags to her friend that her daughter-in-law earns more than her son. Another Renault Duster television advertisement shows a working mother
visibly upset to leave her baby alone when she has to leave for work. Her husband is projected as an enlightened man who realizes how upset his wife is and therefore decides to take leave for the day and look after the baby. These kind of role depictions of a husband and wife of a household would never take place in earlier Indian advertising. Big brands like Nescafe also try to build their differentiation through the advertising they create. The advertisement which gives the opportunity for a person with a speech problem to be appreciated by an audience over a cup of Nescafe. An advertisement of Hindustan Times shows a boy being socially conscious and pushing a tree that had fallen in the middle of the road, jamming traffic on all sides. While everybody, including adults and politicians were not doing anything about it, this young boy shows everybody the way.

Political advertising campaigns are also today reinforcing Indian culture. The concept of the ‘common man’ was prevalent with India being a new economy with socialist principles before liberalization. ‘Aam Aadmi’ has been a popular political concept. Initially used by the Congress Party, this concept has gained momentum with the prevalence of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and its great victory in the state of Delhi. Symbols of the cap, the ‘jhaadu’ all contributed to the reinforcement of the importance of the ‘common man’ in Indian society.

Advertising also creates lifestyle changes in the Indian consumer. McDonald’s, Pizza Hut, Dominos and other such brands have promoted fast-food eating in India. Television programs have been promoted in advertising. Use of western clothing like jeans, dresses and casual clothing. Valentine’s day is heavily advertised as a day when young people can show their love for each other. Gifting, red roses, dining out, all are cultural norms gaining acceptance in our country because of advertising portraying such life styles. Car advertising promotes families driving out to the countryside or into the city. Starbucks, Café Coffee Day and Barista coffee chains promote going out for coffee with friends and family.

India is a country where high levels of Power Distance are maintained. This was reflected in a very popular advertisement of Naukri.com, where humor is made of an obnoxious boss called Hari Sadu. Levels of hierarchy is maintained in Indian culture, where bosses often are known to be bossy and over-demanding. Raymonds advertising lovingly depicts this when a principal of a school is invited by an alumni for a party, and is shown respect by the student touching his feet.
and by him being welcomed by family members. The Titan advertisement however shows affection to a Professor by showing a class of college students sitting in class and studying, and suddenly they start singing and dancing and present a gift to their Professor. ‘What an Idea, Sirji’ was the popular advertising campaign of Idea cellular provider, where the head of the village decides how things will work in a village. Rajnigandha Pan Masala advertising campaign is also based on power distance, where the line,’Oonch Log, Oonchi Pasand’ became very popular. Another advertisement of this same brand has a seemingly Board, imitating the head of the organization. Indian tend to accept levels of class difference. Rin addresses this when a television commercial shows a woman of modest background being mocked at when she enters and expensive hotel with her mother to celebrate her first salary, but later is saluted by the guard when she enters wearing a white sari. Advertising recognizes the benefits that the rich and wealthy get in India and also makes interesting stories of this. An Axis Band advertisement has the superstar, Deepika Padukone having a meal with her college friends, who expect that she being the superstar she is will pay the bill. She laughs in a friendly manner and tells then that how she is just like them, carrying no money, with just an Axis bank card.

India is a male dominated society and males are considered to be providers of their family. This is reflected in the ICICI Prudential advertisement. The logo of the brand has a red sindhoor indicative of a married woman’s. The earlier campaign was very patriarchal where the son and daughter-in-law was under the protection of the father-in-law, who was the head of the family. The current campaign also has the line ‘Bande Ache Hai’, where the male is projected as the protector who takes care of the woman and child. He tests a plank that goes over water before allowing his family to cross the plank and is highly protective of his wife and child. The family members are shown as highly dependent on him. The advertising is highly provincial, in a society where women are actually becoming more independent. The sense of power enjoyed by males and the patriarchal culture in India is also reflected indirectly in Indian advertising. Men are usually shown driving cars and taking important decisions for the family. Masculine traits of being rough and tough are associated with products like tires and success. Amitabh Bachhan is very commonly used in advertising, despite his advanced age, in advertisements ranging from Cadbury’s to Gujarat Tourism to Parker pen. This is because, besides his ability to constantly reinvent himself by making himself relevant to the Indian audience, he represents the patriarchy.
of India and his popularity reflects the respect for age that is one important aspect of Indian culture.

Individualism is also a culture that tends to get promoted by advertising. Kurkure shows each family member’s characteristic reflected in a flavor. For example, ‘Teekhi College Girl, Dolly’ and ‘Masaledar Bhaiya’. New brands like Hot Star for video streaming use advertising lines like, ‘Go Solo’.

Irreverence to romantic relationships is also projected in the Fast Track – Move On advertising, where the communication is that if a relationship does not work out, then just move on in life. Breaking traditional norms are also projected positively. For example the Kinley advertisement where a girl lies to her parents to have an outing with her friends, and feels bad having told lies. In this advertisement, the sense of hierarchy is evident between father and daughter, and also a social message of how it is good to tell the truth. The Hindu newspaper has a plot where a teacher asks her students to replicate a discussion in the Indian Parliament. The students start throwing chairs, shouting and tearing documents. Humor and irreverence is now becoming part of Indian culture.

Advertising reflects a society’s culture. The Cadbury’s advertising shows the importance of celebration and sharing during festivals. The influence that celebrities have in fashion and aspirations is reflected in the number of advertisements having stars like Amitabh Bachhan, Aamir Khan, Shahrukh Khan, Priyanka Chopra and so many others. Love for cricket is reflected in the popularity of using stars like Dhoni and Sachin Tendulkar.

Food is part of a society’s culture. India has a culture of food that is wheat based in the North zone an rice based in most of the other zones. The ‘dal-chawal’sabzi’ culture is part of most Indian meal plans. Vegetarianism is part of Indian culture. In international flights, the term, ‘non-vegetarian’ is typical of flights from or to India. Navratra meals become advertised during the Navratra season in the north. India has however many cuisines – what with noodles and momos from the North-East, dosa-idli from the south, bhel puri from the west and rassogulla from the east. Within all these regional foods, one brand has cut through India’s diversity of cultures, in terms of food. One whole generation has developed a ‘comfort food’ in Maggi
Masala. Maggi noodles are popular all over India, especially the ‘masala’ flavor. Maggi advertising and its ‘two minute’ formula has created a culture in Indian homes where convenience of cooking a processed food overpowers the problems of health. Of course, Maggi noodles has come with different ranges that speak health like Maggi Atta noodles. We see how advertising has not only developed a taste for noodles (quite alien to the traditional Indian palatte) and endorsed the concept of ‘just two minutes’.

It is possible to summarize that culture is indeed an interesting phenomenon of Indian advertising. Advertisers can use cultural dimensions to create unique brand positioning and build differentiation. This can be seen by looking at the research findings of the three phases and the attempt to update the findings through qualitative and contemporary views. The study will look at how culture can be assessed for advertising so that Indian advertising practitioners can use these dimensions to create more creative and interesting advertising