“Ichha hu agasasama anantaya” (Desire is endless like the sky.)

Lord Mahavira

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: Overview

Advertising is a reality in contemporary society and is often a topic of controversy because of the strong impact and desires it tends to create on targeted consumers. Accounting for about 40% of India’s growing Media and Entertainment industry (as per the FICCI-KPMG Indian Media and Entertainment Report, 2014), the advertising industry in India is over Rs 363 billion in value with print and television being the primary media vehicles each accounting for over 40% of total advertising spent. Consumers are therefore primarily exposed to stimuli in the form of messages given in the advertising, in the various media, especially print and television. The stimuli in the form of advertising is developed by advertising professionals in a manner that is creative and appealing. Advertising aims at meeting advertising objectives and creatively building the efficacy of the promotional strategy of a brand or corporation. In the process, advertising also has an influence on the social dimensions of society, especially culture. This paper studies how advertising in the Print and TV media is reflective of Indian culture. The research primarily looks at the Print medium and also covers some aspects of television, since this is such an important medium of advertising, and cannot be ignored.

This section that introduces the topic of this thesis will cover background reading and key theories in the following areas: culture, consumer behavior key theories, popular culture, the Indian consumer and some advertising theories. The introduction will conclude with the objectives of this study.

Advertising is created to influence consumers to finally purchase the brand, issue or organization being marketed. Its presence in mass-media makes it have an influence, may be greater that just selling a product. Whether a person likes advertising or does not like advertising, he/she has to deal with it, and in some ways get influenced by what is communicated in the advertising. While this study acknowledges that advertising gets created by marketers keeping in mind the culture of
the consumer, the research investigates this and looks at the various dimensions of culture that is there in the advertising.

Culture is a term that is often used loosely – a person is seen as somewhat uncultured when not behaving in a particular manner. Culture is seen in the way groups of people live, in common language, art and music, and in people’s value and belief systems. Significant amount of research has been conducted on cross-cultural advertising, using the dimensions of culture as defined by Hofstede. According to Hofstede (1980), culture is “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another”. Culture influences the identity of a human group. Hofstede distinguishes ‘values’ as individual and ‘cultures’ as societal, and describes the dimensions of culture to primarily include Power Distance, Masculinity versus Femininity, Individualism versus Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance. These dimensions have been used by many researchers in the fields of social science.

India is a country that is known for its 5000 years of rich culture. Indians come from many races including the Adivasis (world’s First Settlers or Negroid aboriginals), the Dravidians, the Aryans, the Mongols and the Semites. Culture is influenced by history, may be from the days of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, and the great Indian epics, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The Vedic period instituted the system of caste that is still prevalent in India, and influences Indian culture. The rise of Buddhism and Jainism not only created new religions in India, but new values. The invasions of the Persians, starting with the invasions by Cyrus, Darius I and Alexander, all influenced the culture of India. Even today, one of the important areas of Gurgaon is Sikendarpur – after Alexander the Great, the Greek ruler. Foreign invasions were not only from the Greeks, but were from the Huns, the Kushanas, the Arabs, the Dutch, French and British. Indian culture was influenced by the dynasties that ruled, be it the Hindu rulers like the Mauryas or the Guptas, or the Muslim rulers like the Mughals. Modern history saw the colonization of India by the British, the fight for independence and the partition of India. Socialism, liberalization, social movements, all these have influenced India’s culture. Culture influences the way consumers spend. The food they eat, the way they celebrate festivals and their lifestyle. Advertising looks at consumer needs and communicates what needs
to be said about a product, brand, organization or an issue. In order to communicate this in an
effective manner, advertising tends to be conscious of the culture of consumers. India is a
diverse country with many states, languages and religion. What more, there are numerous
dialects and people belonging to different socio-economic strata. Culture of a consumer is
influenced by origin of state (from India’s 28 states and 7 union territories ), through the food
habits (the emphasis of wheat in the North of India and rice in the South, East and West of
India), languages spoken, urbanization and earnings of consumers. Consumer needs are in fact
influenced by culture and therefore the subject of consumer culture plays an important role in
the study of Marketing. For example, some Indians are known to eat biscuits with morning tea.
Part of the eating culture of consumers in West Bengal is the eating of Arrow Root biscuits in the
morning. In fact, so many brands have regional preferences because of this ‘regional culture’ of
consumers. Brand positioning is also influenced by the prevailing culture and needs of
consumers. All this influence the culture of Indians and creates diversity in culture and a
pluralistic society. How should advertising deal with this complexity and yet be able to achieve
its communication objective? This becomes even more complicated when it deals with different
types of products and services. A consumer purchases such a variety of products and services –
be it convenience goods, shopping goods, specialty goods, and yes, unsought goods.

This paper studies advertising and its reflections on culture in the context of different product
categories, depending on the level of consumer involvement in the category and the rational or
emotional consumer decision-making. This categorization has been done by other scholars.
Researchers like Zaichkowsky(1985), Laurent and Kapferer (1985) have studied consumer
behavior towards products depending on these 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 have been classified:

**High involvement /rational:** This category includes expensive purchases, for example, financial
services, purchase of a home or car or major appliances and electronics. Purchase of these
products involve an element of financial risk, because of the high price of the products.
Consumers purchasing this category of products tend to go through more of a rational process of decision making, and would look for advertising which has more information, with clear explanations of features and benefits. Examples of products in this category include cars, electronics, real estate or financial services.

**High involvement/emotional:** For consumers, this includes jewelry, weddings, and holiday travel plans. Decision making in this category would be more emotional, despite the high price of the product. For example, the purchase of jewelry for a wedding would be an emotional decision. Or the selection of which holiday destination or hotel to visit. In India, the marriage market like matrimonial advertising for the selection of a husband or wife could also fall into this group. Advertising in this category tends to focus on visual, music and emotional appeals. Examples include perfumes, jewelry, weddings, hotels and holiday travel plans.

**Low involvement/rational:** Low involvement products are relatively lower priced yet are not products that are bought on pure impulse. Though these are bought out of habit or with very routing decision making processes these products require some amount of rationalization in consumer decision-making, because the prices of the products while being low compared to high involvement products, are not at throw-away prices. FMCG products like coffee, hair color, shampoos and detergents would be in this category. Advertising plays an important role in terms of positioning and loyalty building. Examples of these products include lotions, ice-cream party packs, hair oil, cooking oil etc.

**Low involvement/emotional:** These products are priced low, with low risks in purchase, and are purchased on an impulse. They usually offer the benefit of emotional or sensory gratification. Soft drinks, sweets, an entertaining magazine, or a birthday card – all products purchased spontaneously. Inexpensive FMCG products like soaps, noodles, sweets fall in this category.

The critical difference between these two types of products is the role that price plays in consumer decision making and the risks involved in purchase. However, for each type of product, the research has also looked at those products where decision making is rational, logical
and information-seeking, and those that are emotional and based on brand imagery, where there is no direct information seeking in consumer decision making.

To study the cultural nuances in advertising requires insights that are not directly communicated. This paper will attempt at making some sense of advertising through both secondary and primary research. The literature review will help identify the gaps in research for this study. The different phases of the research include a content study of print advertisements of the above four categories, following a practitioners qualitative study and finally a consumer survey. In the content study, the advertising appeals will be identified and the findings will be analyzed in the context of earlier research undertaken by Albers-Miller et al (1996), where advertising appeals were correlated with Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. The findings of the practitioners study and the consumer survey will all be incorporated to identify the cultural phenomena of Indian advertising.

The topic of this research includes many subjects of social sciences like anthropology, psychology and marketing management. The focus of this study however will be on advertising. This research hopes to develop a new tool whereby advertising practitioners can create more effective advertising. The paper will therefore study the existing theories as a background, a review of relevant literature, the communications happening in the market place, practitioners views and consumer perspective to finally arrive at conclusions of the study. These conclusions should help in developing an advertising tool that incorporates consumer culture in advertising planning.

1.2 Culture

The topic of culture has been much written about in the social sciences. Culture has been defined in the Oxford dictionary to include, “the ideas, customs and social behavior of a particular people or society”.

Culture is what a particular group of people possess in terms of characteristics and knowledge, and is manifested in terms of religion, language, food habits, social habits, music and the arts. This paper will look at culture from a marketing perspective, since it forms an essential part of
consumer behavior and determines the success of advertising. Culture has been described by all fields of social science including sociology, anthropology, management and psychology. This background note will explain this concept better with the help of some established models.

There are many models that have been developed to understand culture better. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck defined six cultural orientations: the nature of people, the relationship to nature, the relationship to other people, the modality (doing and being) of human activity, the temporal focus of human activity (future, past and present) and the concept of space (private/public). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner have outlined eight dimensions: Relationship with nature, Relationship with people, Relationship with time, Universalism/particularism, Individualism/communitarianism, Diffuse/specific, Affectivity, Achievement/ascription

A more recent model is called “Globe” (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness) and is a study done by a 14-member international team involving 62 of the world’s cultures. The researchers have come up in this study with nine different dimensions. GLOBE researchers identified the nine units of measurement or nine cultural dimensions. The dimensions are similar to that of Hofstede (Uncertainty Avoidance, Institutional Collectivism, In-Group Collectivism, Gender Egalitarianism, Power Distance), and also included Performance Orientation, Humane Orientation, Assertiveness and Future Orientation (similar to the added dimension by Hofstede).

LMR-model: Another model is the LMR (Linear-, multi- and Re-active cultures) model of Richard Lewis. Countries that are linear active tend to be cultures belonging to the US and European nations, while multi-active nations are Latin American countries and some Arab countries. Reactive countries are those belonging to the Far East like Vietnam, China and Japan. Indian culture tends to be a combination of multi-cultural and reactive. Countries with a culture of ‘linear-active’ are cool factual and decisive planners (Example, USA, European countries, East Europe), while ‘multi-active’ cultures are warm, emotional and impulsive (like countries in Latin American, Middle-East, Africa and India). ‘Reactive’ cultures are courteous, amiable, accommodating, compromising and are good listeners.
Indians are described as being family oriented, having loyalty to a group, having a concept of ‘honor’, having arranged marriages, being success oriented, improvising for problems and being fatalistic. Indians tend to be exposed to foreigners because of the many invasions in India. Indians tend to believe in the concept of ‘karma’ and time being cyclical. Therefore, opportunities need not be grabbed greedily, since opportunity will come again. Class is also a dominating aspect of Indian culture. The model is used largely for organizational behavioral studies and for cross-cultural communications. In terms of advertising, this model can have an implication in terms of having relative insights of the Indian consumer. India has a mix of multi-active and reactive cultural types.

Significant advertising research has been undertaken based on the work done by Hofstede. Edward T Hall’s high context and low context styles also give insights into the topic of culture, and so also the Octapace theory on Cultural Dimensions. This paper will therefore refer to all three approaches.

Hofstede’s Dimensions of Culture: Hofstede (1980), has defined culture as “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. The four primary dimensions of culture are:

**Low versus High Power Distance (PDI).** The first cultural dimension, Power Distance, may be observed in the advertising. Power Distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations expect and accept in terms of attitude that power is unequally distributed. In Hofstede’s research, India scored 77 in Power Distance. This indicates that Indian society believes in a top-down structure, where Indians tend to be dependent on the superiors for direction, accept unequal rights and where leaders are paternalistic. Power is centralized, and communication is from the top.

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.
This dimension refers to the distribution of power between less powerful members and more powerful members of organizations. In more advanced economies, power relations tend to be more consultative or democratic. In developing countries like India, this tends to be more autocratic and paternalistic. Do practitioners feel this is reflected in contemporary Indian advertising, and if so, to what degree?

**Individualistic versus collectivistic cultures (IDV):** The second cultural dimension is Individualism versus Collectivism. Though Indian culture lays great emphasis on family, village and community, Hofstede’s research did rate India as moderate on Individualism, at 48. The issue addressed by this dimension is the degree of interdependence a society has among members. In individualistic societies members tend to focus on themselves or their immediate family. Collectivist societies however deal with communities and loyalty to a group. Advertising creates aspirations. Are Indian aspirations that are projected in print advertising promoting a sense of individualism or collectivism?

Western cultures are known to be more individualistic, while cultures in countries like India tend to take collectivist decisions, depending on a group, be it family, village or community. Is advertising in India making Indians more individualistic than before?

**Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS):** The third cultural dimension, Masculinity versus Femininity is reinforced by projecting aspirations with values like success, money, assertiveness, competition and materialism. 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 scale here ranges from very assertive and competitive (described as ‘masculine’) to modest and caring (or feminine). When the culture in the society is to be the former, it tends to be more masculine, while the latter is feminine. In India, culture tends to be more feminine. Hofstede’s research gave a high masculine score of 56 to India. Success here is defined by achievement and success. Even though is not extremely high in terms of masculinity, visual
displays of success and power are prevalent. While India is also a spiritual country, work is the considered to be the center of one’s life and visible symbols of success plays an important role. No wonder, luxury cars have found such market potential in India. The role that advertising plays in creating a more male or female culture is of significance.

**Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI):** deals with the extent to which members of a society feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. India scored 40 in this dimension. This dimension deals with the phenomenon that the future can never be known. This ambiguity brings anxiety and members of a culture therefore fell threatened by such unknown conditions. In India, there tends to be an acceptance for imperfection, compromise and an ability to improvise. Does advertising play a role in making people conform or more accepting of differences. The fourth cultural dimension, Uncertainty Avoidance 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?

**Long-Term versus Short-term orientation:** This dimension was added to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, keeping in mind Asian markets. Respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and the qualities of thrift and perseverance are incorporated in this dimension. The score for India is 61 on this dimension. Indian philosophy mostly believes in the concept of ‘karma’, where time is not linear. Therefore there tends to be a level of tolerance and acceptance on a changing game-plan, destiny and a changing reality. Does Indian advertising project respect for tradition, fulfilling of social obligations, and the qualities of thrift and perseverance? This dimension will not be covered in this study 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.

**Edward T Hall’s High Context and Low Context Styles:** Another well known model is the model of Edward Hall with the dimensions of space (personal/physical, time monochromic/polychromic, friendship and high context/low context language. India according to Hall’s theory, would be a high context society, where the culture is governed more by intuition
or feelings rather than reason, and the culture is collectivist, more indirect in communications and more formal. High context cultures tend to use flowery language, are humble and apologetic in communications.

Compare this to low context societies of Europe where the USA, where the culture is more rational, linear, direct and to the point. Advertising is stimuli that is created to bring about a planned response. The stimuli developed for a culture, will tend to reflect the high context and low context nature of the society. In fact much of consumer research is to study these aspects, so that the advertising developed is of relevance to the defined culture.

Advertising in low context cultures tend to be informative and have a more hard-sell approach while those in high context countries are likely to be emotional and have a soft-sell approach.

**OCTAPACE Cultural Dimensions**: Cultural dimensions have also been described in an organizational development theory called, OCTAPACE viz., Openness, Confrontation, Trust, Authenticity, Proaction, Autonomy, Collaboration and Experimentation – cultures that are required for successful organizations. Human behavior and practices therefore set culture.

“I don’t want my home to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible, but I refuse to be blown off my feet, by any”

**Mahatma Gandhi**

Culture is a very broad topic from areas like anthropology, sociology and Human Resource Development, while Advertising is a field of Marketing and Management. Since the paper has a focus on the Consumer, the theories reviewed will be that in Consumer Behavior. How does culture and advertising influence consumer behavior?

Culture plays an important role in market segmentation. These are seen in the sociological or group perspective and the anthropological or cultural perspective. The Socio Cultural environment is one of the key External influences that works as an input in consumer decision making. Consumers of the same culture tend to share the same values, beliefs and customs, and could share similar demographics, ethnicity or some other factor. Marketers target a culturally
distinct segment in order to develop unique brand positioning. Within cultures, there are sub-
cultures which have their own unique culture. In India, cultural interpretations of product
categories of, for example, a personal care product, can vary from region to region. In other
words, the concept of personal care can vary according to which state a consumer emerges from,
and accordingly, the consumer will purchase the required products. A good example will be the
use of coconut oil as a personal care product in Kerala. On the other hand, especially with the
spread of the internet, the consumers are getting more integrated, and discovering common
needs. Cross-culturally though, marketers tend to adapt products in foreign markets, like the
Aloo-Tikki burger of McDonald’s in India.

1.3 Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is a subject by itself in marketing. It’s relevance to this research is that the
study needs to understand how consumers purchase different types of products. While there are
many theories of consumer behavior, one of the basic tools looks at consumer behavior in a
comprehensive manner, taking into account external and internal stimuli and processes. The
consumer decision making process are three distinct but interlocking stages: the input stage, the
process stage and the output stage, as is shown in the Model of Consumer Decision Making in
Figure 1. Consumer culture is an external stimulus that influences how a consumer behaves to
purchase a product. This determines the value proposition of the product where the consumer
benefits extrinsically through social status, and intrinsically through affiliation and connection
with the community.

This is the most commonly used model of consumer behavior. The model looks at how external
and internal factors contribute to the buying decision process and the final purchase decision.
The consumer behavior here is seen as a computer that has an input, process and output. The
model is therefore referred to by many practitioners, since eventually, advertising plays a role of
helping in making the consumer purchase the product or the brand. The model is shown in the
next page.
Ethnocentrism and Cosmopolitanism

Consumers who feel that it is inappropriate or wrong to purchase foreign-made goods are highly ethnocentric. Country of origin therefore becomes a strong appeal for such consumers where these consumers are predisposed to purchase products from their country of origin. Consumer Ethnocentrism, Antecedents and Consequences have been outlined in the model given below.

The model elaborates the different aspects of Socio-psychological, economic, political and demographic antecedents that influence consumer ethnocentrism. When consumers are more multi-cultural, they tend to be more cosmopolitan in their outlook. The focus of this model, as shown in Figure 2 is consumer ethnocentrism.
Indian consumers are often depicted with cultural stereotypes of Indian society. Gender stereotypes are present in brands like Fair and Lovely, where women in the earlier advertising were shown being able to get a handsome husband after using the fairness cream, and in current advertising feeling empowered with fairness to be able to get a good job. Indian culture has a preference for fair skin, as is seen in many matrimonial advertising or websites where a bride that is fair is often stated as a requirement. However, women are being projected as more modern and contemporary vis-à-vis the earlier image of only being a home-maker. The Indian concept of the joint family, spending at weddings and festivals are all patterns of culture being reinforced by Indian advertising. A brand of chocolates like Cadbury’s was able to transcend from being a product for children (in the 1980’s) to becoming an alternative to ‘mithai’ for weddings and festivals.

The process of involvement and information search varies for different types of products. For example, purchases with minimal personal importance have low involvement, and are priced relatively low. These are called low-involvement products. For products where there is
extensive information search and high prices, consumers get more involved in the decision making. These products are called high involvement products. The two most important determinants of high or low involvement are the degree of personal relevance and the price per unit of the product.

Consumers from a young age acquire the skills, knowledge, attitudes and experiences to make purchase decisions. This is known as a process of socialization. Socialization begins in childhood and extends through out a person’s life. Advertising plays an important role in this socialization process of the consumer.

Social Class is another aspect of culture that influences consumer behavior. Three status factors are commonly used to determine social class. These are:

1. Relative wealth (amount of economic assets)
2. Power (the degree of personal choice or influence over others)
3. Prestige (the degree of recognition received from others)

According to the Social Comparison theory, consumers normally compare their own material possessions with those owned by others to determine their relative social standing. Social class determines consumer choice of clothing, fashion, shopping, saving, spending and credit. Lifestyles and media habits vary according to social class.

The model below depicts the influences of culture on behavior. The concept of subjective culture is defined as supranational (cross national), national (unique to a country) and to a group like family, work groups, friendship groups etc.. Subjective culture, consisting of Regional, ethnic, religious, linguistic, national, professional and organizational groups along with personality traits influence cognitive beliefs, practices and values. This in turn creates attitude and social norms, together which build behavioral intention. All this results in the change in behavior. It is important for marketers to each of these elements in order to bring about behavioral change. Culture therefore influences behavior.
Cultural associations connect well with consumers and brands need to make appropriate use of them. That is because culture is learned through formal learning (family and community). Informal learning (imitation of others in the group) and technical learning (teachers). Marketers believe that advertising reflects the behavior or aspirations of potential consumers. Advertising therefore reflects the culture of the consumer. Symbols are also used to convey a cultural meaning to a brand. Brands are said to be symbols of popular culture. Sometimes advertising reinforces the ritualistic behavior of consumers, like the legend of Santa Claus in Christmas. Usually rituals have typical products associated with it. For example, a birthday has a birthday cake, candles and gifts.

Culture is also transmitted through different social institutions. The primary agent for enculturation is family. Educational Institutions and Houses of worship (temple, church, mosque etc.) also play a key role in determining the culture of a consumer. Another important institution is the influence of the mass media – consisting of television, print, radio, outdoor and the internet. The internet has created very important virtual communities for sharing cultural
values and bringing about the rise of social marketing. Culture is dynamic and therefore creates an exciting world of consumers for marketers to promote their products to. Advertising is part of contemporary culture and according to consumer behavior specialists, plays a role on societal values. While one tasteless advertisement may have little impact on the culture of consumers, cumulatively, advertising may create cultural changes in attitude or behavior amongst consumers.

Advertising that happens on web sites also tend to be influenced by culture. Consumers tend to respond to data best when content is adapted to their local needs. Websites employ colors and layouts based on the country of origin and use symbols and cultural markers specific to the culture of a country.

In some societies, giving gifts is an essential part of culture. In India, while gifts are usually given when a child is born, birthdays, anniversaries, weddings (especially to the bride) and any special occasions. The gifting market however is not so mature like that in the western markets. For example, in the USA, it is common to state in wedding invitation cards, ‘No box gifts, please’, implying that gifts should only be in cash. Couples also register with stores to specify the gifts that they want, so that gifts can be as per their taste. In India, this practice would be seen as not acceptable or bordering on being vulgar. In the USA, this is an accepted practice. The per unit cost of a gift in a more mature market like the USA would also be higher than that in India. India however does have a large gifting market associated with weddings, typically termed as ‘lehn-dehn’ or ‘give-take’ where gifts are usually purchased more by the bride’s side of the family for members in the groom’s side, and the bride is laden with a trousseau that in some communities, are visually displayed.

Culture also influences the ability to innovate of consumers. Consumers in France and Germany showed (Page 403) that consumers more likely to exhibit an inclination to innovate if their culture can be characterized by small power distance (they value equality, not hierarchical power), weak uncertainty avoidance (consumers accept uncertainty and take each day as it comes), and masculinity (the culture places value on masculine traits such as high earnings, achievement, assertiveness).
The Value Paradox: Paradoxes are statements that seem contradictory but are actually true. It reflects a dilemma – I want to be modern in the office, but I am very traditional at home. The commonly used term, ‘Think global, act local’ is a paradox. Both thinking and acting are equally influenced by culture. Technology, media and the internet have supposed to have created a global village – however, use of technology and media is influenced by the culture one comes from. For example, a family that considers themselves more culturally intellectual would not watch certain kinds of Television programs, and have their own uses of technology.

Advertising reflects society’s values and culture. To be effective, advertising must create meaningful associations of society’s values to consumers, and be linked with consumer values. Advertising must reflect the role the brand plays in the lives of the consumer and bring about the appropriate feelings and emotions. It becomes important to understand the concept of culture.

Culture has many meanings in terms of consumer behavior, though biologically, culture has a meaning of bacteria are tested in blood tests, agriculture and horticulture, or in art, it takes forms of art like classical and contemporary music, theater, painting and sculptor. Consumer behavior is influenced by culture in terms of the values, attitudes, beliefs, artefacts and other meaningful symbols used in human behavior and this becomes control mechanisms and rules for the governing of human behavior. Culture is a way of life. “How do we do things here, how we feel and how we think”. The collective mental programming or glue that binds groups together and determines behavior. Cultural universals are values, norms, or other cultural traits that are found in all cultures. Anthropologist George Murdock concluded that all human groups have certain cultural universals: customs about courtship, cooking, marriage, funerals, games, laws, music, myths, incest taboos, and toilet training are present in all cultures. Cultural characteristics also diffuse from one group to another. A dominant culture is imported and diffused into another culture through cultural leveling, and through this process cultures become similar to one another. Western industrial culture is usually adapted by emerging economies.

Consumer behavior is influenced by culture in terms of many facets. The framework set by Hofstede shows the expressions of culture where culture is seen as an onion, with different layers of symbols, heroes, rituals and values. This gets transferred into external rituals,
perceptions of heroes (living, dead or imaginary) and superficially, the manifestation of symbols. Symbols are words, gestures, pictures or objects that signify a particular meaning. It becomes represented as follows:

Figure 4: Culture as an Onion (Hofstede, 1991)

Hofstede’s framework of looking at the different layers of an onion, consisting of symbols, rituals, heroes and values, is often used for advertising. Symbols are commonly used in advertising since they carry a particular meaning for those who share a culture. Some brands like Coca-Cola and Nike have in fact become global symbols. The next ‘layer’, heroes become role models and vary according to cultures and countries. Indian advertising commonly uses celebrities who are actors or cricket players. Rituals are developed by communities as a collective activity, and can vary from religious rituals to the ritual of a family having dinner and watching cricket together. Harley Davidson’s community riding over week-ends is an example of this. At the core of culture is values that often people are not consciously aware of. All these elements are directly or indirectly reflected in advertising.
Brands are part of a ritual in society and advertising helps make the ritual a reality. Fast food like pizza is a ritual. Celebrities like Michael Jordan become heroes. Culture therefore manifests itself in terms of these different layers, where to the naked eye, the symbols get observed, but through the heroes and the rituals, the values of the society get reflected. The study by Hofstede and the dimensions of culture are central to research in advertising and human behavior. Essentially advertising considers that audiences perceive advertising selectively based on cultural norms and manifestations. Advertising that do not match with the culture of the receiver will be less effective that advertising that takes into consideration these cultural dimensions.

Consumer behavior is influenced by the language used in advertising. In India, a consumer is usually exposed to English, Hindi and the Regional language, or in some cases, the Regional dialect. The way advertising uses language is an expression of culture. Most advertising in India is created in English. Translations to vernacular languages become difficult because often there are not similar concepts in the culture of that region. For example a simple ‘thank you’ in many Indian languages gets translated in a very formal tone, and often does not have a direct translation. When advertising is translated into Indian languages, good advertising agencies reinvent the concept in the language, hoping to retain the same advertising idea. When the idea is not acceptable to the culture of the Region, re-creating the concept in a language becomes a challenge.

Language, codes, signs, symbols and gestures are all rituals of culture and define cultural groups. Colors also have a special significance in certain cultures. For example, the color red, used for Indian weddings is seen as auspicious, while white is a color of mourning – though for the Indian Christians, white is a wedding color. The diversity of India in terms of all these phenomena implies mass communications in the form of advertising is more difficult. The concepts of time, space, imagery and music all vary according to cultures. With the success of western music and western brands all over the world, there is an emerging global world culture. However, culture tends to give people a sense of identity and gives a strong emotional bonding. Hence even global brands are localizing and adapting products to suit local needs. While Michael Jackson music may be popular all over the globe, local music (like those from Bollywood or any regional
specific films) has its own popularity. Cultural values determine the way consumers think or their cognitive process. Understanding the concept of culture and the reflections of culture in advertising will make advertising that much more effective. Consumer thinking pattern varies according to the Region one comes from in India. The popular culture of the Northern states may vary from that of the East or West or South. Advertising in India however looks at commonalities and creates brand communications that can go across national television channels and can hold the same idea in different languages across the country. In order to bring about consumer engagement, advertising must be able to reflect people’s values, behavior, emotions and customs.

1.4 Popular Culture

Popular Culture as defined by Raymonds Williams (1983) is often considered complicated. Popular culture consists of a particular way of life of a group of people, whether it is through religion, sports, festivals or national festivals. Culture also reflects an ideology of this group of people. Popular culture is culture that is favored by people. It is sometimes described as being mass produced commercial culture and reflects the authentic nature of people. Storey gives 6 definitions of popular culture:

1. The quantitative definition of culture is that of things being cultured are given a high status. This includes high-brow and intellectual aspects of art.

2. The second definition includes anything that does not have that high stature becomes popular culture.

3. A third definition describes contemporary culture with "mass culture" and ideas. Advertising would be included in this definition along with general commercial culture.

4. Another definition associates "pop culture" as an "authentic" culture of the people.

5. Culture can also been seen with a political dimension where there is a struggle between groups in a society.

6. A postmodernist approach to popular culture emerges from urbanization and industrialization and is dynamic and constantly changing with place and time.

Raymond Williams on the other hand analyzed culture into three different categories:
1. ‘Ideal’ culture is the state of perfection in universal values, where culture is a process of human perfection.

2. The ‘documentary’ record is the “body of intellectual and imaginative work in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded”.

3. The “social” definition of culture looks at culture as a way of life, with emphasis on life’s meanings, values and the ‘structure of feeling’.

Culture also is reflected in the philosophy (like Marxist or Democratic) of a nation, and in terms of the language used by the people. The signs used in language, both explicit and implicit are studied in a science called ‘semiology’. The mythology existing in a society also becomes important. In the context of advertising, if there is an advertisement with the main element being a black French soldier saluting the French flag. This becomes, in semiology, the primary sign and becomes what is called a ‘signifier’. At the first level this is a simple image, but at the second level is a positive image of French imperialism. Cultural codes are analyzed and connotations are produced. The context in which this ad is released also influences the connotations. For example if it was released in a publication in France like the Socialist Review, the same ad would be looked at with irony. On the other hand when it gets released in a lifestyle publication like Paris Match, the connotation is one of French imperialism.

One of the most popular cultural symbols of young Indians today is the use of the mobile phone and the smart phone. An interesting cultural nuance of mobile phone usage, typically Indian is the concept of giving a ‘missed call’. This consumer behavior gave rise to the growth of direct marketing organizations like Zipdial who build data bases by asking consumers to give a missed call for latest cricket updates.

1.5 The Indian Consumer

Advertisers develop campaigns aimed at the Indian consumer, with the knowledge that the consumer’s culture is influenced by his or her religion, geographic region, social class, family structure, occupation and economic status. Advertising reflects the lifestyle, popular culture and aspirations of the consumer while communicating the value proposition of the product.
What influences consumer decision making for the Indian consumer? India is a country with many different types of cultures. The Joint family co-exists with the nuclear family, and now with live-in relationships. Earlier, the joint family relied on the head of the family to take major decisions, and each member had clearly defined roles. Joint families today are still common in many parts of India, but family environments are made more modern and contemporary. For example, a mother-in-law may go with her daughter-in-law for a drink in the bar. The importance of personal space is also respected in today’s joint families. Nuclear families in India too have had transformations. Increasingly, gender roles are not so clearly defined, and men are now expected to help in household duties. The respect for each other’s jobs is also a phenomenon that reduces gender inequality, and families realize the important contribution made by each member. Nuclear families in today’s India tend to be more cosmopolitan and open to new ideas. The new emerging segment in India is the usually young live-ins who lead lives without the expectations of family roles. Consumption patterns would vary according to which segment a consumer belongs to. The Boston Consultancy Group has identified another consumer group consisting of a single member household. In Western economies like the USA and France, the percentage of such households are as large as 27% and 35% respectively. In China and Brazil, this is 9-10%. In India this has doubled in the last 10 years, from 4% to 2%.

According to Rama Bijapurkar, in her book, ‘We are like that only. Understanding the Logic of Consumer India’, in terms of socio-economic classifications, the Indian consumer consists of many segments. The tip of the pyramid consists of the very rich, who are on par with the richest in the world. This would be the SEC A1 category. SEC A and B are the prospering and spending segment, where the B segment would include the booming middle class. SEC C and R1 consists of the ‘middle India, and SEC D, E1 and R2 consists of ‘the mass market’. The poor but consuming India would be SEC E2 and R3. According to Bijapurkar, the basis of the cultural foundations of India is that consumers are discontent. The Indian consumer has become more pragmatic. The consumer is excited about the Information, Communications and Technology era, and is in a rush to catch up with the rest of the world. This has also brought about an exposure to the world, and therefore more discontent amongst Indian consumers. While traditional Indian consumer was patriarchal, today there is more of a level playing field.
and move to egalitarianism. Earlier the focus was on well defined roles or ‘dharma’. Today consumers are happy to have ill-defined roles. Patience and passivity were some of the characteristics of the Indian consumer, and these have changed to assertiveness and impatience. Indian consumers are a mosaic of traditional thought and modern living. The author outlines some cultural themes that define the Indian consumer:

- Consumers now understand that technology and the internet allows them to be heard and seen. This gives even the poor more negotiating power and empowerment.
- Social consciousness has been brought about by the increase in the number of NGO’s and accessibility to financial models that promise a bright future.
- Hybrid models of ‘jugaad’ which allows for improvised solutions at an affordable cost.
- Morality and ideology get adapted to the context in which consumers exist. Today’s Indian, however traditional is willing to accept change in values.
- Focus on the child and the future of children in the family is most important.

Some of the typical characteristics of the Indian consumer are also the following:

- **Concept of the Indian family.** In Gitanjali Prasad’s book, The Great Indian Family, she says that Indian families are now going through major transitions. Some of the key changes are the increasing numbers of working women, the rise of nuclear families and the changing role of the patriarchy. Is this reflected in Indian advertising?

- **Gender stereotypes.** Men are usually depicted as macho, adventurous and are the key economic providers of their family. Women on the other hand, usually take on their husband’s family name, are depicted as gentle, kind, loving and focus on their roles as wives and mothers. How are males and females portrayed in Indian advertising? Is advertising reinforcing gender stereotypes or is it bringing about a change in role definitions of males and females. When women are used in advertising as sex symbols, does this reinforce gender stereotypes or does it conflict with the traditional view of women in India.
• **Use of Humor.** Humor is commonly used in advertising and plays an important role in advertising and social communications. When humor is used in Indian advertising, does it bring about any social change, like for example, the ability to laugh at oneself, or have a greater sense of humor. Studies have associated humor with culture, in evaluating advertising effectiveness.

• **Success.** Advertising very often uses success as a benefit of using a product. For example, the energy given by Bournvita to bring home the trophy. Or the benefits of a good job or living standard. Does advertising play a role in making children strive to be more successful? Do individuals aspire for a better standard of living because of advertising?

• **Fairness.** Though most Indians have skin complexion that is wheat color or brown, fairness of complexion is generally valued in India. Even today, matrimonial websites and advertisements asks for a ‘fair bride’. The success of the fairness cream, Fair and Lovely, and the use of advertising communication that so blatantly promotes fair skin to signify a culture that does not consider this stereotype to be that negative. Of course, due to the efforts of NGOs there has been more awareness that the creation of such stereotypes can be harmful to society.

**1.6 Advertising**

Kotler defines advertising as any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas goods, or services by an identified sponsor. Advertising is an important investment for organizations in their marketing efforts and one of the most critical element in integrated marketing communication. Advertising is a form of mass-communication and therefore is impersonal in nature. How does advertising work? As far back as 1874, a US retailer said the much quoted line used in most advertising classes, "Half my advertising is wasted I just don't know which half”.

Yet there is a professional approach to advertising, and good campaigns create winning brands and play a key role in the success of marketing. The essence of approaching advertising in a professional way is to treat it not as just a creative stimuli (‘the advertising must be catchy’), but to approach it with a marketing orientation. Marketing objectives get transformed to
advertising objectives. Setting of objectives therefore is very important. Advertising can have objectives that inform, persuade, remind or reinforce a value proposition. In order to set objective in a systematic manner, there is a theory called DAGMAR. This stands for ‘Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results’. Advertising objectives are set in a manner that are measurable so that the results of the advertising can be assessed. In this way, advertising can be created not just as a piece of design, but as communications that can be set in an objective manner and assessed well. The AIDA model is also commonly used to set advertising objectives. This is a model of cognitive learning. The AIDA Promotional Model and the Tricomponent Model is uses the concepts of Attention, Interest, Desire and Action which is cognitive (for Attention), Affective (for Interest and Desire) and Conation (for Behavior).

To get the attention and awareness of consumers, one could use cognitive stimuli, that is information or knowledge based. Interest and Desire is usually an affective or emotional process, and finally conation is a behavioral process that makes the consumer act to purchase the product. When a product is just launched, there is an amount of cognition that is usually required, even if it is a very common fast moving consumer good. Launch advertising is usually created for this with a focus on product or service. When Interest and Desire is to be created the focus becomes on creating the intangibles for the purpose of differentiation. Brands in most product categories have very low brand differentiation. It is the emotional intangibles that create the brand differentiation. Objectives that intend to bring about change in behavior are very often or linked to promotional offers or in-store benefits. At each stage of this cognitive or affective learning it is important to remember the culture of the consumer so that stimuli may be developed to get the best results.

In early days, advertisers felt that it was only important to convey the features and physical attributes of the product, to sell the product. This was termed the ‘Product Era’. With advertising professionals being so closely connected with the entertainment industry, advertisers then felt that advertising should be entertaining, and therefore focused on image. This was termed the ‘Image Era’. It was only during the 1950’s with the popularity of Marketing that two brand managers of General Electric, Al Ries and Jack Trout developed the concept of brand positioning in advertising. The essence of the ‘Positioning Era’ was that there were too many
messages and too little absorption of these messages by the consumer. Marketers had to deal with this situation. The Brand Managers therefore created the concept of the ‘Product Ladder’. In the consumers mind exists a number of ladders – each representing a product, example, cola drinks, automobiles etc. However, as markets mature, more ladders set in the mind of the consumer. Each ladder has between 7 to 12 steps (or so). On each step is a brand with a unique positioning. Usually the Number 1 brand occupied the top slot of the ladder, as the Best Position, and the Number 2 brand took the Against position. (Coke as the leader would have the Number 1 position, and Pepsi would have the Number 2 position.). The former is a leadership positioning of a champion, and the latter is that of an aggressive challenger. The Product Ladder also has steps for the ‘nicher’ and the new brand in the category. Follower brands find it a challenge to create differentiation. These often have to do so based on imagery, brand personality, usage situations or through other creative means. New brands of a category have the challenge of finding an empty slot in a Product Ladder so that they can create imagery that is undifferentiated. When differentiation happens due to uniqueness of the product, it becomes a Unique Selling Proposition (or USP). Whether advertising is created based on a USP or based on any slot in the Product Ladder, advertising needs to consider the demographics and psychographics of the target audience. The culture of the Target Audience definitely cannot be overlooked, and in fact could be strategically the basis of a winning advertising campaign.

Various theories of consumer behavior and communications have been the basis for successful advertising. Advertising is a persuasive tool. What aspect of advertising persuades a consumer to purchase a product? This is a very difficult question to answer. Persuasion theories like the theory of reasoned action helped researchers to quantify and measure inputs to behavioral intentions. The theory assumes that thoughts must mediate actions. The theory is therefore criticized because consumers also make spontaneous and impulsive decisions. The most popular Persuasion theory is the Elaboration Likelihood Model. This theory proposes two routes to persuasion: the central route and the peripheral route. The former resembles that of the theory of reasoned action, where consumer attitudes are changed through a rational process of quality of arguments and effortful thought process. On the other hand, the peripheral route of attitude formation is through persuasion that is emotional such as mood, source attractiveness and heuristics. The theory says that when target audiences have both the ability and the motivation
to process the message, the likelihood of the message elaboration is high, it is better to use the central route of persuasion. When the likelihood of message elaboration is low due to the lack of motivation or ability to process information, advertising should take the peripheral route to persuasion. The implication of this is that the quality of the message may have little effect on persuasion, when the motivation or ability to process the argument is low, but in such a situation, emotive cues like background music, may have stronger effects. Attitudes that are formed through the central route is more accessible and predictive of behavior, whereas that formed by the peripheral route is more difficult to assess. The ELM model states that over time, consumers learn about the marketer’s persuasion tactics and in the process, they become better able to respond to such stimuli.

Consumer motives can be rational or emotional. Rationality is very often thought of in the economic sense, but also implies that consumers sets objective criteria for product selection, like size, weight, price or fuel-efficiency. On the other hand, emotional motives tend to be personal or subjective, with motives like pride, fear, affection or status. However, human behavior being so complex, also raises the point that what seems rational to one may seem emotional to another, especially when it affects consumers belonging to different cultures. However, both rational and emotional motives fulfill consumer needs. Advertising in fact serve as cues to arouse these consumer needs.

The theories behind arousal of human motives help in understanding the advertising process. The behaviorist school considers emotional arousal and this theory of motivation believes in impulse purchase, where a buying situation is determined by external stimuli (like advertising). The cognitive school however believes in goal achievement based on needs and past experiences being reasoned, categorized and transformed into attitude or behavioral change. Brand communications therefore use functional appeals, symbolic appeals or hedonic appeals. In India, because of a relatively low per capita income, most appeals are linked with a “price-benefits” consideration. Functional appeals use the cognitive school and reason out a ‘reason why’, symbolic appeal are emotional in nature and reflect status, prestige or a cultural aspect of the consumer, while hedonic appeals are experiential and sensory in nature. Brands need to track the culture of consumers to be relevant over time.
The creative process of advertising plays an important role in creating successful advertising. All advertising, whether it aims at the cognitive, affective or behavioral, attempts to be different and unique. Advertisers therefore use different advertising appeals as stimuli, so that they can be noticed by the target audience and are able to meet the advertising objectives. While good campaigns very often have interesting and catchy lines (like Red Bull gives you wings), the essential characteristic of a good advertising campaign is whether there is a ‘Big Idea’ in the campaign. Award winning advertising is often criticized to be so smart that it does nothing for the product. Advertising therefore has to have a mix of creativity and commercial value. Advertising appeals can be of many different kinds, and researchers have categorized them in different ways. Essentially the advertising appeals must work for the target audience, depending on their demographic and psychographic profile. Since advertising is an impersonal medium, its biggest criticism is that it does not engage the consumer. Advertising therefore needs to be used along with other media of integrated marketing communications like public relations, direct marketing etc.. The creative tone and creative strategy of advertising needs to be defined so that the campaign is of value to the brand for a period of time, and not merely serving tactical needs. When advertising performs a strategic role of brand positioning, the outcome is that the brand equity increases and the brand positioning is able to sustain over a period of time (for example the Marlboro campaign). While creativity of an advertising campaign can be researched to check on its effectiveness, many advertising professional believe that too much research tends to kill good creative ideas. However advertising needs to fulfill its commercial objective. Most advertising agencies complain that marketers find that creative advertising tends to be very risky to use. They complain that advertising agencies have an archive of creative campaigns that do not get used. However, in the words of Ogilvy, “In the modern world of business, it is useless to be a creative, original thinker unless you can also sell what you create.”

It is very popular to use celebrities in Indian advertising. The hindi film industry has in fact played a key role in formulating different aspects of Indian lifestyle, festivities and dance. Advertising therefore depends on celebrities to bring about notice ability of the advertising, and more important to bring about image associations on to the brand being advertised. The Source models explain this practice. The Source Credibility Model says that the message is effective depending on the perceived level of expertise and trustworthiness of an endorser. The Source
Attractiveness Model contends that the effectiveness of the message depends on similarity, familiarity and liking for an endorser.

This study therefore deals with consumer behavior, advertising and culture, all topics that are difficult to quantify. However, the research aims at dealing with this subject through a study of existing advertising, getting the views of practitioners or experts, and finally undergoing a consumer survey.

1.7 Objectives

This study will look at contemporary Indian advertising in terms of the cultural dimensions, in three phases. The research will be initiated with a content study of representative samples of large advertisers. The next phase will have practitioners of marketing and advertising giving their views on how culture is reflected in advertising. Finally, a consumer perceptual and opinion study will be undertaken to gauge the cultural dimensions of advertising. The purpose of this study is to help advertisers realize the dimensions of culture that consumers see in advertising across the four product categories (HIR, HIE, LIR and LIE and also assess how positive or negative are the cultural stimuli in the advertising. The research will aim at meeting the following objectives:

1. To undertake a descriptive study of advertising across industrial sectors and undertake a content study of the social dimensions of the advertising. 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 assess the understanding of advertisers, viz ad agencies and advertisers regarding their understanding of the cultural dimensions of advertising.
4. To study consumer responses to the cultural stimuli and get consumer opinion regarding which cultural stimuli is perceived as positive and which is negative for various product categories.

5. To develop a framework that reinforces the role of cultural appeals in creating effective advertising.

The findings of the study will help advertisers develop campaigns that are not only more sensitive to the Indian consumers’ cultural values, but also be more effective in terms of message and visual delivery. It must be noted that the current practice of advertising and marketing practitioners is to plan for advertising so that advertising is treated in a more objective manner, and not just developed on the basis of appeal. The process of planning for advertising takes place with the disciplines followed by different marketing organizations and advertising agencies. Advertising has to create a balance between planning for good advertising and yet breaking rules with creativity that gets noticed and is unique. Most of the advertising agencies, be it Lowe Lintas, J W Thompsons or Leo Burnett (all ad agencies that have been associated with the researcher of this thesis), follow the basic agenda that includes sections that look at where the brand is currently (in terms of the market, the consumer, communications, environment, communication problems and communication opportunities), where the brand wants to be (in terms of the target audience and communication objectives), how the brand can meet the objectives (in terms of communications and creative strategy, media opportunities) and finally how to measure the results of the strategy. This research will add another section on the strategy of advertising planning, where one looks at how to meet objectives in light of the cultural dimensions that advertising needs to address.