CHAPTER – 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Culture

Culture has been increasingly viewed as influencing the daily life and behavior of the individuals. It is man-made part of environment and it largely determines the course of our lives (Herskovits 1969 p.305). Winick (1958 p.144) elucidates that it is everything that is "non biological and socially transmitted in a society, including artistic, social, ideological, and religious patterns of behavior, and the techniques of mastering the environment." The term ‘culture’ still remains elusive and fuzzy, which has been defined and interpreted in innumerable ways. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) have reviewed about one hundred and sixty four different definitions and the conceptions associated with culture (Henry 1976 p.122; Herskovits 1969 p.305; Usunier 2000 p.4). Groeschi and Dohetry (2000 p.12) opine that the often quoted work of Kroeber and Kluckhohn in literature of identifying more than 164 definitions of culture suggests that culture defies a single all purpose definition and there are almost as many meanings of the culture as people using the term. Different definitions of "culture" reflect different theoretical bases for understanding, or criteria for evaluating, human activity. In general, the term culture denotes the whole product of an individual, group or society of living beings. It includes technology, art, science, moral systems and the characteristic behaviors and habits of the selected living entities. In particular, it has specific more detailed meanings in different domains of human activities.

Culture operates at various levels of society: nation, industry, occupation, corporate and organization (Groeschi and Doherty 2000 p.15). In International research the operation of culture at the national level is widely followed to understand the cross-cultural differences between the different nationalities (Kale and Barnes 1992; Merritt 1998; Witkowski and Kellner 1998; Keillor and Hult 1999; Naumov and Puffer 2000; Vishwanathan, Childers and Moore 2000; Briley, Morris and Simonson 2000; Hofstede 2001; Pheng and Yuquan 2002;
Vliert 2003; Allick and McCrae 2004; Allik an Realo 2004; Sternquist, Byun and Jin 2004; Carr and Harris 2004; Dwyer, Mesak and Hsu 2005; Malhotra et al.2005). Though there have been different frameworks proposed by different scholars for operationalization of culture but Hofstede’s (1980) framework of cultural values at the national level has been the most famous and widely used for calculating the cultural values of nations.

Hofstede’s (1980) national culture framework is by far the most influential framework (Steenkamp 2001 p.31). Hofstede has been cited 1,101 times on the Social Citations Index from 1987 to 1997 whereas Edward Hall’s Beyond culture (1976), which is a rival culture theory has been cited just 147 times (Sivakumar and Nakata 2001 p.556). Till the publication of Hofstede’s book most of the research was “atheoretical”, simply comparing a managerial phenomenon in different countries and it was only after Hofstede’s work that measured dimensions of culture began to be linked to every aspect of management (Triandis 2001a p.17). Bond (1994) regards Hofstede’s work as “godsend, providing the integration of cultural differences that was so desperately needed” (Allick and Realo 2004 p.32). Hofstede (1980 p.25) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”. Hofstede conducted research between 1967 and 1973 using 116,000 questionnaires on IBM employees from 72 countries (Hofstede 2001 p.41). The items of the questionnaire on the basis of their correlations were divided into four groups that pointed to the four basic problems that every society has to deal with and represented the four dimensions of national cultures (Hofstede et al. 2007). The fifth dimension was added on the basis of research by Michael Harris Bond (Hofstede 2001 p.351).

The five dimensions of cultures have been labeled as follows (Hofstede 2001):

- **Power Distance** is the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. This dimension is related to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality.
Uncertainty Avoidance is the extent to which individuals feel threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations. This dimension is related to the level of stress in a society due to uncertain future.

Individualism versus Collectivism refers to a continuum on which collectivistic cultures score lower as compared to the individualistic cultures which score higher. This dimension is related to the integration of individuals into primary groups.

Masculinity versus Femininity refers to the extent to which masculine or feminine values are dominant in a society. This dimension is related to the division of emotional roles between women and men.

Long Term versus Short Term Orientation refers to the extent to which a society fosters virtues oriented towards future rewards rather than fosters virtues related to the past and present. This dimension is related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present.

1.2 Culture and Marketing

Culture as subject of study was closely associated with anthropology and sociology for about last one and half century but in recent decades it has gained importance in disciplines like management (Ganesh 2005 p.13). Despite the problems in defining, conceptualizing and operationalizing culture, it has been increasingly acknowledged as important for organizations (Groeschl and Doherty 2000 p. 12). Each culture has its own norms, customs and expectations for behavior, so any manager who ignores culture puts his organization at a great disadvantage (Bateman and Snell 2003 p.206). The cultural variable is accorded an important place in international marketing, despite the difficulties in isolating its various elements (Usunier 2000 p.3).

Marketing has contributed significantly to the improvement of the society (Wilkie and Moore1999). The Philosophy of this contributor is seeing the "products and services through the eyes of the customer (Lilien, Kotler and Moorthy 1991 p.19). To see through the eyes of the consumer it is imperative to understand the consumer behavior and the factors like culture, social, personal and
psychological factors which influence this behavior. Culture is the "fundamental determinant" of the individuals' wants and behavior (Kotler et al. 2007 p.146). Culture is a lens through which the individuals perceive the world and it is viewed as behavior (Kumar 2004). It is one of the limitations in consumer research (Green and White 1976 p.81) and influences every aspect of marketing (Jain 1989 p.73). The consumer behavior patterns are quite different across cultures (Ward, Klees and Robertson 1987 p.469).

As globalization occurs and Multinationals vie for foreign market opportunities, the need and importance of cross cultural consumer behavior has risen. Globalization of markets has provided the markets an opportunity to tap the cross national markets. The understanding of consumer behavior in international marketing becomes important as it "involves introducing new products or ideas into different cultures (Sheth and Sethi 1977 p.369). Therefore, international marketers must understand the cross cultural differences to develop effective marketing strategies for the target foreign markets as they are not identical (Loudon and Bitta 2002 p.113; Perreault and McCarty 2002 p.170; Schiffman and Kanuk 2004 p.476). Culture is a potent hindrance in the geographical expansion of firms' activities (Salcuviiene, Auruskeviciens and Lydeka 2005 p.147).

Research conducted across two cultures or nations' representing different cultures is known as cross cultural research. Cross-cultural research have clear implications for consumer behavior (Tan, McCullough and Teoh 1987 p.395). There is an increasing trend for globalization of businesses which "provides a compelling reason for understanding the cultural context of consumer behavior" (Maheswaran and Shavitt 2000 p.59). In light of globalization the marketers have to face considerable problems and it becomes imperative for consumer behavior researchers to unravel how cultural differences and values affect consumer behavior (Klein and Gurhan 1998 p.114).

In recent years the cross-cultural marketing has gained great importance in academics and business (Malhotra, Agarwal and Peterson 1995 p.7) and there is growing interest in cross cultural consumer behavior (Venkatesh 1995 p.40).
This growing interest can be witnessed in the growing emergence of research and theoretical contributions to cross-cultural marketing (Henry 1976; Sheth and Sethi 1977; Raju 1995; Roth 1995; Applbaum and Jordt 1996; Nakata and Sivakumar 1996; Aaker and Williams 1998; Keillor and Hult 1999; Steenkamp, Hofstede and Wedel 1999; Naumov and Puffer; Luna and Gupta 2001; Steenkamp 2001; Luna and Peracchio and Juan 2002; Moij and Hofstede 2002; Kau and Jung 2004; Moij 2004; Okazaki 2004; Ogden, Ogden and Schau 2004; Malhotra et al. 2005; Salciuviene, Auraskeviciene and Lydeka 2005). The interest is evidenced in the research proving the effect of culture on the different aspects of consumer behavior: consumer involvement (Edgett and Cullen 1993); consumer decision making styles (Lyonski, Durvasula and Zotos 1996); consumer innovativeness (Steenkamp, Hofstede and Wedel 1999); perception, motivation, learning and memory, age, self concept, group influence, social class, sex roles, attitude change, decision making, purchase and post-purchase behavior (Usunier 2000); impulsive buying behavior (Kacen 2002); price perceptions (Sternquist, Byun and Jin 2004); prices and shopping behavior (Ackerman and Tellis 2001); brand loyalty (Lam and Lee 2005); consumer patience (Chen, NG and Rao 2005).

The interest in the cross-cultural research is further corroborated by the growing contribution to cross-cultural research methodology (Green and White 1976; Sekaran 1983; Parmeswaram and Yaprak 1987; Ward, Klees and Robertson 1987; Durvasula, Lyonski and Andrews 1993; Malhotra, Aggarwal and Peterson 1996; Cavusgil and Das 1997; Usunier 2000; Salzberger, Sinkovics and Schlegelmilch 1999; Groeschl and Doherty 2000; Sinkovics, Penz and Ghauri 2004; Yeganeh, Su and Chrysostome 2004; Ewing, Salzberger and Sinkovics 2005).

Green and White (1976) observe that though many cross-cultural researches were reported but some methodological issues were ignored. They draw attention of the researchers to some of the methodological issues like functional equivalence, conceptual equivalence and instrument equivalence which are
necessitated in cross-cross cultural research. They explain the need for comparability of samples across various cultures.

The concern for methodological and theoretical issues in cross-cultural research has also been expressed by Sekaran (1983). She classifies the methodological and design concerns under five broad categories: functional equivalence, instrumentation, data-collection methods, sampling design issues and data analysis. The scholar calls for ensuring functional instrument equivalence. In instrument equivalence attention is drawn to scaling equivalence and containing biases taking into account the cultural sensitive issues. In data collection response equivalence, timing of data collection, status and other psychological issues should be kept in mind. The samples should be true representative and comparable of the cultures under study. The data analysis should include multivariate analysis which provides better understanding of the phenomenon and relationships among the variables under study.

Parmeswaran and Yaprank (1987) observe that cross-national consumer research instrument is sensitive to the nature of attitudinal constructs, the nationality of the respondents and the country-of-origin effects. Their study demonstrated that same scales may have different reliabilities when used by the same person in different cultures.

Malhotra, Agarwal and Peterson (1996) have organized the methodological issues around the six-step marketing research process: problem definition, approach development, research design formulation, field work, data analysis, and report preparation and presentation which have been elaborated in chapter 2 of literature survey.

Methodological issues in cross-cultural sourcing research have been highlighted by Cavusgil and Das (1997). They propose a framework for conducting cross-cultural research which includes six steps: domain determination, evaluate equivalence, sampling design, instrument development, data collection, and data analysis. The model framework calls for functional, conceptual, sampling,
instrumentation, data collection and data analysis equivalence and incorporation of theory in different steps of the framework across the various cultures in study.

Salzberger, Sinkovics and Schlegelmilch (1999) illustrate the difficulties in achieving equivalence in cross-cultural research. They observe that many studies disregard data equivalence or suggest the use of confirmatory factor analysis. The confirmatory factor analysis has certain inherent problems which can be overcome by using the latent trait theory.

Groeschl and Doherty (2000) critically review the way culture is conceptualized by different researchers. They recognize that culture is a complex term and has been defined in different ways in different cultures. The conceptualization and delimitation has also been done in many ways. Some recognize the culture at national level, some at sub cultural level, while others equate culture to the organizational culture. The authors show that there are clear similarities in the different approaches and concepts, and so call for a need to create a general framework for understanding culture.

1.3 Standardization versus Adaptation

The cross cultural research literature has witnessed never ending debate of standardization versus adaptation debate in international marketing. The proponents of standardization view that as a result of globalization the consumers’ needs are converging and so standardization of marketing is possible for all the consumers of the globe irrespective of their culture differences (Elinder 1961; Levitt 1983). This group contends that globalization has led to the homogenization of customer needs, tastes and preferences (Levitt 1983). They rely on the assumption that globalization has resulted in reducing the cultural differences and so culture has no significant role in the behavior patterns of the consumers across the globe.

The proponents of ‘adaptation’ hold that standardization across cultures is not possible as globalization has led to divergence of consumer needs and desires (Mesdag 2000; Mooij 2001; Mooij and Hofstede 2002). They believe that cultural differences play a major role in differences in consumer behavior and advocate
the adaptation of marketing strategies according to the cultural values of the market (Luna and Gupta 2001; Suh and Kwon 2002; Mooij 2004).

This debate has generated lot of research on the aspects of marketing that can be standardized and to what degree it is possible (Jain 1989; Samiee and Roth 1992; Szymanski, Bharadwaj and Varadarajan 1993; Leeflang and Raaij 1995; Medina and Duffy 1998; Witkowski and Kellner 1998; Suh and Kwon 2002). The proponents of divergence argue that globalization instead of homogenization has led to the divergence of consumer needs, and preferences (Usunier 2000; Mooij 2001; Mooij and Hofstede 2002; Moiij 2003; Moiij 2004).

1.4 Etic versus Emic

In the study of history of culture there has always been a debate as to whether culture is unique and non comparable or different cultures can be compared on some aspects (Hofstede 2001 p.24). The former is called as emic approach which holds that each culture is unique and cannot be compared while the later is the etic approach which holds that cultures are comparable on certain universal parameters. The emic approach examines culture from within the system, investigates only one culture and relative to internal characteristics of culture while etic examines the culture from a position outside the system, investigates many culture and criteria adopted are considered universal (Malhotra, Agarwal and Peterson 1996 p.10). Emic stresses the unique aspects while Etic stresses the comparable aspects.

The emic approach offers more reliability and internal validity but lacks comparability (Usunier 2000 p.212). Etic employs more of quantitative data while emic study employs less of quantitative data. Since etic approach uses generalizable variables across cultures, it is more suitable for broader analysis which involves two or more cultures (Yeganeh, Su and Chrysostome 2004 p.73). They are basically both sides of the same coin, equal and complementary (Hofstede 2001 p.26). Organizational researchers may find etic approach “more practical in terms of financial limitations and time pressures (Yeganeh, Su and Chrysostome 2004 p.74). The combination of cross-cultural etic and culture...
specific emic approach helps in solving the problem of reliability and validity in different cultures (Malhotra, Agarwal and Peterson 1996 p.15).

1.5 Indian Culture

India’s economic growth and emergence as a profitable market has led to the attention on the country on many sectors (Ganguly and Ayers 2006 p.5). India has a population of over one billion and one out of every six people in the world is Indian (Stern 2003 p.1). The burgeoning middle class and the changing consumption patterns (Venkatesh 1995; Singh 2000; Das 2002; Shridharan 2004; Wessel 2004; Chhokar 2007) have made India one of the most coveted markets. The emergence of India as a viable profit destination has generated much interest among the multinational companies who are vying for a sizable share in this profitable market. Gaining a reputable share in this growing market necessitates understanding the cultural values which underlie the behavior and consumption patterns of the consumer markets. But the International marketers find it difficult to unravel the complexities of the Indian culture and myriad consumer behavior patterns across India. Although there is interest and demand for overviews of Indian economy but the demand is not accompanied by a growth in Indian focused studies (Ganguly and Ayres 2006 p.8).

For India different culture values have been calculated holistically for the whole of the nation (Hofstede 1980). These values can not explicitly explain the complexity of the diverse cultures within India and could lead to erroneous decisions. The literature on marketing considers India as a single culture with uniform cultural values and consumption patterns (Westfall and Boyd 1960; Mitra and Pingah 2000; Ramachandran 2000; Rao 2000; Webster 2000; Wessel 2004; Mukherji 2005). The literature available on Indian culture is based on mere observations and intuitive assumptions and not based on empirical investigations. So seeing the importance of Indian market for marketers it necessitates the research to unravel the complexities of Indian culture and consumer behavior.
The research on Indian culture has been mostly following the emic approach. Most of the research on any aspect of Indian culture or society considers holistic India as a single cultural unit and has used the emic approach (Srinivas 1995; Rajagopal 1999; Sharma 2000; Stern 2003; Wessel 2004; Gupta 2004; Sinha and Kumar 2004; Taeube 2005). This trend of considering India as a single cultural unit is even followed in the management and marketing literature (Westfall and Boyd 1960; Dixit 2000; Ramachandran 2000; Mathur, Zhang and Neelankavil 2001; Chatterjee and Pearson 2002; Kakar et al. 2002; Kumar 2004; Mukherji 2005; Chhokar 2007). But India is a multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic society. The usage of nation as a surrogate for culture is inappropriate for countries like India with heterogeneous cultures (Malhotra, Agarwal and Peterson 2001 p.18).

Although using nation as a cultural unit has led to wide contribution to understand the cultural differences and behaviors across various nations but it has failed to recognize the differences between the various subgroups within the nations (Ogden, Ogden and Jensen 2004). Lenartowicz and Roth (1999) observe that most existing approaches to studying culture use nations that are convenient to define but usually represent broad unit of analysis. They suggest that culture-based research should identify and examine multiple subcultures within a single country. It has been seen in research that “different ethnic and demographic niches did not always respond to favorably to mass-market advertising” (Kotler et al. 2007 p.146). The understanding of sub-cultural differences is essential for greater success in capitalizing on the differences within a nation (Ogden, Ogden and Jensen 2004). These concerns have led to emergence of little research on multicultural marketing in context of United States or Europe (Venkatesh 1998; Burton 2002; Thomson and Troester 2002; Jamal 2003) but literature is bereft of research on subcultures in India.

India is a country with economic, caste, ethnic, religion and linguistic diversities (Stern 2003). The recognition of India as a single culture unit could lead to wrong comprehension of the phenomenon and lead to erroneous decisions. Large countries like India “can be divided into regions differing along geographic,
climatic, economic, linguistic and/or ethnic lines and generally assumed to differ culturally” (Hofstede et al. 2007). The regions within many countries differ from each other substantially with regards to income, mobility, media access, employment and socioeconomic characteristics (Roth 1995 p.166). Chatterjee (1998) as quoted in Rajagopal (1999 p.131) suggests “that in a country like India, the importance of negotiating national and subnational contradictions increases rather than diminishes with globalization. He argues that these contradictions center on the resiliency of community as a locus of affiliation and action, as means of resistance to the homogenizing impetus of capital, as a site of historic memory, and as a resource for alternative futures.” So it becomes imperative to understand the differences between the various cultural communities within India. There is the possibility of making wrong conclusions about cultural effects if the subcultures are not taken into consideration (Lenartowicz and Roth 2001 p.321). In the regional societies children are integrated from birth onwards, absorb the values of the society and are assumed to differ culturally (Hofstede et al. 2007). In this research an attempt is made to compare the cultural values within the four regions of India using an etic approach and its effect on the consumer behavior in these regions.

India is home to several thousand ethnic groups, tribes, castes, and religions. The castes and subcastes in each region relate to each other through a permanent hierarchical structure, with each caste having its own name, traditional occupation, rank, and distinctive subculture. Tribes usually do not have a caste hierarchy but often have their own internal hierarchical organization. The Indian society is “regionally diverse (north/south/east/west), communally differentiated (Hindu/Muslim/Sikh/Christian/ Buddhist, etc.), socially stratified (in terms of caste or class) and culturally discrete” (Uberoi 1993 p.45).

As there is lack of “reflexive methodology or vocabulary to address the multiple dimensions of Indian culture(s)” (Bharucha 2000 p.66) this project employs the Hofstede’s framework to operationalize culture. This research has been influenced by the growing body of cross-cultural research and interest in the cross-cultural consumer behavior. Indian market has a unique culture and the
marketers should take into account the cultural dimensions that have effect on consumers (Kumar 2007 p.4). As the Indian society is regionally diverse with different societal patterns in North, South, East, and West (Uberoi 1993 p.45), so this research deals with the cross-cultural study of Punjabi, Tamil, Gujarati and Bengali cultures which represent four different geographical areas of India namely North, South, West and East respectively. The cross-cultural consumption of selected commodities in these cultures is also examined.

North India is dominated by the Proto-Australoid racial elements (Hasnain 2003 p.153). The main languages spoken in this region belong to Indo-European or the Aryan language (ibid. p.156). The present northern family is a continuation of the family of the ancient times with slight modifications (Karve 1993). It is patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal. Marriage is generally outside of the kin-group and the local group. It is a joint family in which the brides are all brought from outside and the girls are all given away. The behavior is strictly regulated according to generation, according to whether one is born in the family or married into the family and finally according to whether one is a man or a woman (ibid.).

Punjab state in Northern India was the frontier region of the country which has faced hordes of invaders from Western and Central Asia who ultimately got absorbed in the main population and some of the surnames like hoon, sur, sobthi which are originally Central Asian are integrated in the ethnic mosaic of Punjab (Singh 2003b p.xiv). Punjabi identity is mainly defined by language. Most of the communities (86) live in plains, few in the hilly terrain and some in semi-arid regions (11) and there are no schedule tribes in Punjab (ibid.). The main diet of Punjabis consists of wheat, buttermilk, tea with plenty of milk, milk and meat. The consumption of rice is much more in south and East India as compared to other regions while North dominates in wheat consumption (Chatterjee, Rae and Ray 2007). Though traditionally fruit and vegetables were not part of the traditional meal but there is general increase of the consumption of the vegetables and fruits. There is marked change from vegetarianism to non-vegetarianism and there is the largest incidence of drinking alcohol in Punjab as
compared to the national average (Singh 2003b p.xiv). The majority of the communities profess Hinduism (71), followed by Sikhism (38) and Islam (13). The state is comparatively more egalitarian as there is less social differentiation (17.89 per cent against the national average of 48.39 percent). Baisakhi, the festival of harvesting is the most important festival (ibid.).

The South Indian region is dominated by the Negrito race (Hasnain 2003 p.153). This region encompasses those parts of southern and central India where the languages of Dravidian family are spoken and can be divided into five regions (Karve 1993): Karnataka where the Kannada language is spoken; Andhra Pradesh or Telengana, where Telugu is spoken; Tamil Nadu where the language is Tamil; Kerala or Malabar where the Malayalam is spoken; region from north of Andhra Pradesh through Bastar and Western Orissa into Southern Bihar where a number of mixed languages are spoken. The Dravidian languages are related in both form and history (Trautmann 1993).

In this region though patrilineal and patrilocal family is the dominant family type but there are some important sections which follow matrilineal and matrilocal and a substantial number whose systems possess features of both types of organizations. In marriages exchange of daughters is favorable and marriage among close kin is preferred. There are cross-cousin and uncle-niece marriages (Karve 1993).

Tamil Nadu the southern state of India has 364 communities which is the second largest number of communities in India and the social divisions are widely reported in 276 communities. All the communities are divided in to subgroups. The Brahmans are divided into two sects: Saivites and Vaishnavites. The most interesting feature of the communities of Tamil Nadu is their division into two caste groups: right-handed and left-handed. The Brahmans are regarded as neutral and free from this division (Singh 1997 p.xxix). Rice is one of the staple foods of the Tamils from time immemorial and millets along with honey are also eaten. The consumption of rice is much more in south and East India as compared to other regions (Chatterjee, Rae and Ray 2007). Eating stale food was also common earlier. Alcohol made from coconut and palm trees is
consumed. Milk as such is not consumed though mainly through coffee or tea, and vegetable consumption is higher among the urbanites than the rural people (Singh 1997 p.xxix). Hinduism along with local tribal religion is the main religion followed by Christianity and Islam. Pongal is the main festival celebrated by Hindus in which sweet rice is prepared for the cattle. The practice of drawing of threshold designs as part of household routine by females is prevalent in whole of Tamil Nadu (Dohmen 2004). This practice is unique to the region not prevalent anywhere in India.

The Western region of India comprises of regions like Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. The main languages spoken here are Rajasthani, Hindi, Gujarati, and Marathi, which are of Sanskrit origin, so there is close affinity to northern zone. But within this region there are large segments of people who speak Dravidian and Austro-Asiatic languages. As this region lies between northern and southern zones it is influenced by these regions though not uniformly. In Rajasthan and Gujarat only Sanskritic languages are spoken and so the kinship pattern followed is predominately northern, though few customs are similar to southern zone (Karve 1993). Some groups practice one type of cross-cousin marriage (marriage of man to his mother's brother's daughter) which is as a result of mélange of different ethnic elements. In Maharashtra majority of the people speak Sanskritic language, while many people in east speak Dravidian languages and Marathi includes many words of Dravidian origin. The majority of the people practice one type of cross-cousin marriage while other types of cross-cousin marriages are taboo but marriage to father’s sister’s daughter is followed in southern Maharashtra. In north junior levirate is allowed in many castes while in central and southern Maharashtra it is not allowed. The state is most affected by the southern practices as is evident in the kinship behavior, kinship terms, folk-songs and literature (ibid.).

Gujarat historically has strong links with Rajasthan and Sindh from where many communities came, and has a larger percentage of trading and business communities and has the largest proportion of communities identified as Kshatriyas (28.8 per cent) (Singh 2003b p. xxv). The Parsis arrived in Gujarat in the nineteenth century and emerged as landowners, moneylenders, traders and
industrialists (ibid. p.xxiv). The staple food consists of wheat, bajra, maize, gram and urad. Though there is increasing instance of non-vegetarian food (17.1 per cent) but incidence of vegetarianism is very high. Alcohol is consumed by males in communal feasts and rituals (ibid. p.xxvii). The state is a meeting ground of the kinship systems of north and south and so marriage and customs of both north and south India exist here. Majority of the population follow Hinduism (89.53 per cent) followed by muslims (8.53 per cent). Other religious groups include Christians, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs (ibid. p. 17). Diwali is principal festival of the Hindus.

The Eastern region is dominated by the Mongoloid race (Hasnain 2003 p.153). The Sino-Tibetan family languages are spoken mainly by the tribal belts of the North-East but Bengali which belongs to the Indo-Aryan language family is predominately spoken in West Bengal (ibid. p.156). But there is not much known among the kinship patterns of these groups. The succession of property in Khasi community of Meghalaya devolves in the female line and sons have no right to it. It is a multilineal society but patrilineal principles are gradually introduced by modernization (Nongbri 1993).

The population of West Bengal consists mainly of Hindus, followed by Muslims and Christians. British imperialism in India did not only bring in political and economic change but also social and cultural changes (Bandyopadhyay 2003 p.1). In Bengal Durga Puja is the most popular religious festival of the Hindus and it has emerged from a household ritual to an elaborate festival with the coming in of the British (Ghosh 2000 p.289). The cultural practices have been institutionalized in modern Bengal and Durga puja has become secular entity with participation of different castes, classes and gender (ibid.). There is rise of street-food consumption in urban Bengal as there "is decline of the familial meal as a ritual activity and the rise of non-ritual eating (snacks) directed at sensual stimulation rather than assuaging hunger-pangs" (Mukhopadhyaya 2004 p.39).

People are fond of tea and usually have it in clay cups called ‘bhar’. The males often consume alcohol and women were observed consuming ‘bhang’ during Holi by the researcher. Football which was introduced by the British in Bengal became a strong unifying force among the Bengalis in the late nineteenth
century (Bandyopadhyay 2003 p.2). It is most popular sport in Bengal even today, which is not that popular in any other part of the country.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This study report is divided into six chapters, of which the first is this Introduction. The literature is reviewed in two chapters: two and three. The chapter two: ‘Culture and Consumer Behavior’ deals with sections on definition of culture, conceptualization and operationalization of culture. The chapter expatiates on the issues pertinent to national culture, cross-cultural research, standardization versus adaptation and convergence versus divergence debates. The various consumer behavior models of cross-cultural consumer research are discussed.

The third chapter deals with the ‘Indian culture and consumer behavior’. Through the literature an effort is made to probe the complexity of Indian historical and cultural legacy. The issues and intricacies of Indian cultural ethos are looked into in detail. The literature on the Indian social structure, language, religion, family, kinship and psyche in historical perspective is discussed. The changing Indian society and consumption patterns in light of globalization is looked into along with the markets and marketing practices in India.

The chapter four on research methodology deals with the cross-cultural research issues. The methodological problems pertinent to cross-cultural research are discussed and the methodology employed for the furtherance of this project is presented.

The chapter five: ‘Data Analysis and Interpretation’ deals with the analysis of the data and its interpretation. The methodology presented in the fourth chapter is employed and practically used. The cultural differences between the four states and consumption patterns within them are analyzed and accordingly interpreted. The effect of culture on the consumer behavior is studied utilizing the various analytical techniques.

The chapter six: ‘Summary and Conclusions’ leads to the culmination of this project, summarizing the outcome of this research. Limitations conclude the chapter and this report.