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Oriental Cultural Values Depicted in Advertising; with Special Reference to Sri Lankan Context

***¹Sajitha Lakmali Hewapathirana, ²R.I.Batuwangala**

¹Department of Mass Media, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

²Department of Comparative Education, Zhejiang Normal University, China

*sajitha@spc.cmb.ac.lk

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Abstract

Following the eradication of a domestic terrorist menace that severely disrupted the country for over thirty years, Sri Lanka has entered an era of rapid social and economic development where mass media can play a highly significant role in national transformation. Within this developmental process, an urgent need arises to study the specific role of advertising media in the sphere of cultural evolution, particularly because the unique nature and historical trajectory of Sri Lankan advertising culture heavily depend on traditional oriental cultural values. Because a cultural dimension—defined as a learned system of shared knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and norms—is an essential factor for understanding modern media environments, it must be rigorously evaluated; yet, sufficient academic emphasis has not yet been placed on how advertising functions as a core component in the conceptual development and broader cultural processes of Sri Lanka. Advertising within oriental cultural value settings remains a remarkably under-explored area of research across global disciplines, including media and communications studies, leaving a distinct gap in the literature that the authors of this paper actively attempt to fill. By deeply examining the direct effects of oriental cultural values on the contemporary advertising culture in Sri Lanka, this study ultimately aims to provide a framework that fosters the active cultivation and preservation of authentic Sri Lankan cultural values through more conscious, contextually aware concept development in modern commercial advertising.

Keywords: Culture, Advertising, Oriental, Values, Beliefs

Introduction

Background

Advertising is a deeply pervasive and motivational part of all lives lived in consumerist economies. It competent to directly impact for the values of the culture While it reflects society to a certain degree, it also has the effect of 'generalization' values or behaviors. First need to clear in this study the concept of "oriental". One thrust is the perspective known as "Orientalism," which focuses on the West's perception of the "Orient" in the construction of its self-identity (Said, 1978). This perspective has undergone something of a reversal in the past two decades. The theory of orientalism, as a "discourse" in all its epistemological and methodological dimensions, has raised a storm of arguments. It has been criticized for the vagueness of terminology, the self contradictions in its theoretical system and the reinforcement of the binary opposition between the Occident and the Orient. (Said, 1978) However, for all the arguments of the so called post orientalism, orientalism still has a great impact on postmodernist studies and culture, which deals with transnational capitalism as well as Sri Lanka's search for modernity. On one hand, oriental cultural ideologies and images have severely been used within the advertising industry in the country, celebrating Sri Lanka's traditional history and culture. On the other hand, libertarian life styles and values also seem to have used to address the needs of contemporary consumer culture. In this sense, the advertising industry symbolizes Sri Lanka's deep anxiety and ambivalence toward its own cultural ideologies and materialist culture of global capitalism.

Purpose of the study

In order to achieve above research aims the researchers looked into the following guide questions:

Examination of contemporary advertising approaches on Oriental Cultural Values Depicted in Advertising in Sri Lanka

Examination of working with cultural hegemony in advertising.

Documenting the specialties for an alternative oriental concept from the western concept

The purpose is to explore how the oriental cultural ideologies and values are being reproduced within the advertising industry in contemporary Sri Lanka. The research is conducted to obtain a better oriental cultural understanding of Sri Lanka. The foundation of the research is to understand different perspectives of oriental and west cultures.

The study will reveal noteworthy results of television advertisements focused more on highlighting oriental cultural aspects in their advertisements. Furthermore the research will help to understand cross-cultural concepts of western and Asian advertising industry.

Limitation

The field of interest in research is regarding four major markets in Sri Lanka (banking, telecommunication, transportation, food & beverages) and selecting the two most famous advertisements in each category broadcast in television media with consideration to the common audience who watch television regularly.

Special in (Commercial credit , Lanka bell , Sunquick , TVS)

Problem Discussion

Cultural systems play a decisive role in the productions of social relations, while the economy only relays and shifts them in their reproduction (Baudrillard , 1975). Influencing the buyer's preferences is culture as according to Geert Hofstede personal feelings and thinking patterns are much influenced by social environment where one grew up. The study mainly focuses on oriental cultural values depicted in advertisements in Sri Lankan context. The goal of this study is to find out how the oriental cultural ideologies and values are being reproduced within the advertising industry in contemporary Sri Lanka. The research is expected to contribute in providing new and useful information as it aims to represent the need of values as well as oriental perspective in the local advertising industry within the global capitalism.

Hypothesis

The advertising industry is basically driven by the idea of widening markets for selected products and services. It makes use of cultural and traditional ideologies not to change the *status quo* but to manipulate consumer demand in an opportunistic manner. It is this inherent pragmatic characteristic within advertising industry that transforms it into an ideological apparatus of oriental culture perspective.

Theoretical concept

Brief view of Storytelling

Sri Lanka is categorized as a third world developing country in the world. It has not been developed a sophisticated culture of advertising in comparison to the West when considering the earliest approaches of the storytelling, which dealt with the ideology of oriental culture.

At the dawn of the 20th century, some French children made an incredible finding in the Pyrenees Mountains – drawings of extinct animals in caves. The 35,000-year-old paintings on the walls of the Lascaux Caves are the earliest recorded evidence of storytelling. For ancient humans, storytelling was magic. There was little separation between what was spoken and what happened and, it seemed logical that if we could describe a great hunt in all its vividness and glory, to those who did not participate, then it should be possible to tell a story about a hunt and see it happen later. When it didn't work all the time, they decided that perhaps drawing the story would help. The caves of Lascaux and others from the same period are not only the first storytelling arts, but also the first visual arts, first cartoons, and first narrated slide shows. The technologies we use today are innovative, but the methods of storytelling are ancient. Different stories and different ways of telling the same stories, shaped distinct cultures. People's stories are often similar to those of other cultures, but distinct from each other. . Your culture's stories became part of your self-identity. It's possible that culture is rooted in storytelling. With storytelling came cultural and societal bonding. When we invented stories, we invented gods, heroes, villains, and magic. The roots of psychology, of lecture-style teaching, of religion, all capsuled within stories.

Not only had the most ancient of stories and story forms been developed by the time they were written down, but also genres had been differentiated, though some were specific to their own cultures.

There was one common theme throughout most ancient storytelling, no matter where they were found in the world: they were at heart didactic, stories expounding on morality and

teaching about the pleasures of a morally good life while describing the misery that followed ill deeds. As you can imagine, this contributed greatly to stories shaping their culture. Instead of standardizing advertisements across the global market, a message can be communicated more effectively by incorporating cultural values in advertisements and allowing communication to play an effective role in interacting with the consumer through advertising. According to De Mooij "if we want to know how advertising works across cultures, we'll first have to learn how communication works" (De Mooij 2010:97). In advertising communication process, the basic purpose is to inform and persuade the customer about the product. It is also important for business units to know about the customer likes and dislikes. Understanding cultures is very important for global advertising and the Hofstede model of national is applicable to global advertising and marketing. The model explains various concepts of self, identity, personality that further help in devising branding strategies (De Mooij, 2010). Standardized advertisements across global market are not as effective as adaptive strategies for local markets; therefore it has become increasingly important to understand the local cultures. Cultural values depicted in advertising are an integrated part of the consumer self rather than environmental factors (De Mooij, 2010). Consumer self-identity (culture, image, values) along with social and mental processes (previously described in consumer buying behavior) affects the advertising appeal and style. (De Mooij, 2010). Advertising reflects the pattern of our thinking, the way we do things in our daily life i.e. eating, relaxing, talking, working, having fun, things which moves us.

It's proven according to the Baudrillard argument; Cultural systems that play the decisive role in the productions of social relations, while the economy only relays and shifts them in their reproduction (Baudrillard, 1975).

Oriental cultural perspectives

The word "culture" is the most powerful word in the human dictionary. By culture humans get the true meaning of a real human. Culture is derived from the Latin word "Cultura" meaning "cultivation" and was first used by Romans; however Germans practiced sociological meanings of culture two hundred years ago under the name of "kulturges-chichte" (Burke, 2008). Sir Edward Burnett Taylor, an English anthropologist in 1871 gave one of the earliest definitions of culture, which is used today as well. He defined cultures as;

"Complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, Customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society (Taylor & Samovar: 2009, p 9).

In this globalization world people identify and understand each other distinctly because of their culture. According to our research topic we try to reveal and compare some differences of both the Western and Oriental cultural perspectives. Advertising is the biggest part of marketing communication in worldwide business activities today. It's not merely a popular and direct medium of sell products, besides advertising delivers and spreads more cultural values to the society. When studying about culture of the world we can recognize two categories as the oriental culture and the western culture. Oriental culture is mainly based on a collection of human relations, myths and values, whereas the Western culture portrays dynamic lifestyle, development in the countries and many new technologies, which were developed. In Asian perspective we can see that there are many gods, beliefs and myths tying people's hands and it's difficult to change their minds at once. Apart from that, religion also mainly affects the Asian mind and has different ideologies to the West. In Western cultures

there are fewer gods or fewer religions and they contribute their full effort in inventing modern technology and knowledge for the sake of development. Furthermore, the Oriental culture is built on various traditions and rules and therefore focuses less on modern technologies. Western culture is able to break their rules with more ease and create more with the development and find something new. One special difference in Oriental culture is sympathy. People live for the other. For an example parents live for their children, a husband lives for his wife, children live for their parents etc. for the western culture its vise versa. The differences between these two cultures are numerous. But from this brief explanation we tried to clarify that the culture is located as the central layer between personality and human nature.

When considering culture according to the research topic, cultural knowledge and understanding is very important in business as culture Influences every aspect of marketing. Oriental individuals are guided by the cultural illustrations and historically created systems of advertising as it represents the way people think, how they communicate with each other, how they express feelings, how they live, eat, relax, enjoy and everything (De Mooij , 2005). Cultures differ in the way people experience and use aspects such as time, space, relationships, power, risk, masculinity, femininity and many others. According to De Mooij, advertising is a cultural artefact and in order to build relationships between consumers and brands, advertising must reflect people's values.

Methodology

Media industry watcher Nielsen Sri Lanka estimated Sri Lanka's total advertising spend on the media in 2016 to be approximately LKR 90 billion (USD 585 million at January 2017 exchange rate).

This research is based on qualitative approach for gaining more in depth knowledge and to get a clear picture from describing existing data and analyzing the Oriental cultural concept. Another reason for choosing qualitative research method is the variation in number of consumers in Sri Lanka. The total population of Sri Lanka is approximately 21.2 Million with television subscription of around 70%. Most respondents said they trusted and was influenced by television mostly (56%) followed by news papers (20%) and the internet (21%). There is a trend among the younger generation to turn to the internet as source of advertising. Notably radio 's trust level is very low among this sample (Secretariat for Media Reforms, 2016). When comparing the three major modes for marketing communication i.e. television, radio and magazine, television media provides a greater impact than others by combining sight and sounds with addition of offering more creative breadths (Kelly & Jugenheimer:2008).

It would be difficult to get clear results through quantitative research done on a small portion of a very large target audience. However continuation of this research by quantitative analysis on a large target audience and more diverse scope can provide generalizable results. Television is the most trusted type of media.

Yin (1989) described five strategies for conducting research which are; Survey, experiments, archival analysis, case study and history. In this research the question under observation contains "how" factor and the purpose of the research is to get better understanding of Oriental cultural values in advertisements therefore requires content analysis and focus group discussion has been adopted to answer the question.

Data for the study will be gathered in qualitative nature via focus group discussions with viewers; field observation; in-depth interviews with opinion leaders who were likely to influence the decision-making process in the community; Advertising creators, media practitioners and review of reports, studies, and evaluations to distill lessons learned. It will be create a space for articulating diverse viewpoints, approaches, and opinions. The study focuses on advertising viewers who living in Sri Lanka. It will be included 20 focus group discussions and 100 in-depth interviews. In order to test the hypothesis, correlation and regression techniques were basically applied.

Data Collection & sample selection

According to Denscombe (1998), data can be collected through four main sources; questionnaire, interview, documents and observations. In this research we have used direct observation plus content analysis of various videos of television commercials for data collection. However in case study approach, for maintaining the reliability and validity of research, it is more appropriate to use more than one source of evidence.

The primary data was collected through direct observation and interpretation of the research. To maintain the validity and credibility of research, systematic observation and content analysis was carried out with the help of two neutral observers of the videos. For comparison of television commercials, judgmental sampling technique was used for separating advertisements of various industries on basis of four criteria.

Are the advertisements using the method of storytelling or not

Are advertisements depicting Oriental cultural values

Is that product famous or not in the market

Conclusion drawing and verification

The broadcasting time of commercials is within last five years and not beyond that duration i.e. 2012-2017.

Once the data was separated on basis of above criteria, eight television advertisements were selected representing the various fields of market.

Discussion, Result and Conclusion

The study result clearly shows that, workplace collectivism has a strong and significant effect on business activities and participation rather other underlined variables. Sufficient emphasis has not been paid on advertising culture, which is a significant component in the concept development and cultural processes in the country. The advertising in Oriental cultural value settings remains a relatively unexplored area of research across all disciplines, even that of media communications study. Therefore, in this study the researchers attempted to fill this void. This research is expected to develop a Sri Lankan and oriental cultural relationship through concept development of advertising.

Sri Lanka has not yet paid sufficient attention in Oriental effect in advertising and we are still following and being influenced by the western concept. In western concept the changes and developments occur day by day but in oriental culture seems regressive. Advertising firms and the clients also give priority to making and creating commercials based on human feelings.

Then the problem may not be similar to consumer's requests. Mostly this happens unconsciously in the Sri Lankan advertising field. However the younger generation seems to be trying to spread and widen the understanding of oriental culture, but it is also unsuccessful. Currently TV commercials follow the trend of shifting to new media commercials and its contents are produced according to the demand of western market necessities. It is essential to expand new theoretical and conceptual areas about oriental cultural values and reinforce methodologies to address the folk consciousness consciously. Consumers and advertising creators and clients should be empowered to understand the connection between oriental culture and human relationship. Finally The advertising industry is basically driven by the idea of widening markets for selected products and services. It makes use of cultural and traditional ideologies not to change the *status quo* but to manipulate consumer demand in an opportunistic manner. It is this inherent pragmatic characteristic within advertising industry that transforms it into an ideological apparatus of oriental culture perspective.

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