

## Impact and Influence of Culture on Brands in Indian Market

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### Abstract

**Purpose** - Culture plays a pivotal role in consumption pattern of individual or institutions and depending on underlying cultural philosophies, the consumption pattern of consumers fluctuates. Culture has very strong influence on founding many brands. Successful brands have been able to adopt their branding strategies in line with this dominant cultural philosophy and integrating their brands into the specific cultural fiber. In Indian scenario, the alluring face of the Indian business landscape has highly sensitive and demanding customers. Also there are increasing numbers of Indian brands that are offering superior quality of products to consumers at affordable prices. In such a scenario, global brands can win only if they attune themselves to the local conditions and culture.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Descriptive study using quantitative methods is conducted restricting samples size of 160.

**Practical implications** – The research work will help organizations to understand the importance of culture in brand establishment and creating brand identity in the target market.

**Originality/value** - This paper provides clear insights with relevant examples showing the merger and blend of cultural fiber for flourishing of brand in target market. It also clearly depicts considering few global brand that flourished in Indian market adopting and blending Indian culture.

**Keywords:** Culture, Branding, Consumer and Products.

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### I. Introduction

Culture is a collaboration of patterns or behavior of people of particular region over a period of time. This pattern may include their intellect, belief, art, morals, laws and customs and traditions. In other words, it can be summed up as the way of living of people of an area in a particular time frame.

So why culture is so important when it comes to branding? Culture provides a wireframe of an individual behavior. It plays a major role in influencing people and captivating them to pursue to follow a particular brand. Hence, it is indispensable for the organizations to instill the cultural blend of the specific region, in order to continue their momentum to get hold of the target end users. When a brand is introduced in the market, it is very important that it analyses the taste and the flavors of the particular region in order to adapt the same in their product. In India, there is a diversified environment, where every region and area has its own set of colors. Since, this is the very basis of the identity or origin of an individual, and is deep rooted in the lifestyle of people which is very evident in the food habits, the fashion, morals or beliefs hence it gets crucial in terms of sentimental values. It is therefore imperative for an organization to mold themselves with the influence of the place in order to strengthen their underlying base on which they want to build the pyramid of the brand. Most of the organization follows the tried and tested method while expanding themselves beyond their home region. However, a presumption of selling the brand just by the pedigree or genuinity is not enough. An organization should make an attempt to understand the target audience, analyze the needs, consider the feedbacks and shortcomings in the available products to set its foot right and minimize the risks. The cultural blending hence comes as a mitigation pointer as it deals with the ethnicity and ethicality of people residing there. The biggest example is the evolution of Indian market in terms globalization. Many international brands attuned themselves to the cultural blends to firm their grip in the era of cut throat competition in both rural and urban areas.

This paper intent to study few of the global as well as Indian brands which touched the hearts of millions of Indian consumers post making initials blunders and merging culture stint in the same. The marketing strategies of different brands have been analyzed critically to see how meticulously they worked upon to make their brand a major success in the diversified Indian culture.

### II. Literature Review & Theoretical Background

The controversies and popularity regarding most of the brand as cited by brand theorist (Keller 2004) is that consumers believe that they own the brand and as a result consumer look for self-identification with brands.

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In many cases consumer develop emotional attachment with brands (Fournier 1998). Further in this study a very important concept of brands is highlighted by Pitta and Franzak , 2008 which states that “ A brand is personification of the product – what it does, how well it does, who did it and how it feel after having doing the same. To target consumers sufficient knowledge about the culture, behaviour, and lifestyle are the key ingredients for the marketers. They need to understand these concepts and adapt the same to generate business in the target market. The initial complexity lies in understanding the culture and the role of the same in marketing and utilization (McCort and Malhotra, 1993). They also stated that culture of a place signifies knowledge, belief, customs, morals and habits acquired by the individuals. The cultural framework of Hofstede (1980) was built on the foundation that people from different cultures have different attitudes, beliefs, morals, and customs. There have been numerous studies that categorize core values across societies and those values that exist between societies as a result of local cultural differences (Burton, 2009). The review of marketing literatures recommends that the cultural value of any individual consumers plays crucial roles in determining the reaction of consumers towards brands (Soares et al., 2007). Understanding value system of a particular society enables the marketers to persuade their consumers. This can be achieved by tailoring product attributes as per consumer needs (Parasuraman 1997; Woodruff 1997). Sekeran (1983) states “Culturally patterned behaviors are thus distinct from the economic, political, legal, religious, linguistic, educational, technological and industrial environment in which people find themselves”.

Further to enhance the understanding on the blend of culture to adapt in new market few cases of various brands were discussed to comprehend the success story behind each brand. The brands considered were Kellogg’s, and McDonalds from Food Industry Coca- Cola and Paper boat from Beverage Industry and Football Clubs from the forte of sports.

### **III. Kellogg’s**

Kellogg Company is an American multinational food manufacturing company headquartered in Battle Creek, Michigan, United States. It is one of the major producers of cereal and convenience foods, manufacturing products in around 18 countries and marketed in over 180 countries with revenue of around US\$14.8 billion. Initially it entered Indian market, in September 1994, with a marketing strategy of being “Crispy breakfast food”.

India on the other hand, had the culture of having heavy breakfast served hot. Hence, when Kellogg’s entered the market, without creating much awareness of consumption of the cereal food to be served with cold milk, the Indians started to use the product with hot milk, making the crispy flakes soggy, which was contradictory to the claims made by the company. Moreover, it was not easy for the consumer to accept the culture of having cornflakes as their total breakfast, as most of them remained hungry and it defied the presumption of the ideal hot, spicy and varied regular breakfast.

The company then restructured its entire marketing strategy to introduce Kellogg’s as “All Day Meal” from “Crispy breakfast food”. It later started emphasizing it’s branding in terms of its nutritional values in India. Kellogg’s now is projected as a breakfast, small between the meal convenient, easy to prepare food, to complete your diet, with higher nutritional and lower calorific values, to keep you fit and healthy with products like Chocos, Honey Loops, Kellogg’s Cornflakes with iron-Shakti Plus and Special K targeting various sections of the society. It came up with various endorsement ideas like- launching small sized convenient packets of Rs. 10, for overcoming the price sensitivity, to launch of the ad campaign with various catchy Hindi one liners like “jago jaise bhi,lo Kelloggs hi”. “Andar se khush, to bahar se kush”, “Shuruvat sahi to din sahi” for attributing the daily energy provision to Kellogg. The company further roped in stars of television industry as well as Bollywood, to leverage its products on the basis of fitness. The launch of Kellogg’s Special K projecting Lara Dutta as its brand ambassador is one of the example. Today, the Indian market alone contributes 10% to the parent's Asia-Pacific revenues of Kellogg’s, making the country its fastest growing market in the region. The company is now planning to invest to triple its size in the Indian market, to take it to 20% in next five years.

### **IV. Mcdonald’s**

McDonald's is the world's largest chain of hamburger fast food restaurants, serving around 68 million customers daily in 119 countries across more than 36,000 outlets. Founded in the United States in 1940. It entered the Indian in the year by forming two 50:50 joint ventures, one with Hardcastle Restaurants Private Ltd. in Western India and another with Connaught Plaza Restaurants Private Ltd. in Northern India, with the first outlet opening in Mumbai. Though, McDonald’s had got clearance from the Foreign Investment Promotions Board (FIPB) in 1991, it made the final entry in the year 1996 which clearly suggests that company was not going to let loose its foot unprepared.

The major challenge that McDonalds faced in India was its diversified culture. World’s biggest beef burger company was about to set its footmark into a country which considers cow holy. The major consumers were supposed to be vegetarians, and some non-vegetarians with special exclusion to beef and pork. Moreover,

the price points were too high for the Indian consumers to afford. So there was a lot of homework to be done for the company on its specialties and varieties to be offered keeping in mind the price of the menu. In addition to that, there was a fierce competition from the lots of local food retailers who had been in the market for years and had an edge over McDonald's in terms of prices, and knowledge of local tastes.

The most captivating challenge handling mechanism of McDonalds was its flexibility. The company came up with the idea of localization of their product to meet the requirement and expectations of the customers. They promised a no beef or pork menu, in addition to that, they made an effort to come up with a variety of vegetarian menu. The company pushed itself further to maintain separate kitchens for preparation of vegetarian and non-vegetarian meals keeping in mind the religious and cultural sentiments. It inaugurated world's first all vegetarian restaurant in religious pilgrimage sites of India. The restaurant in Gujrat even serves menu, keeping in consideration the Jain population, which particularly refrains eating any form of root vegetables. In terms of pricing as well, McDonalds came up with the smart move of introducing 20 rupees burger called Aloo Tikki Burger, a burger with a cutlet made of mashed potatoes, peas and flavored with Indian spices. McSpicy, and special range Cheese burgers are few other examples of localization of the menu. To cater to the price sensitive of consumers, the Happy price menu was launched, which focused on the family fun elements as well. Today there are as many as 350 outlets of McDonalds across India and the company is targeting to push it beyond 1000 outlets as they foresee huge target consumers of around 1.2 billion people.

### **V. Coca-Cola India**

Coca-Cola, one of the largest and oldest leading player in the Indian beverage market with a 60 percent share in the carbonated soft drinks under the name of Coca-cola, Thumbs up, Sprite, 36 percent share in fruit drinks labelled as Mazaa, Pulp Orange and 33 per cent share in the packaged water segment, Kinley.

Coca-Cola Initially entered the Indian market during the late 1970s and the Government's order had forced the company to leave the Indian market. The company again made an entry into the India in the year 1993 after the government decided to liberalize the market again. This time coca cola killed all its competitors in the market by bringing all the leading Indian soft drink brands like Thums-up, Limca, and Gold Spot using its financial strength. Further, the controversy related to pesticide tarnished the image of the company to an extent of bringing down the sales by 11 percent.

The company worked on the infrastructure by spending a whopping US\$ 1bn for succeeding in India. The company invested in setting-up 25 wholly owned bottling plants in India. All these steps taken by the company ensured that the company was able to ensure a deeper level of penetration in the Indian market – even in the rural areas. Since it re-entered the country in 1993, Coca-Cola has already invested \$2 billion has come a long way from being ranked number 16 in the global pecking order in volumes in 2005-06. While re-launched the Coca-Cola brand in India, it went ahead with global communications only, but sooner it realized its mistake and the company quickly adapted its communication to ensure proper appeal to Indian consumers. The company rode on two of the strongest pillars, a brand can use in Indian advertisement and communication industry to succeed i.e. Bollywood and Cricket. It roped in multiple film stars and cricketers so as to promote its brand in the Indian market. Its campaign with the tag line “Thanda matlab Coca-Cola” was able to create the mass appeal for the brand in the market. For positioning the brand Coca-Cola for rural consumers, the company roped in Aamir Khan the famous Bollywood star that helped in popularizing the use of cold drinks in rural areas. To further deep root in rural market, the brand also reduced the entry level price to Rs.5. only The Company also successfully overcame the biggest challenge it faced in the year 2003 of the pesticide controversy. They later came up with airing an ad which gave a tour of the Coca-Cola factory and showcased how the 400 quality control tests are a part of the production process in order to revive the trust of the customers that the brand they are consuming is safe for them. Standing today, Coca-Cola India ranks among our top 10 markets in unit-case sales. The Coca-Cola Company and its global bottling partners will invest \$5 billion in our India operations between 2012 and 2020. By the end of that period, they are eyeing India to be one of the top five global markets.

### **VI. Paper Boat**

Paper Boat is a non-carbonated beverages and energy drink marketed by Hector Beverages located in Bangalore, India. Paper Boat made its debut in the Indian market on August 2013 branding itself as traditional, authentic indigenous drink packaged in eco friendly packaging. The drinks were produced from locally available spices, fruits and some locally available fruits that are grown wild. In July 2015, Paper Boat brand was valued at \$100 million and it expanded its base in Dubai, Malaysia, UK and US. A brand of three year old already adopted Indian culture and customs to promote its drink. It eventually captured the festivals to kick start its promotion and innovation on drinks. Paper boat captured the local flavor of every region in its drink to capture the consumer interest. It started its products adopting the local flavors in the country like drinks with taste of “Jamun Kala Khatta”, AamRas”, “Anardana”, “Kokum” etc with tagline of “Drinks and memories”. This immediately connects with people as these are household flavours of every Indian home and immediately

connect with the sentiment of the consumers. The advertisement with the background music of R. K Narayan's famous "Malgudi Days" and voice over of Gulzar made it more appealing and connected the brand emotionally with the customer/consumer. Apart from this Paper boat made this innovation of introducing drinks for festive. Targeting different festive of the nation, it tried to cater the people through variety of drinks for each festival such as Thandai (an almond-flavoured beverage) for North India timed around Holi, Panakam (jaggery based drink) during Ram Navami festival for Southern market, Kachi Lassithat during Baisakhi and planned to introduce Rose Sharbat during Ramzan. These drinks were introduced and were being planned to introduce in the market because they bring high emotional values with the consumers and these flavors are highly related with each festivals. Other brands in this space like Mondelez, Pepsi-Co and Del Monte have tried to launch specific festival-led promotions but rather than forming any special crafted drink for festive they mostly revolved around their existing product. VT Bharadwaj, Managing Director at Sequoia Capital, one of the main investors in Hector Beverages shares, "The idea behind bringing the appointment drink concept to beverages is to leverage the extraordinary cultural history of this country where we have special drinks for almost all our religious festivals." Over-time this should help us in building the right product portfolio at Paper Boat, he adds. Thus Paper Boat rise as brand is only because of its better understanding and adoption of local culture.

## **VII. Football Clubs**

Football is the second most popular sport in India, after cricket. The sport got a shot in the arm with the formation of the Indian Super League (ISL) in 2014. The number of viewer being almost 400 million in a span of two months. In addition to this, a huge number of viewers hitting the International leagues like the English Premier League (EPL), UEFA Champions League (European), La Liga and the Bundesliga (German) on television and Internet, have made the clubs take notice of their potential market here in India. To capture and make a mark of sports clubs in Indian market various collaborations worked out in recent past. Some were Dream Theatre the company that managed the FIFA merchandise program last year has recently tied up with Brandon Company (an affiliate of sports apparel and accessory manufacturer, Puma) for Arsenal Football Club (FC) merchandise. With this tie-up, the sports apparel brand will be the official kit partner of the club, nicknamed Gunners. Puma has acquired the wide-ranging licensing rights to develop Arsenal merchandise (apparel, back-to-school, sporting goods and souvenirs) globally, through its subsidiaries such as Brandon, Cobra Puma Golf, Wheat Accessories and Dobotex. Further, Viacom18's has an agreement with Nike for the master licensing rights for the star-studded Spanish club, FC Barcelona. The plans are to have as many as 25 categories of products, ranging from apparel, memorabilia and footwear to accessories.

Manchester United, one of the most popular clubs in the EPL, was one of the earliest clubs to move on ahead of selling the merchandise. In a franchise agreement with Mirah Hospitality they collaborated to set up Manchester United Cafe Bars in metro cities for the fans. It also has a licensing agreement with Indus League Clothing to have the merchandise available on e-commerce sites. It has been proactive in sponsorship tie-ups with various Indian brands for training programmes or meet and greet with its players, to further market the brand name among Indian audience.

In order to reach out a wider audience and market, these clubs are now trying to gel-up with the local culture. In a recent video, the star players of the biggest clubs of EPL like Chelsea, Arsenal, Manchester United and Manchester City were seen celebrating and wishing all the audience from India and across the globe Happy Diwali wearing Indian costumes and celebrating Diwali. Since, there are not much domestic rivals in this sector; the International football clubs are likely to take most of the advantage.

The above discussion aimed at understanding the blend of culture with brands and if at all the adoption of culture and tailoring the products as per consumer need had any specific effect on brand in the market. The examples of Kellogg, McDonalds, Coco-Cola, Paper Boat and Football clubs briefly discussed the same. To carry forward the study, the researcher tried to incorporate a survey to understand the connect of consumers and brands with respect to culture.

### **Research Objective**

- a. To identify the underlying cultural dimensions that influences consumer decision and success of brand in target market.

## **VIII. Methodology**

The research objective established in this research is tested through survey using a duly framed and structured questionnaire. The study was administered to students, working professionals and non working individuals (an age group of 18 – 44 years) using a convenience sampling technique. The questionnaire was administered to 200 respondents, 160 responses were collected and collated for further analysis and discussion. The total numbers of female respondents was 64 and male respondents were 96 i.e. 41 percent and 59 percent respectively. The attributes incorporated for constructing the questionnaire are Perceived quality, Lifestyle, Self

–Identity, Values and National Traditions to test the hypothesis. These attributes were derived from Sun et al (2004) and Strizhakova et al (2008) to understand the significance of these attributes as dimension of culture and their role in establishing a brand. The questionnaire comprises of 14 items in five point Likert scale where the responses denoting 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree.

### IX. Finding & Analysis

The items in the questionnaire are tested through Cronbach’s alpha test to check the reliability of each the items. The alpha value for fourteen items is given in the table below (Table 1) which shows the high reliability of items. Higher alpha values (more than 0.7) indicate that the constructs are reliable and are evaluating the basic concept of research (Churchill, 1979).

**Table 1:** Cronbach’s Alpha Value of Items

Sr. No	Statements	Cronbach's Alpha Values
1	I prefer the brands because of the quality they represent	.864
2	I prefers this brand because of its offerings to spend time with friends and family	.856
3	A brand name tells about the quality of a product it offers.	.756
4	I prefer the brands because of its adaptability as per our traditions	.955
5	My choice of brand is because of its consciousness towards, to keep you fit and healthy	.854
6	I have a preference for a brand because options are available for various categories of people	.835
7	I prefer any brand because it that helps in quick use	.755
8	I choose a brand because they were preferred by my friends	.854
9	I refer a brand because of the emotional connect with the brand and I get nostalgic seeing the advertisement	.896
10	I prefer any brand because they blended their offerings as per the locally available tastes	.952
11	I opt for particular brands because they are part of our local traditions	.925
12	I prefer those brands that are reliable and consistent with my values.	.755
13	I use brands because I agree with the company’s values.	.854
14	I avoid brands because I do not support the values they stand for	.853

The researcher conducted Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), which helped to understand the significance of culture in influencing consumer decision and establish a brand in target market. The factors that had an effect on the positive construction and perception of the brand through cultural dimension are identified through this multivariate analysis. The items in the questionnaires were based on Perceived quality, Lifestyle, Self/Group –Identity, Values and National Traditions to test the hypothesis. The details of the results and the analysis are discussed below.

The specifics of the factor analysis are as follows:

**Variables included:** All the aforementioned variables/factors have been included in the analysis

**Extraction method:** The minimum eigen value is kept at 1.00 and the default method of principle components, which is also the most frequently used method, is retained.

**Rotation method:** This is used to arrive at factors as distinct from each other as possible. Here, we are using an orthogonal solution with the default value, “Varimax.”

\*KMO and Bartlett’s test of sphericity are also selected to judge the feasibility of factor analysis in the given sample/dataset

**Table 2:** KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.819
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	105.673
	Df	45
	Sig.	.000

The KMO and Bartlett’s tests were included in the analysis to judge whether the given dataset is suitable for running a successful factor analysis. The table reveals that the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant, standing at a value of 105.673 and a significance level of 0. This implies that from the perspective of Bartlett's test, performing factor analysis in this case is feasible.

However, the results of Bartlett's test usually tend to be significant. Hence, there was the need to involve the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy test. This is a far more discriminating test to decide the suitability of factor analysis and scope for further analysis. The table above reveals that the KMO

value stands at 0.819 which is high enough to support the case for factor analysis and underlining that the sample size is adequate to conduct factor analysis.

Table 3 below is the Rotated Component Matrix, which displays the factor loadings for each variable. The factor that each variable loaded most strongly on has been highlighted for quick reference. This table will clearly emphasize on the factors that had an effect on the positive construction and perception of the brand through cultural dimension

**Table 3: Identified Factors through Rotated Component matrix using EFA**

<b>Component 1</b>	<b>Variables Included</b>
I use brands because I agree with the company's values	.814
I avoid brands because I do not support the values they stand for	.866
<b>Component 2</b>	
I prefer any brand because they blended their offerings as per the locally available tastes	.778
I opt for particular brands because they are part of our local traditions	.856
<b>Component 3</b>	
My choice of brand is because of its consciousness towards, to keep you fit and healthy	.814
I choose a brand because they were preferred by my friends	.944
<b>Component 4</b>	
I prefer a brand because of the emotional connect with the brand and I get nostalgic seeing the advertisement	.964

The variables identified above give a clear picture on the aspects that significantly governed the construction of brands through cultural dimensions. The survey and the research here highlight the key variables identified from the list of variables. The variables that emerged through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were listed component wise.

**Component 1** talks about social value that consumers hold while choosing a brand. Social values are an integral part of any culture and if a brand does not represent the same it may affect its perception and image of brand in the target market.

**Component 2** discuss about the adaptability of the brand in the target market

**Component 3** talk about consciousness and group identity of brands.

**Component 4** discusses and highlights the connection of sentiments and emotions with brands.

All these attributes of brand are very important for its success and failure of a brand in target market. Hence according to this survey analysis, the increasing success of any brands is due to these underlying cultural dimensions which are stated below.

- Social values
- Adaptability
- Brand Consciousness & Identity
- Emotional connect of brand with Consumers

## X. Discussion

The study discussed about the value of culture is creation or co-creation of brand in a target market. Due to emergence of various brands in global market, there exists a lot of struggle in subsistence of any brand. Every brand comes up with innovative ideas and approaches to target the market and to increase its productivity. Sometimes they succeed and sometimes they come across the failure. Success and failure of any brand is largely dependent on understanding the social values of the brand and its emotional connect with its consumers. Every marketer has to understand that brand is about adapting with person choice, preference and culture. To attain success in any market, brands have to adapt the global culture, tailoring its offerings as per the culture of specific area/region/locality. This research through its various examples illustrated the success of global brands in Indian Market. Through this study the importance and integration of culture can be visualized. The study briefly articulated that how adapting Indian culture, the global brands succeeded in gaining the trust of consumers and creating emotional connect with them.

## XI. Conclusion

The present research very clearly discussed in brief about few global as well as Indian brands that adopted culture of specific region to establish their brand in the country. Cases of Kellogg, McDonald, Coca-Cola and Paper Boat clearly give a picture of the perfect blend of their product with target audience keeping in mind of sentiments, religion and consumption habit. Even the cultural blend is seen in sports where big league European clubs are also targeting potential Indian market to sell their merchandise. To promote the same they are targeting Indian festive and caramelizing their taste with pinch of Indian tone and culture. Thus it can be easily concluded through this study that for any brand to establish them in any market culture is very important

and plays a significant role. Also the fact is supported through survey which undoubtedly ascertained few dimensions like social values, traditions, cultural sentiments & emotions, adaptability & flexibility of brands as few factors that affects and influences consumer decision regarding setting up a brand in target market. This study will also help marketer to understand the impact of culture towards various brands. It further emphasize on doing proper research before releasing a brand in any market. The limitation with this study is that it is restricted to few brands and limited sample which can be escalated further to a broader vision and understanding.

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