

# Standardization and adaptation in television advertising



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Still in this 21st century television continues to be a prevailing media. Due to the increase in the globalization this world is “shrinking” at a rapid rate, companies doing business overseas must find new and innovative ways to communicate their brands to the market. Thus, the decision of standardization or adaptation of the advertisements between various nations is of much importance to these companies competing in the international market. The purpose of this paper is to develop a better understanding as to how the multi-national companies standardize and adapt their television advertising. For reaching the conclusion, questions based on the elements of television ads, along with the factors affecting the decision whether to standardize or adapt were identified. On the basis of these questions, analysis of related literature was conducted to form a conceptual framework, which was further utilized to guide this paper’s data collection. Qualitative case study approach was rendered to collect the data, based on the interviews and observing the television commercials of multi-national brands. The conclusion derived shows that there are various appeals that are efficient. For e. g. Emotional appeals are more efficient on young target market, whereas the rational appeals work more efficiently on the older target market. Cost is the key factor which influences the company’s decision to adapt a commercial. Whereas regarding the standardization of a television commercial the company’s main focus should be the non-geographical elements such as the family culture and humour.

Contents

## **1 Introduction**

The following chapter will be providing the reader with some background of the area being researched. Problem statement regarding the standardization and adaptation in television ads will be followed by the research. The overall purpose and the related research questions will be concluding this chapter.

### **1.1 Background**

Marketing communication is based solely on the method of sharing of the perceptions. The intended message can be successfully communicated only if the sender's perceptual field or what we can define as his experience of that brand is in congruence with the perceptual field of the intended market. Thus a message which lands outside the receiver's perceptual field has no effect on the receiver. According to Root (1994) the perceptual gaps as well as the encoding and decoding gaps resulting arising due to the cultural differences between the sender and the receiver hinders the communication. Moreover, as a reason of the unawareness of cultures regarding the existence of such gaps the level of communication hindrance increases additionally.

In the below figure 1. 1, it has been demonstrated by Czinkota and Ronkainen (2004) that efficient communication depends on three main factors: the sender, the receiver and the message. These three factors are interconnected with a message channel.

### **Figure 1: Marketing Communication Process**

It was also stated by Root (1994) that communication process between the people of the same culture derives an advantage from a high level of

congruence in their perceptual fields as well as the similarity between their communication codes. The communication process can be therefore be affected by the cultural hindrance which is justified by Root (1994) saying that many times the sender as well as the receiver of the same culture believe that the message has been clearly understood by them even though it is not the case.

Advertising has been defined by Root (1994) as a process of non-personal communication which is sponsored in monetary form to promote a product, a brand or even a company. Advertising has also been recognized as a tool for mass promotion (ibid). According to Laroche and Teng (2006) cultural values are vital for any ad message and it is also a deciding factor for the success of any ad. They have also stated that the people are finding commonalities between them and the ads when their cultural values are embodied in those ads. The vice versa happens when their values are not matching the ad.

The assignment of delivering the message to the people is given to the advertising media. Radio, print, television, cinema, hoardings and other outdoors are the leading media considerable for this task. The advertisers are able to demonstrate the service or the product in motion using a number of choices of elements available for this task. The right combination of these elements during the making of the television ad so as to give the message a strong probability of catching the attention of the consumer and getting the message to him is vital to achieve the desired impression on the mind of the consumer.

## 1. 2 Problem Discussion

Television ads can also be used to boost the image of the product by showing the product in motion along with the ability to use colour and sound for constructing a desirable environment surrounding the product. The centre of this paper will be television commercials, due to the various factors of television such as vision, colour, sound and motion which are very crucial in presenting the message. Moreover, the study of Brassington and Pettitt (2000) showing that motion ads are considered superior for the generation of emotional appeals also is a factor for the concentration of this paper towards television commercials.

The decision of the standardization or adoption of television ad at an international level resides mainly to the manager and his manipulations towards the promotional mix elements. People who support standardization argue by saying that the current trend in the marketing world is of creating the products and marketing them in the same way in all the nations without considering the differences in the various cultures. But when manager sees much higher level of differences in the lifestyles as well as economies of the target market population he renders a higher level of adaption instead of going for the standardization. On the other hand supporters of standardization justifies themselves by saying that using same ads in the overseas markets would help them to achieve lower costs as well as establish a corporate image on a global level. Again the people in support of adaptation say that this won't help them in entrenching themselves into the local markets.

According to Root (1994) nations vary widely in quality, availability, cost of marketing, etc. Thus, marketers should thoroughly embody the various cultural variables into their ads as it seems to have a great impact on influencing the consumer as well his buying decision. The research conducted by Chandra (2002) shows that various adaptations in an ad's slogan, jingle, theme as well as idiomatic symbols, expressions and colours make the adaption in an ad mandatory. He also stated that it is vital for firm to adapt their marketing campaigns to the regional market targeted in order to realize the profits.

Bottom lining this standardization vs. adaptation debate are the factors of economic savings in case of using standardized marketing strategies and the maximum realization of profits in case of adaptation of the strategies so to fit into the local target market. Bradley and Sousa (2005) concluded in their studies non-regional population is likely to be less reactive to the ads which don't match to their cultures. Thus it is mandatory for successful marketing in other nations that the marketers to understand the target population's cultural traits.

According to Melewar and Vemmervik (2004) products and brands can, for a time, sustain the cultural difference and homogenization, but this is not the case with ads as they are much more dependent on influencing the consumers through the marketing elements which are closely tied to the culture of those consumers. Due to the use of such verbal and visual factors such as the scenes, regional language and models the ad tends to be effective and hence deriving profits.

### **1. 3 Purpose and Research Question**

Based on the discussion in the previous section, the purpose of this seminar paper is to provide a better understanding of how the companies standardize or adapt their television commercials in the international markets.

Two problem questions are formulated for the reason of helping us to acquire the knowledge required to accomplish the stated purpose.

PQ 1. How the elements of television ads that are standardized or adapted can be described?

PQ 2. How the factors influencing the decision to standardize or adapt be described?

## **2 Literature Review**

This chapter presents an overview of the researches related to the questions stated. This chapter will be starting with studying the elements of television ads. Then studies relating to the factors influencing the choice of standardize or to adapt will be discussed. In the end, a conceptual framework for this paper will be presented.

### **2. 1 Elements In Television Advertising**

It is concluded in the research of Melewar and Vemmervik (2004) that particularly the Visual and Verbal elements embedded in the ads are more dependent on the differences among cultures. They further stated that the dependence of the effectiveness of the ad is directly proportional to the use of local scenes, models as well as the regional language. Another element Appeal was added by Laroche and Teng (2006).

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## APPEALS

Ad Appeals can be defined as a message communicated to the consumers so as to motivate them to buy the related product/service. The choice of the Appeal is the key factor associated with the ads. Kelley and Turley classified them into two categories: Rational Appeal and Emotional Appeal.

Rational ads rise from the traditional communication model where the recipient is assumed to make reasonable rational decision. Such ads show the benefits of the product by demonstrating its quality, value, performance and economy and generate self-interest in the mind of the target customer.

In contrast to Rational Appeal, Emotional Appeals rely on the emotional perceptions of the consumer. These ads, generally being experimental, generally tend to make the recipient feel good about the relevant product/service generating a likeliness or friendliness towards the brand. Emotional Appeals tend to bring up the negative and positive emotions in the mind of the recipient in order to motivate them for a buying. The negative emotions may include fear, shame or guilt appeals making people do things they should or stopping them for doing things they shouldn't. Whereas, positive emotions include appeals like love, humour, pride or joy. (Albers-Miller and Stafford, 1999)

Laroche and Teng (2006) in their recent study have stated that there exists different appeals among different cultures which are able to impact the target consumer in the most efficient manner. And the ad won't be able to achieve the desired result if the target consumer fails to find similarities between themselves and the ad's characteristics.

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Furthermore it is also observed that these variances in the Appeals between the West and the East date back to the ancient times. The reason behind this is thought to be the influence of the Greek philosophers on the culture of the west, emphasizing on Verbal communication. (Muller, 1992)

The experimentation on marketing campaigns using violence and shocking appeals were reviewed by Anderson, Hedelin and Nilsson (2004). During the review they concluded that the use of sex as well as violence produced negative impacts on both male as well as the female recipients making it difficult for them to interpret the same message that was tried to be conveyed through that ad. They also found out that there exists a difference among the sexes in the interpretation of the messages. The females were able to relate themselves with the commercials when children are displayed.

#### VERBAL ELEMENTS

It has been stated by Nelson and Paek (2007) that the language used in the ad is of much more importance than most marketers realize. Stewart (1994) also supported this thesis by saying that the importance of the use of the regional language becomes a vital factor when the ad is using a dramatized plot approach. The only thing that should be taken care of is that the use of dialects and vernaculars may be interpreted as stereotyping which may not be consumed positively by the local population.

Chart : Ducan and Ramprasad's (1995) survey illustrating majority of brands opting for adoption of regional language in their ads

#### VISUAL ELEMENTS

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According to Hewett, Madden and Roth (1999) colour being and significant part of the products, their logos and their packaging is a powerful tool in positioning the brand into the minds of the consumer.

It has been stated in the studies conducted by Greenberg and Solomon (1993) it requires a great effort on the part of the directors as well as set creators and many others to choose a scenery and location and numerous other factors like the tone as well as the nuance of the print on which the ad is supposed to be executed. These experts in their respective fields strive to create a compelling environment that will be executed on the ad agency's vision of a way to reinforce the targeted product's intended "brand image" into the mind of the recipient. An influential and persuasive message can be delivered by the product if the ad is well-crafted and presented in a manner which is sensible to the recipient and reinforce the intended message in his mind.

## OTHERS

Cho (1999) argues that a message conveyed by an ad should be in congruence with the values of the local culture. He also supported this statement by saying that the cultural values embodied in the ads are the core of these ads. Most of the time ads endorse, embellish as well as reinforce the cultural values. Moreover, it has been shown with the help of empirical studies that ads which reflect regional cultural values are more persuasive than the ads which don't incorporate them.

## **2. 2 Influencing Factors**

This part will be analysing various factors that impact the decision to standardize or adapt based on various researches conducted. These will be stated along with explanation through this whole chapter.

### **COST**

It is stated by Darmon (1999) that one of the reason leading to standardization is cost considerations. Ducan and Ramprasad (1995) also stated that economic gains along with convenience being a key factor leading to standardization. However, they were much amazed when the data of their survey stated “ cost savings” as one of the least priority item.

### **THE ROLE OF HEADQUATERS AND SUBSIDIARIES SALE LEVEL**

In their research Ducan and Ramprasad (1995) that the marketing strategy as well as the follow up are more probable to be changed in the more well-off markets where the holdings of the firm as well as the profit margins are comparatively higher. Still the power of making important decisions of the regional offices depends completely on the level of freedom offered by its parent company.

### **MACRO FACTORS**

According to Chandra (2002), these factors vary considerably from nation to nation and affect the decision making process very much based on the nation’s legal, political and economic factors along with the marketing

scenarios. For e. g. in south Korea, only the nation's models are allowed to be featured in the ads.

### SINGLE BRAND IMAGE

Ducan and Ramprasad (1995) concluded in their studies that the single brand image is the most influencing reason for standardization. It is also suggested by Vrontis (2003) that through the use of single brand image a company can significantly establish its global brand image. And due to the global broadcasting by the media as well as consumer mobility standardization is much favoured as compared to earlier times.

### PRODUCT CATEGORY

As compared to the products/services which are likely to be purchased on the basis of the regional cultures, products/services which show uniform consumer buying habits are more likely to employ a standardized marketing strategy. For e. g. electronic goods are used the same way across different cultures in contrast to food items which are more likely to be consumed in the traditional fashion.

### DEMOGRAPHIC, PSYCHORGAPHIC AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

It is stated by Chandra (2003) that the use of standardization depends on the existence of the homogeneous market segments. If such market exists than the consumers are more likely to behave in the same manner across the markets and share a common buying habit.

### EXPLOITING A SUCCESSFUL IDEA

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Ducan and Ramprasad (1995) stated that when an effective idea or strategy have taken a great time in its development and is successfully producing positive results, the firms are very keen on using this idea across different markets so as to reap the costs incurred in the production of that strategy.

NOT INVENTED HERE

When the multinational agencies are trying to use standardization, their regional subsidiaries are often uncomfortable with the imposition of their ideas and often defend their reasoning by tagging it as not invented here and hence lacking creativity.

## **2.3 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework is defined by Miles and Huberman (1994) as a visual, graphical or audible description of a study explaining it. They can be constructs, factors, elements or variables and the relationship links between them. They also state that if the research questions have been stated first than it is much easy to form the conceptual framework. Thus for answering the research questions we have to first state on what basis we have collected the data.

First, the relevant theories for the first question will be stated followed by the relevant for the second question.

## **2.3 Conceptualization – Elements of Television Advertising**

Laroche and Teng (2006) found out the various appeal elements of ads, whereas Melewar and Vemmervik (2004) have classified them into visual and verbal elements.

Appeals

Rational

Culture

Emotional

Speech elements

Sound

National Language

Visual elements

Scenery

Models

### **2. 3. 2 Conceptualization – Influencing Factors**

There are various different factors influencing the decision of going for standardization or adaptation for the television ads. The related theories will be analysed and equated with data collected:

Cost

Demographic, psychographic and cultural characteristics

Macro factors

Single brand image

Product category

### **3. Methodology**

In this chapter the methodology used in the research will be presented. This chapter begins with the purpose, approach and Strategy used in the research followed by data collection and selection of sample. This chapter will be concluding with the problems faced during the methodology study.

#### **3. 1 Purpose of Research**

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