

Brands Explore Human Relationships for Consumer Engagement : A Critical Analysis of Television Advertising in India

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Abstract

Within the critical codes of advertising executions, human relations (personal and social) in television ads were examined to know the recurring relationship projections in the present day Indian advertising. It was found that the individuals' relationship with self is emerging as a preferred one, with romantic love and family relations often used either as site or subject to position the brand as integral, at times intimate, and more often, identifiable in the product category. Evidence pointed out at the homogenization of product-consumer relation as well as existing character- character and character - consumer relations across durables, non-durables, or other identified sponsors. From the purposive sample, it was noted that television ads used collectivistic appeals to use or create moments in life driven by the need to love and belong. Products are seldom directly talked at us but are artfully woven in relationship slices in seamless communication and persuasion.

Keywords: homogenization, attachment, interpersonal relationship, mutuality, legitimization ads, collectivistic appeals, puffery

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The danger of looking at advertising merely through the frames of markets, masses, and monopoly delinks it completely from the sphere of social simulation and ideology (Goldman, 1992). With advertising, there is certainly more to see and consume than whether or not to buy. In fact, corporate organizations have found legitimization advertising a potent tactic to mediate “meanings of freedom, individuality, work and leisure, community, and family life” (Goldman, 1992, pp. 82-85). The creative codes used in advertising not only present the dominant imagery, but also underline the polysemy of meanings we need to know via critical examination of content, cues, and context. Freeing advertising from economic outcomes, Williams (1980) argued that more than the material possession of an object, a direct association of those objects with the personal and social meanings in cultures embody the advertised mind. Social scientists have long held that advertising does not just tell us about the products, it also shows us the way we should live our lives. In one way or another, advertisers attempt to tie the product or service to our deepest and most basic psychological needs, such as security, self-esteem, respect, passion, and love. Therefore, we buy products not only for their material utilities, but also for the symbolic meaning of those products as portrayed in their images (Speck & Elliott, 1997). These images can influence what consumers think, feel, and behave, sometimes in a very negative way (Pollay, 1986).

In India, advertising research has scantily focused on how human relationships are addressed in the television advertising despite its expanding share in media and entertainment. India had almost 138 million television households and cable connections or direct to home (DTH) penetration reaching 80% of the masses as per the

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FICCI - KPMG report (2011). As per Adex India, television media advertising in India witnessed a growth of 18 % in the first six-months of 2014 as compared to the corresponding period in 2010. While food and beverage, personal care, and services were the top three contributors to television advertising, educational and social advertisements topped in print.

Television advertising and human relationships (interpersonal or small group relationships embody strong, deep, or close association or acquaintance between two or more people that may range in duration from brief to enduring) are two strong constructs for any academic scholarship. As an intermediate between the brand and the viewer, the conceptualization of an ad message needs to be de-constructed before setting it up for any audience response or 'effects' discourse. Therefore, the focus in this study is on finding out the dominant relationship projections in television advertising. Furthermore, 'opportunities to see' ascertained by multiple insertions in the medium makes it a valid site for investigation.

Background

Television advertising is the most captivating of all forms. NRS 2002-2005 highlighted that TV has grown most in comparison to print or other advertising media (Jethwaney & Jain, 2006). Over a longer period of time, the TV set has become a permanent fixture in all upper and middle-class households, and it is not uncommon even in the poorer society of urban areas and rural households (Shah & D'Souza, 2008). Television affects behavior, though its effects are debatable since most of the studies so far conducted are laboratory studies consisting of experiments, making generalizations difficult (Chunawalla & Sethia, 2008). Manstead and McCulloch (1981), in a survey of 170 commercials broadcasted on Granada TV, noted the product category and gender linkages along with nature of setting and relationship between parents and children depicted in the ads. Results showed sex role stereotypes in terms of knowledgeable opinion as against mere consumption and being shown with children. This study, in many ways, set the course for similar projects across the world.

The starting point of this research is that TV ads have gone beyond simple spoken announcements with an accompanying picture and caption to explore "... sequences of everyday life, particularly family life ... featuring the use of a product" (Dyer, 1982, p. 11). This attempt to understand sociological and psychological constructs in commercial consumer advertising would benefit three dimensions of the sender, that is, source, author, and persona in advertising as a communication process given by Barbara Stern (Arens, 2008). Besides, the content analysis will also throw out variables to be studied in campaign testing and impact studies by the media scholars in India.

Related Studies

Xue and Ellzey (2009) did a content analysis of couple images in advertisements in six consumer magazines (Cosmopolitan, Vogue, Glamour, Men's Health, Esquire, and GQ) published in 2005 and 2006. They concluded that the typical couple image portrayed in ads in mainstream magazines was a young, heterosexual Caucasian couple with thin bodies and a trendy style either posing in front of the camera or enjoying leisure time in a relaxing setting. Men's magazines contained more financial or technology products, more foreign brands, more recreational activities, and more sensory messages, while women's magazines contained more beauty products, more group context, more safety appeal, and more rational messages. Xue and Ellzey (2009) referred to the classic examples of De Beers, who frequently use images of lovers in its advertising campaigns to connect jewellery with love, and Clean & Clear has been using two "best friends forever" teenage girls in lots of ads. However, very little systematic research has analyzed relationships between two individuals in advertising.

Mazumdar (2010) illustrated that family, and not the individual, is the primary target group of late in India by

citing a case of McDonald's (Example 2.1 & 2.2; p.162) , as to how the food chain has shifted the focus from couples to families and kids. Avasthi (2011) pointed out that marriage and sex continue to remain the core themes in Indian advertising, reflecting the realities of our society ; though narratives, context, and content of the relationship shown is more contemporary, reflecting the changing motives and modes of marriage.

Brown et al. (2013) examined the frequency of romantic content in entertainment programmes on TV in China. The analysis revealed that romantic scenes, typically portraying men and women already in committed relationships, appeared in 80% of the 196 programs obtained from a large sample of entertainment programmes aired on 28 channels. The analysis suggested that according to Chinese television in the early part of the twenty-first century, emotional love was more important than physical sexual interaction in romantic relationships. More than half of the 1112 romantic scenes analyzed depicted love between the partners without any discussion or display of physical sexual behavior.

Huang (2004) argued that sex and romantic love need to be classified distinctively, and romantic love is an independent ad theme. It was found that while pleasure due to sex appeal shown in ads leads to a direct response in ad attitude of the respondent, pleasure in case of romantic love appeals is moderated by arousal, which leads to an ad attitude. Lepkowska-White (2004), in her study on advertising appeals in U.S. and Poland, found that collectivistic appeals were less popular in U.S. and Poland, attributing it to their individualistic relationship based value system and emphasized that the reverse may be true for collectivistic cultures like China and South Asia.

Zhang and Gelb (1996) found that collectivistic appeals were more popular in Chinese advertising than in individualistic societies like USA. Nestor (1974) observed that high school students, particularly those in the junior and senior years, were almost universally confused and struggled with human relations. They simultaneously searched to define themselves as individuals while trying to define themselves in relation to the other. Greco (1993) analyzed 464 television commercials aired to find that more ads containing elderly persons were being used. However, a majority of the elderly continued to be cast in minor or background roles, and frequently appeared in ads with members of other age groups.

In the past, research showed that the portrayal of sex roles in advertising has not reflected equality or reality. Furthermore, studies typically have examined only U.S. advertising, leaving open the question of cultural influence on advertising's sex role portrayals. Gilly (1988) did a comparative study of sex roles in advertising for U.S., Australian, and Mexican television advertisements. Results revealed differences in the portrayal of the sexes in U.S. advertisements. Australian advertisements showed somewhat fewer sex-role differences, and Mexican advertisements showed slightly more sex role differences than U.S. advertisements. Stereotypes were found in the advertising of all three countries, but were manifested in different ways.

Research Questions

Q1 : Is romantic love more pervasive than filial bonds in TV ads?

Q2 : Are the sex roles in ads a reflection of unequal interpersonal relationships between partners?

Q3 : Are relationship projections in advertising based on mutuality and resonance or individual's needs and desires?

Q4 : Is there a similarity in certain relationship types in specific product categories?

Conceptual Framework

The research questions were developed based on Jossleson's (1996, 2003) description of eight ways of

Table 1 A. Variable Summary

Variable	Coding Categories	Source
1. Relationship	<Parent -Child>, <Married Couples><Friends>,<BF/GF>, <Siblings>, <Family>,<Teacher-Student>, <Govt-Public>	Adapted from Josselson's Model
2. Advertising Appeals	<Individualistic>, <Functional> , <Collectivistic>, <Experiential>	Lepkowska-White (2004)
3. Sex of the Lead Character	<Male> , <Female>	Schneider & Schneider (1979)
4. Age of the lead Character in the ad	<Child> ,< Youth>, <Elderly>	Schneider & Schneider (1979)
5. Employment of the Character	<In a work Situation > ,<In a Non Work Situation but looks employed>,< Without indication of Employment>	Schneider & Schneider (1979)
6. Sex Roles	<Spouse><Parent> , <Homemaker>, <Worker>, <Real life Celebrity>,<Interviewer/narrator>, <Any other >	McArthur & Resko (1979)
7. Product Categories	<FMCG>, <SMCG>, <Org>. <Others>	Dixit (2007)
8. Nature of Relationship	<Harmony><Conflict>	Adapted from Stages of Relationship
9. Message Execution Format	<Animation>,<Slice of Life>,<Dramatization>,<Testimonial>, <Authoritative>,<Demonstration>, <Fantasy>, <Informative>	Operationalized (Ref: End Notes)
10. Age Group	< Child>,< Young >,<Elderly>	Ahmed (2012)

overcoming the space between us in her multidimensional model of relationships. Out of the eight, two have been selected as competing drivers of advertising messages (in this study): *Attachment* and *Passionate Love*. Mutuality and product category are independent variables and type of relationship is a dependent variable.

Operationalizing the Relevant Terms

↳ **Attachment** : It is the long term family relationships based on trust between the care givers and self (parent and child, siblings, extended family).

↳ **Passionate Love** : Includes sexual love between men and women in various ways ; marriage, love affairs, live-in relationships, opposite sex friendships.

↳ **Individual's Love for Self** : In the study, it is character - product relationship, quest for identity through creating a link between the protagonist and the advertised product.

↳ **Organizational Relationships**: Relationships at the workplace; among peers, employees, and boss ; among people and the government.

Research Methodology

The study aims to examine human relationships in television advertising in the Indian context in present times. It is an exploratory research regarding the dominant relationship projections in television advertisements and their linkages with sex roles and prevalent ad appeals. For the purpose, content analysis was used. The unit of analysis (TV advertisements) was obtained and then categorized into different variables to reach appropriate results (Table 1A).

↳ **Sample** : A total of 65 advertisements were obtained from the prime time slot of a television channel in the third week of February 2014. For the purpose of content analysis, purposive or judgmental sampling technique

Table 1. Demographic Profiling (Sex and Age) of the Lead Character in Television Ads

Sexof the character	The Age Group of the Lead Character			
	Child	Youth	Elderly	Total
Male	4	5	1	10
Female	7	47	1	55
Total	11	52	2	65

Table 2. Typology of Relations in Indian Television Ads

Relations	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Parent-Child	8	12.3	12.3
Married Couple	4	6.2	18.5
Friends	2	3.1	21.5
Family(Entire)	8	12.3	33.8
Bf&Gf/Lovers	2	3.1	36.9
Office Mates	2	3.1	40.0
Govt.&Public	6	9.2	49.2
Teacher-Student	1	1.5	50.8
Peers/Strangers	6	9.2	60.0
Self	26	40.0	100.0
Total	65	100.0	

Where family, parent-child collectively are a subset of attachment BF/GF, married couples, friends, acquaintances, strangers form romantic love personal ,(I) based ads define individuals' relationship between self and products.

was used. GEC Star Plus was selected as the source of television ads under study. Star Plus is the leading hindi general entertainment channel and has clocked highest ratings any Hindi GEC has ever got. From within the prime time access and the prime time between 20:00 and 23:00, ads were collected conveniently from 22:00 to 22:30 during weekdays, and from 22:00 to 23:00 during weekends, as these timings come under the prime time slot, and thus the television viewing is more and so are the advertisements, making the data more reliable and valid.

A code sheet of 10 variables (Table 1A) was prepared to classify the data on specific content categories. Data was coded by a single coder. To analyze and interpret the data for the tabulation and pictorial representation, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 21.0 was used. Descriptive statistics and chi square goodness of fit test have been used for data analysis.

Analysis and Results

(1) RQ1: Is romantic love more pervasive than familial bonds in TV ads?

Romantic love and familial relationships have been studied by coding variables like: typology of relationship, nature of the relationship, appeals, age of the lead character. The lead character in most of the ads was a young female (18.5%). It strengthens the argument put forth in the study that romantic relationships form the core of brand stories in Indian advertising. Since romantic love is mostly associated with people in the age group of 15-

Table 3. Nature of the Relationship in the TVCs

Nature	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Harmony	45	69.2	69.2
Conflict	20	30.8	100.0
Total	65	100.0	

$M = 1.30$; $SD = .46$

Table 4(a). Distribution of Roles Played by the Lead Character in an Ad w.r.t Sex

Sex of the Character	Roles played by the Lead Character in the ad						Total
	Spouse/Bf-Gf/Friends	Parent	Homemaker	Worker	Real Life Celebrity	Narrator	
Male	2	1	0	0	6	1	10
Female	9	5	5	7	18	11	55
Total	11	6	5	7	24	12	65

Chi square = 11.7($df = 10$), $p = 3.94$, 95% level of significance

$r = .365$

60 years, advertising too mirrors this facet (Table 1).

The ads show a pattern of attachment in relations; passionate love is not all pervasive. Individuals' love for self clearly dominates (Table 2). The story of an individual finds presence in most Indian TVC's today (40 %). However, a variety of other relationships between man, woman, and child are being explored by brands to tell their stories. The family as a unit often becomes the site of situations created by the ad creatives to highlight the need / desire for a brand within the values, traditions, and rituals in the Indian family system. So, we find that intimate, personal, and close human relations form the nucleus of brand association and interest in engaging the media consuming buying prospects. Love relationships, that is, husband and wife, young lovers, and friendship bonds have become the conceptual identity of many brands of late. The secondary bonds of kinship are lesser explored nowadays. This may be attributed to the changes in the social mobility in the country. From a collectivistic society, India post 1991 has become individualized, consumerist, voyeuristic, aspirational, and nuclear in its love and belongingness. What remains, however, is the perennial urge to provide, deliver, please and support your relations. Within these bonds, brands are artfully positioned as the connectors, mediators, suppliers of the expectations, emotions, and experiences to nurture and maintain one's relationship with self and with others in close contact.

Almost all the advertisements celebrated the relationships rather than presenting the inherent conflicts and contradictions in them. The data supports the inherent 'feel good factor' - both social and economic created by advertising globally and locally now (Table 3). Situations are not grim, dark, or unappealing to allow the viewer's empathy, but in fact, create a pseudo environment based on utopia and stereotypes. The brands are aggressive to offer potent answers to difficulties in relationships but indeed, are at best facilitating the progression of an already working harmonious human connecting. There seems to be less urge in the advertising fraternity to marry the grey shades of human life with the rise of a brand. Brands continue to be catalyzers in a narrative where the end is a happy one. However, 20% of the ads that showed tension or frustration in relations may suggest a beginning of making advertising less glossy and more real.

(2) RQ2: Are the sex roles in ads a reflection of unequal and non-mutual interpersonal relationships between partners?

Sex roles were observed wr.t variables like: sex of the main character, role of the main character in the ad,

Table 4(b). Distribution of the Employment Status of the Lead Character w.r.t Sex

Sex of the Character	Employment Status of the Lead Character in the ad			Total
	Work Situation	Non-Work Situation	Without any Indication of Employment	
Male	2	6	2	10
Female	16	17	22	55
Total	18	23	24	65

$M = 2$; $SD = .8$

Chi square = 3.6 ($df = 4$), $p = 3.66$ at 30% level of significance

Table 5. Dominant Ad Appeals in the TVC

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Individualistic	12	18.5	18.5
Functional	5	7.7	26.2
Collectivistic	43	66.2	92.3
Experiential	5	7.7	100.0
Total	65	100.0	

$M = 2.6$; $SD = .87$

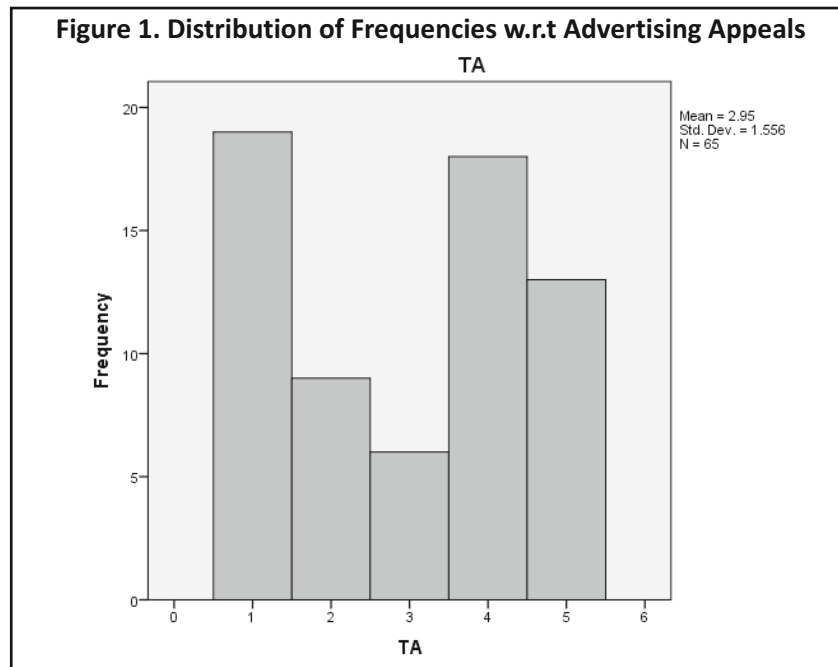
Chi square is 60.7 ($df = 3$); $p = .3$ at 5% level of significance

employability. The dataset reveals a slight shift from the previous studies w.r.t sex roles. The Table 4(a) shows that a lot of women role models (33%) are now being projected to engage with women buying prospects in brand communication. There is a reinforcement of the old stereotype as well, as women are still shown as homemakers, spouses, and parents. Women appeared as working women in merely 10 % of the advertisements. Significantly, they are telling their own stories, extending themselves into new relations with society and self by being the voice of the narrator (17%) ; $p < \chi^2$ means that there is a significant divergent distribution of roles played by the character away from the normal probability. It was clearly observed that in ads, women still do not go out to work (71%). Since most of the lead characters are women, and significant number of ads did not give any indication on employment (Table 4(b)), it can be extrapolated that women are still not seen as an active workforce in advertising communication (40%).

(3) RQ3: Are relationship projections in advertising based on mutuality and resonance or individual's needs and experiences?

Sixty six percent (66%) of the ads presented collectivistic appeals, clearly pointing out the use of families, friends, social settings at home and outside to tell stories based on human emotions to create an engagement around the brand. This finding is similar to research studies conducted in China, USA, and Poland on advertising appeals, where results suggested that the culture of the country is directly proportional to the frequency of the ad appeal executed. India is a collectivistic society; hence, 66.2 % appeals used in are collectivistic (Table 5).

Since the $p < \chi^2$, the null hypothesis of equal probability is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It means that collectivistic appeals are the dominant appeals in Indian TV advertising. Furthermore, sub-categorization shows that 29% of the ads used fear appeal ; while, 28% stuck to rational appeals. It is significant to note that 20% of the ads were based on love appeals with humor and sex at 13.8%, 9.2%, and 20.0%, respectively. This distribution of advertising appeals throws up some interesting presets of our times. Earlier, fear appeal or shock advertising was used sparingly in ads as it was believed to create an ad avoidance syndrome



amongst the audiences. However, now, we see a lot of advertisers in the personal care, health, insurance, and banking sector using the fear appeal in varying degrees. Fear found two predominant manifestations in these ads. Firstly, the fear to lose one's tangible or intangible virtues, characteristics and secondly, the fear of losing one's 'relationships'. The second type of fear signals the dependence of advertising on sociology of human bonds more deeply. Advertising seems to have understood that more than creating a desire to buy something new because of its novelty or differential benefits, fear of not being able to develop or retain personal relationships can lead the young India to become loyal to a brand in the information processing commercial communication sphere (Figure 1).

The traditional reliance on humor in advertising continues, though it is now being balanced by the use of other emotional appeals like acknowledgment of friendship, joy of being together, contributions to someone else's success, reversal of roles in a man-woman relationship, and reinforcement of certain permanent emotions like dreams, contentment, longing, sorrow, envy, pride and prestige at different points in every relation. Sex appeal is restricted to certain product categories like deodorants and body sprays besides condoms. Though, in many ads, you find the 'expression of freedom or self' being depicted through subliminal advertising on television.

Rather than product trial or product features, the emphasis is on creating trust amongst the characters in the ad or the character and the audience via validation, certification by celebrities, and use of empathy (Table 6). It shows the type of creative execution formats used by the ad makers in the ad sample. Celebrity testimonials stand out as the most commonly used message format (40% of the testimonial ads starred celebrities). Out of the 65 advertisements analyzed, 16.9% were product/service announcements, directly focusing on the relationship of a product and a protagonist. Problem - solution, question- answers, and reason- why approaches were used to provide information, at times education, about the benefit or use of a product to the viewers. Most of these advertisements were election campaigns of political parties, while a few were public service messages issued by the government or other public sector institutions.

Admittedly, the use of celebrities, especially movie stars and sports personalities in television ads, is a growing trend in Indian advertising (perhaps can be attributed to a new social order where success stories drive, guide, and persuade the new aspirational Indian youth in making their choices with regards to brand usage).

Table 6. Message Execution Format used in TV Ads

Creative Executions in TVC				
Animation	3	4.6	4.6	4.6
Slice-of-Life	2	3.1	3.1	7.7
Dramatization	6	9.2	9.2	16.9
Testimonial	26	40.0	40.0	56.9
Authoritative	4	6.2	6.2	63.1
Demonstration	9	13.8	13.8	76.9
Fantasy	4	6.2	6.2	83.1
Informative	11	16.9	16.9	100.0
Total	65	100.0	100.0	

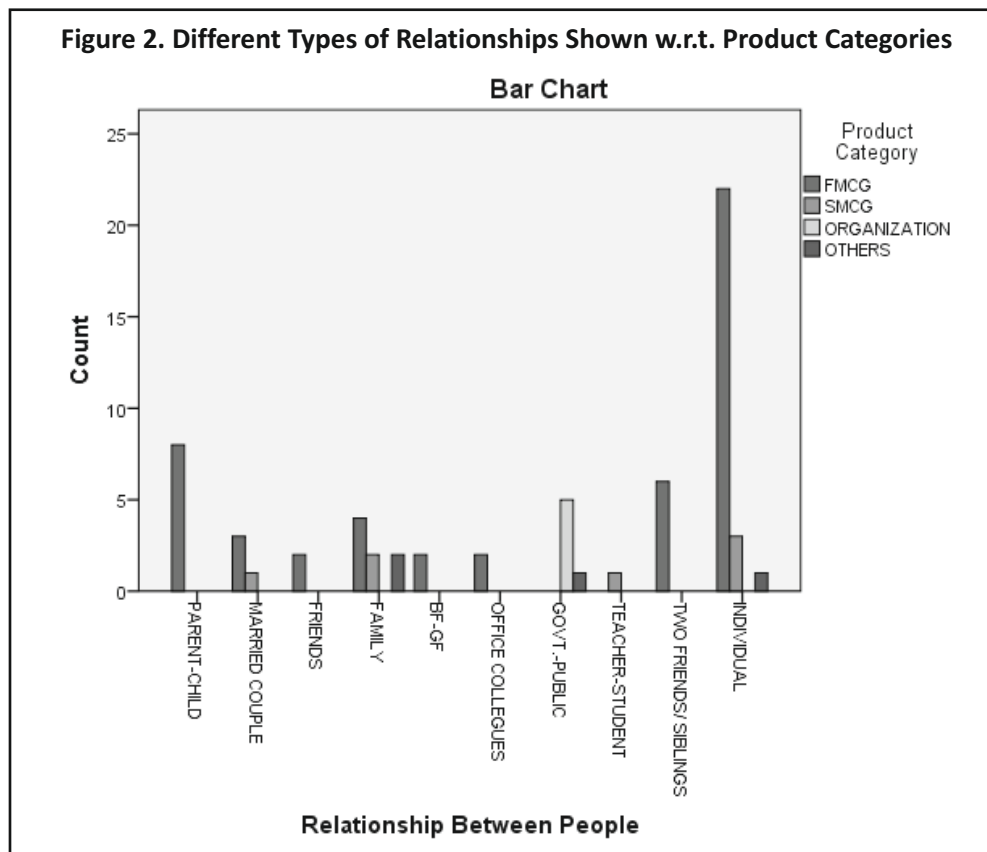
However, it is also interesting to note the way these celebrities are presented in the ads. L'Oréal reinforces the achiever's attribute of the celebrity, and the celebrity dons the role of an expert, therefore, attaching the merit of self to the merit of the product. On the other hand, several brands are writing stories based on situations arising out of day to day interactions, conversations, and events wherein the celebrities play a role, act as a fictitious character in the brand ad. Here, only the familiarity of a known face is being seen as a hook to get the attention of the viewers leaving the inform, persuade, and remind functions to the story or to the plot. Therefore, in many ways, television ads are slices of life with a celebrity appeal thrown in to create more opportunities for the viewers to pay attention to. Use of demonstration in these TVCs is different from the “how to” approach of the infomercials. Here, the narrative interlinks the need for social or filial associations and belongingness to learn how to become better at a task or job at work/home. Making the loved ones happy remains the driving force behind learning or acquiring a new utility or changing an old process.

Use of drama and borrowing from life itself remains a leading choice in the creative executions. Lot of the slices of life in advertising now focus on self in terms of 'self-expression,' 'the dilemmas of an individual,' or 'self esteem' as a vital aspect of human needs and motives. So, we see that in the quest to connect with others, advertising brings to the fore a human being's relationship towards one's own self more overtly now than ever before.

(4) RQ4: Is there a similarity of use of certain relationship types in specific product categories?

To note a recurrent pattern, cross-tabulation between product categories and types of relationships was done. It is evident that FMCGs (75.4%) mostly bought the airtime during the prime time slot, while SMCGs (11%), organizations (8%), and others (4%), respectively showed a marginal presence. Edible items and personal care products were the most commonly advertised products in the selected day part. It can be seen that since the personal care segment is largely trying to create an aspirational social and psychological order, heavy viewership allows them to target individual users, peers, and reference group audiences in one attempt and voice.

Cross tabulation shows that in the most commonly advertised FMCG category, the individual's needs, interests, and motives form the creative strategy. Eight out of forty nine (8/49) advertisements portrayed parent-child and family relationships. A variety of other relationships too were found depending upon the product class and type. The findings suggest that brand stories depicting relationships are highest in the FMCG product category (Figure 2).



Discussion

In response to the main objectives, it was found the advertisers and agency professionals in India are taking the peripheral route to persuasion more than the central one. In the times of consumer fetish and a paradigm shift towards social communication in advertising, more and more ads are being made based on human behavior in terms of its ability to bond and belong. The present study, on the one hand, reestablishes the normative practices in television advertising; use of spoken tagline /jingle as the key element in carrying the DNA of the ad message and the findings of the ADEX 2014 report where FMCG is the leading product category in terms of number and frequency of insertions on television. Vignette scenes, spoken taglines, visual and sound effects (VFX & SFX) blend harmoniously to illustrate the nature and nuances of relationships presented in the ad story. Unlike print, elements in TV ads do not have a singularly defined role in conveying product or concept related information. This enmeshed approach makes television an ideal mate for advertising world over as the elements surrender their identity to tell a story in less than 30 seconds.

Since a tagline is the most memorable element of any ad, an attempt was made to find the presence of cues about the relationship or the drift of creative encapsulation in the tagline itself. It was seen that taglines today do flirt with the idea, more than in the past. Earlier, taglines were carefully written focusing on product or rational uses of the product alone, but more recently, taglines may not carry the identity of the brand and reinforce the emotion or relationship emphasized in the ad story.

Ads still shy away from the layers of real-life situations; simplistic and affirmative presence of filial and social relations have become a backdrop of many brand differentiation efforts. While ads are far from being gender neutral, a few brands have taken determined steps to reflect the new gender discourse in their current ads.

Advertising, albeit reluctantly, has made small concessions in depiction of gender. A new sensitive male often forms one dimension of the message, breaking the cliché, particularly in terms of his personal and professional rights and responsibilities. Men in some ads are now an object of the female gaze, reversing the monopoly Indian women had vis-à-vis objectification in mainstream media. The ephemeral nature of television as a medium may be one of the factors contributing to how TV ads treat human relations in India. 'Gone in 30 sec' form seemingly restricts the brand communicators to explore the complex maze of social and cultural links.

A lot of television commercials in the sample were for the personal care segment (Livon, Clinic Plus Vita Oil, Gillette Fusion Razor, Stayfree, Dove Go Fresh, Fogg Black Deodorant, etc.) catering to a niche target group, therefore, concentrating on the "I, me, myself" appeal, telling stories about ambitions, desires, and other benchmarks of social and professional acceptability and popularity.

The Complan commercial revisits the bonds between a grandfather and a child, where a child's wish is a grandparent's indulgence and command. Advertisements of toothpastes, bathing soaps, and hand washes concentrate on traditional narratives of Indian parenting where invariably, the mother guides the child towards using a product for certain key merits. These commercials bring to fore the dependence and trust of the child on the mother w.r.t. product choices and consumption patterns. While ads of another fast moving good, mosquito repellants, depict the psychological makeup of the Indian parent. The parent, mostly the mother, is shown to be worried about the health of the child due to climatic or spatial exigencies. This worry is mitigated by the said product in line with the perpetual effort of a parent to protect the child against all problems.

Slices of life or dramatization has become a common practice, even in cross promotion. Various e-commerce sites and portals are increasing advertising on television to increase their terrestrial reach. While on cyber media, direct response advertising is a common phenomenon, however, the same products choose to tell stories based on human relationships astutely, inserting the merits of a product within the ad.

Conclusion

This study, through the use of creative formats, advertising appeals, and elements in a television commercial brought forth the 'unity in diversity' of concepts or ideas being popularly used in Indian advertising. It shows how a motley of relationships forms the core of storytelling in TV ads. Whole ranges of situations (real or exaggerated) are created to infuse the role of the advertised brand in fostering, improving, or simply presenting the emotions in human relations. Relationships, in all their manifestations, define the brands attempting to enter our lives. Adoption or rejection of a product may still depend on trial or use, but the creation of brand interest is deeply rooted in stories of filial love, belongingness in a social setup, or acceptance of self by those you would want to bond with. Search and sustenance of relationships becomes the underlying motive of human endeavors, and advertising aims to communicate that.

However, questions remain on whether advertisers are trying to break free from the cultural stereotypes by creating ad appeals based on value paradoxes or use the same filters to present human lives. There seems to be implicit understanding amongst the creative communicators not to let advertising fall prey to merely a call for action direct response mode. This study into relationships and portrayals in advertising also opens discussion into the dangers of looking at audiences as age old segments based on stereotypical segregation. To make advertising responsive to the turning points in the social systems, media content, and audiences, the agencies and advertisers must reflect upon the need to revisit the principles of market segmentation, especially in the post Internet era. This study also gives salience to advertising in a marketing mix by recognizing the power of creative executions in product-consumer relationship so different from the loci of e-commerce, sales promotion, or marketing on 'sales'. While focus on self is still the essence of advertising, reliance on life-like stories more than loud announcements may be an attempt to get rid of the more profusely used cliché, 'the all deafening blast of

puffery' often used by Carlyle (1843), Turner (1952), and Williams in their critique (as cited in Goldman, 1992). Post 1991, with the liberalization of the economic regime, corporate organizations ushered in mass production, which resulted in the consumption glut breaking down or at least away from the pre-set norms of social human relations in India. Rising consumer culture gave birth to nuclear families, redefining frames of interpersonal relations and social bonds.

Rapid transitions have led to question marks on the institution of marriage, rifts in the parent-child relationship, role reversals in gender relations creating a societal dissonance. Interestingly, advertising is trying hard to portray the 'nostalgia of the utopian happy relationships' free of discord and conflict. Advertising shies away from the contentious issues of relationships with the neighbors, elderly, and strangers. Even within the familial bonds in TV ads, issues of strong dissent or rebellion are missing, recreating frames of a 'picture perfect happy family' simply in need of products to solve their personal and professional problems.

Implications, Limitations of the Study, and Scope for Further Research

The study provides an opportunity to the creative professionals in advertising agencies and the advertising departments in corporate organizations to develop a critique of the message execution strategies they use in television advertising. With the knowledge of message dimensions, especially the use of self and society, better campaign objectives can be developed to create new needs for new product introductions. It also propels advertising both as a concept and a practice to be able to develop models of consumer engagement to move beyond awareness and information.

This study may be limited in its sample size and the day part selection constraints, but since the day part selected airs a diverse range of commercials across product categories, inferences can be drawn from the sample. The ephemeral nature of the medium too creates a limitation w.r.t. repetitive occurrence of a phenomenon, a key indicator in quantitative studies. Further research on perceptual mapping of audiences vis-à-vis media messages in TV advertising may bridge the gap between content creation and perceptual reality by the media consumer.

End Notes

[1] **Legitimation Ads:** Advertising directed to reinforce corporate legitimacy by the by-products of capitalist development through reaffirming the importance of home for our families (see Goldman, 1992).

[2] **Judgmental sampling or purposive sampling** is when the researchers choose the sample based on who they think would be appropriate for the study.

[3] **Selection of the Day part :** To know more about day parts in television media planning, refer to Arens (2008).

[4] **Operational Definitions of Advertising Appeals used :**

(i) **Emotional Appeal :** An emotional appeal is related to an individual's psychological and social needs for purchasing certain products and services. Many consumers are emotionally motivated or driven to make certain purchases. Emotional appeal includes personal and social aspects of life/ e.g.: Love appeals, freedom, success, social gratification, and social mobility.

(ii) **Fear Appeal :** Fear is often used to good effect in advertising and marketing campaigns of beauty and health products including insurance to scare or shock the audience into action.

(iii) Humor Appeal : Humor is used effectively when it is related to some benefit that the customer can derive without which the joke might overpower the message.

(iv) Sex Appeal : Sexuality, sexual suggestiveness, over sexuality, or sensuality raises curiosity of the audience and can result in strong feelings about an advertisement.

(v) Rational Appeal : Rational appeals - as the name suggests - aim to focus on the individual's functional, utilitarian, or practical needs for particular products and services. Commonly found are: Favorable price appeal, news appeal, product popularity, features, and competitive advantage.

[5] Operational Definitions of the Message Execution Formats used : The executional framework is the manner in which the ad appeal is presented. The executive framework is selected or chosen after an advertising appeal has been selected.

(i) Animation/Comic Strip : Animation uses fictitious characters through illustrations, graphics, and animated figures to illustrate product differentiation and illicit humor.

(ii) Slice-of-Life : In slice-of-life commercials, advertisers attempt to provide solutions to the everyday problems consumers or businesses face. The advertisements normally show the common experiences and especially the problems people encounter. Then the good or service is made available to solve the problem. The most common slice-of-life format has four components: encounter -problem - interaction - solution.

(iii) Dramatization : It is similar to the problem solution format, but the difference lies in the intensity and story format. Dramatization uses higher level of excitement and suspense to tell the story. A dramatization story normally builds to a crisis point. An effective and dramatic advertisement is difficult to create because the drama must be completed in either 30 or 60 seconds.

(iv) User Testimonials : When a customer is presented in an advertisement telling about the positive experience with a product, it is a testimonial. In the business-to-business sector, testimonials from current customers add credibility to the claims being made. In many business buying situations, prospective vendors are asked for references. Testimonials provide references in advance. Furthermore, most buyers believe what others say about a company more than they believe what a company says about itself. Thus, testimonials by someone else offer greater credibility than self-proclamations.

(v) Expert Testimonial : Here, the advertiser is seeking to convince the viewers that a given product is superior to other brands. One form is expert authority. These ads employ a physician, dentist, engineer, or chemist to state the particular brand's advantages as compared to other brands.

(vi) Demonstration : A demonstration execution shows how a product works. A demonstration is an effective way to communicate the attributes of a product to viewers. Other product benefits can be described as the product is exhibited. Business-to-business ads often present demonstrations. Demonstration ads are especially well suited to television and Internet flash ads.

(vii) Fantasy : Fantasy executions are designed to lift the audience beyond the real world to a make believe experience. Some fantasies are meant to be realistic. Others are completely irrational. Often, the more irrational

and illogical ads are the ones that are more clearly recalled by the consumers. The most common fantasy themes, however, still involve sex, love, and romance.

(viii) Informative : Informative ads present information to the audience in a straightforward manner. They extol the product benefits and features to the consumer.

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