

Chapter 69

Self–Brand Congruity and Brand Communication

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ABSTRACT

Brand communication through advertising plays an important role in developing strong brands in emerging markets, especially in India. This chapter investigates how ethnocentrism moderates the effects of advertising adaptation levels (globalization, glocalization, and localization) on Indian consumers' ad evaluation and self-brand congruity. It uses self-brand congruity to explain the psychological reasons behind the Indian consumers' preferential patterns of the levels of advertising adaptation. A 2 (local celebrity, global celebrity) x 2 (local verbal cues, global verbal cues) full factorial between-subjects experiment is set up with 219 Indian consumers. Ethnocentrism is measured at the individual level. Results show that highly ethnocentric individuals respond more positively (attitude towards the ad and self-brand congruity) to localization and glocalization advertising strategies compared to a globalization strategy, while lowly ethnocentric individuals do not respond differently to these strategies. The practical and theoretical implications as well as suggestions for further research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports a study set in India, one of the largest emerging markets of the world with a fast growing population of more than 1.2 billion. India's constant growth in purchasing power in recent years (IMF, 2012) indicates the ability of Indian consumers to purchase a whole new variety

of products. Euromonitor International (2010) forecasts that India will be one of the best performing emerging economies in 2020 with annual real GDP projected to grow by 7.1%. This makes India an attractive market for multinational companies.

The Indian market is culturally and socio-economically diversified (Kumar, 2007). Developing and preserving a strong brand in a diverse market

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like India requires flexibility in marketing strategies, in order to cater to different segments. In a description of the Indian market, Panda (2004) suggests that brand building in India needs a high decibel of advertising with a focus on social differentiations, self-indulgence and gratification. Thus, advertising has a prominent role in building a strong and favorable brand image in India. One of the most important factors that not only affects the overall image of a brand, but also the marketing costs of the company, is the level of adaptation of the advertisement to the social and cultural context of the target groups. This chapter aims to explain how the level of advertising adaptation to the Indian context affects consumers' ad attitudes and self-brand congruity, two important determinants of brand attitude and purchase intention.

Advertising adaptation is a continuum ranging from a globalization strategy (i.e. one unique ad for several culturally different markets) to a localization strategy (i.e. an ad with 'local' cues adapted to the target market), and in between these two extremes, there are hybrid forms, glocalization strategies (i.e., ads with a mixture of global and local executional elements) (Sinclair & Wilken, 2009). In the present study, we operationalize this continuum by means of two frequently used advertising cues, namely the origin of the celebrity used in the ad (local vs. global) and the type of verbal cues origin (local vs. global) (Table 1). Both factors used in our operationalization are frequently employed in Indian advertisement. Celebrity endorsement is a crucial strategy in the Indian context, as most of the companies use it to build strong brands (Panda, 2004). India has two main official languages, i.e., Hindi and English, both are spoken and understood by the majority of the people. In such conditions, the choice of language is "becoming increasingly crucial for multinational corporations that need to weigh the advantages of single language use (e.g., English) across markets versus the complexities of communicating their message in the local language" (Krishna & Ahluwalia, 2008, pp. 692).

In order to explain the behavior of consumers towards the adaptation of advertising, we use self-brand congruity (SBC). This concept states that when an individual's image of a brand is more positively correlated with his/her self-concept (i.e., has a higher self-congruity), he/she has a higher probability of favoring and purchasing the brand (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Moore & Homer, 2008). Although self-brand congruity can have implications for the effectiveness of advertising adaptation levels, its role has not been investigated in previous studies of advertising adaptation.

Following Kumar, Lee, and Kim (2009), Indian consumers are high in symbolic needs which affect the structure of their self-concepts. Considering that self-concept is the basic component of the self-brand congruity process, adaptation or standardization of symbolic brand associations should have a significant impact on the intensity and valence of this process. The role of self-brand congruity among Indian consumers has been considered by Indian companies before. For example, Charms cigarettes is one of the earliest Indian brands that employed the self-congruous slogan of "Charms is the way you are" (Kumar et al., 2009, p. 168).

In addition to the self-brand congruity process, we investigate the effects of adaptation levels on the attitude towards the ad (Aad). Building a strong and favorable brand image requires the ability to associate the brand with those elements that will provoke a positive response in consumers (De Pelsmacker, Geuens, & Van den Bergh, 2007). Persuasive and well-liked advertisements can lead

Table 1. Operationalization of advertising adaptation levels

Visual Cue (Celebrity Origin) Verbal Cues Origin	Local	Global
Local	Localization	Glocalization (type 2)
Global	Glocalization (type 1)	Globalization

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