

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION

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Abstract

The Indian culture is one of the most ancient and richest cultures of the world. This ancient culture today is being influenced by globalization and the new generation of India is slowly leaning towards the dominant western culture. Even though globalization has led to an overall erosion of the cultures worldwide, it has also made cultures globally recognizable through the spread of information on cultural awareness. Indian culture is exported and recognized throughout the world in the form of yoga, cuisine, Bollywood etc. This has also brought about the necessary changes for world integration.

As firms enter new markets in emerging economies, they realize that the structure, framework, distribution channels and customer wants differ radically from market to market. Standardization of operations of a multinational firm leads to failure almost every time. Informal interviews with a sample of youth in Mumbai show that the changes made by globalization and international firms are very prominent in the younger age groups. The youth, which is under the constant influence of western media, culture, cinema, music is slowly inclining itself to the global culture. The older generations, at the same time, are rooted to their old habits and have not adapted. But as India heads towards growing literacy and increasing access to internet and information, westernization through globalization cannot be averted for too long.

Keywords: culture, adaptation, Indian, globalization.

Introduction

The Indian culture is one of the most ancient and richest cultures of the world. It has always labeled as a combination of several varied cultures and has been influenced by a glorious history that is several thousand years old. The components of India's diverse cultures, such as Indian religions, philosophy, cuisine and lifestyle have had a profound impact on the world. This country has a vast population of about 1.3 billion and speaks about 700 different languages. This ancient culture today is being influenced by globalization and the new generation of India is slowly leaning towards the dominant western culture.

As the global access of goods and services people are introduced to the cultures round the globe. This culminates in breakdown of barriers. Also, the media plays an important role in the transmission of knowledge keeping consumers in touch with the practices and trends of the world. Media is also used as a mass platform by American business giants and conglomerates to establish their superiority through effective marketing. Thus, slowly, all the youth around the globe is becoming 'westernized' under the name of globalization.

Impact of westernization on Indian culture

Today we see the drift especially in the metropolitan regions shifting to western clothing like jeans, tee-shirts In India. The rapid change of fashion in India is now leading to reduction of the importance of the Indian culture to many people.

The western culture is also in a way reducing the importance of age old festivals. Indians greatly celebrate their festivals like Holi, Diwali, Navratri, etc. with great gusto. Even though there is no apparent decrease in the celebration of these festivals, there has been an increase in the celebration of western festivals like Christmas or Halloween.

The Indian plate now incorporates many western foods such as pizza, burgers, steak tacos etc. and Indian foods like Golgapa, curry etc., are facing decreasing popularity. However, they are becoming common over the world because of an increase in the cultural export. Western foods are relatively unhealthy and this causes the obesity rate in India to increase. English is spreading its reach rapidly. Fluency in the English language is also becoming a pre-requisite for various jobs. This is a distinct disadvantage to the people who have been speaking their native languages. Age old beliefs like family values, respect to elders, teachers are slowly disappearing. People are adapting themselves to the dominant western culture. This is also leading to the youth of the country duplicating the extravagant western lifestyle, which is not very sustainable in the long run. The Indian music is also adapting itself to its global counterparts. The traditional music and instruments like flute, drums, etc. are now sparingly used and are being replaced by different instruments like guitars, piano, violin etc so that the music appears more contemporary.

The western culture has also influenced India in many good ways. For example, it is making India more modern. All cultural groups now realise that they cannot remain isolated from the world forever and India needs to integrate with the rest of the world. Due to western influence, sanitation and public health has improved significantly in India. Free trade has made western medicines available all over the globe which has helped to reduce sickness and diseases in large parts of India as health care has become more accessible. This is improving the standard of living among people and bringing down mortality rates.

As a direct result of globalization, Indian artisans, craftsmen and weavers find it easier to export their handcrafts. These artisans and craftsmen have grown in numbers and strengthened the export industry. Westernization has also helped the education system in significant ways by further building on to the education system and making it more holistic.

Even though globalization has led to an overall erosion of the cultures worldwide, it has also made cultures globally recognizable through the spread of information, modernized the nation and brought about necessary changes for world integration. Indian culture is exported and recognized throughout the world in the form of yoga, Indian cuisine, Bollywood etc.

Cultural aspects of doing business

“You need to address the whole ecosystem that surrounds your offering.” Adapting to the local culture and business practices of a country is an absolute imperative. As firms enter new markets in emerging economies, they realize that the structure, framework, distribution channels and customer wants differ radically from market to market.. Standardization of operations of a multinational firm leads to failure almost every time. The customary mistakes companies make when they are entering an emerging market is they don't take an all-inclusive view of the value structure, either of customers or of the overall culture.

- **Researching the market:** Extensive research on various aspects of the foreign market is necessary like the presence of domestic firms, channels of distribution, market distribution, existing products, consumer value proposition. A firm must decide whether it is going to compete with the domestic firms in terms or price or product differentiation.
- **Deciding international strategy:** Out of the two approaches which a firm can follow while entering a new market i.e. global branding or local branding, the most ideal approach would be to find a balance between the two. A firm should try to be as local as possible while sticking as close to its global brand image as it can. Through this approach, customers of the host country are drawn to the established international brand while sticking to their cultural preferences at the same time.
- **Mistakes in translation:** It is necessary to make sure that good quality translation takes place. If a firm has a center of operations in the target market, it makes more sense to recruit local native speaking talent. Even if the firm only plans to export from a home base, qualified and experienced native speaking translators help it to get the message across and catch any potential cultural faux pas. When Kentucky Fried Chicken translated its famous "Finger lickin' good" in China, it came out as "Eat your fingers off". Honda was forced to rename the Honda Fitta to Honda Jazz in the European market after it discovered that *fitta* is crude slang for female genitalia in Norway and Sweden. If the firm plans to operate a website, introducing the native

language of the region on the website helps build a brand image. A customer is more likely to buy something off a website if it has been translated into his native language.

- Cultural adaptation :The issue of cultural differences also needs to be addressed. More than any other factor, culture is the prime determinant of consumers' purchasing behaviour and want structure. Firms from the advanced countries who cannot understand the culture in the developing countries are doomed to fail.

There is a lot of research which needs to be done about adapting a brand to different cultures, but getting the right advice and an insider's view from within the market is a good way to start. Sometimes, to succeed in the market, even the most iconic product must adapt to the existing culture. Kellogg's had a long struggle in India as it never really understood the needs of the Indian consumers

Oreo did not succeed in China when it was first launched and was on the verge of being pulled out. Kraft researched that the bitter and sweet contrast of the Oreo cookie was not working on Chinese tongues and so changed the recipe. The Oreo team also launched a series of TV advertisements where cute children demonstrate to their parents and other adults how to eat an Oreo cookie in the American style. Sales of Oreos doubled in China and Oreo is now the best-selling cookie in China.

McDonald's around the world thinks globally and acts locally. It offers customers variations of their product as per their culture and religious customs. For instance, in India it has separate serving streams for vegetarians and does not serve beef or pork. In tropical countries, it has added guava juice to its menu for consumers to beat the heat while it offers beer to its consumers in France and Germany in keeping with the local culture. In China, Mc Nuggets are offered with chili garlic sauce. In Israel McDonald's had to change its menu to respect the regulations of the Jewish Halakha law framework and kosher restaurants which do not allow eating a mixture of meat and milk and thus McDonald's separated the cheese and meat from its Big Macs. McDonald's launched Kaisu Burger in Singapore based on the popular comic strip character Mr. Kaisu and later launched Kampung Burger which is based on a cartoon character, Kampung Boy to denote the customary values associated with village life. Besides that it also offers desserts and beverages such as mango and durian milkshakes to appeal to local taste. Though McDonald's has adapted globally to customers taste buds and choices but the structure of its menu has remain standard : sandwich/burger, fries and soft drink.

Starbucks with its unparalleled global brand recognition operates in 72 countries. Starbucks began to feel the culture shift when it expanded to Europe, particularly France and Austria. There is a deeply ingrained café culture in Europe, and patrons are known to linger in the coffee shop well after their beverage is purchased and consumed for leisurely chats, business meetings, or just reading books alone. Starbucks renovated its stores to create a comfortable luxurious space with more seating and free Wi-Fi. When Starbucks expanded into India, they understood that they may not enjoy the kind of rapid growth they were used to in other countries so they opted for a measured pace of expansion opening only 75 stores over a three year span. At first, Starbucks continued their global strategy of selling primarily coffee but is now planning to bring their recently acquired tea company, Teavana to the region to increase sales.

Inferences:

Informal interviews were held with around 50 people from different age group in the city of Mumbai to see how the westernization process has affected people of different generations. In the age groups upto 25 years western attire is the most popular, irrespective of income levels. This shows the influence of media on the lifestyle of the younger generations. The older age groups, relatively less affected by the media's western culture still prefer wearing traditional Indian clothes. Western food has also become more popular among the younger generations. The older generations still prefer eating Indian food. The age groups 25-40 and 40-60 clearly do not prefer western music over Indian music. India's history and culture is linked with its art and music. Even though the country is becoming a part of the global culture, the old generation is still unaffected by globalization in music. Cinema is one of the biggest factors which have given the American culture the popularity it has today. The younger respondents admitted to being more inclined towards western cinema. Even though the youth is strongly influenced by western cultures, all Indians irrespective of age stand by our traditional age-old festivals. Festivals celebrated in the West are not very popular in India, as of now. The younger age groups are happy with the change brought by globalization, while the older generation are divided on this issue and a majority oppose these changes.

Conclusion

The survey shows that the changes made by globalization and international firms are very prominent in the younger age groups. The youth, which is under the constant influence of western media, culture, cinema, music is slowly inclining itself to the global culture. The older generations, at the same time, are rooted to their old habits and have not adapted very well. This could be because they are not as exposed and influenced by media as their younger counterparts. In the coming years the youth would have completely immersed themselves in the western culture. This survey was conducted in Mumbai which being a metropolitan region is the most affected by western cultures and there is solace in the fact that the whole of Indian population is not getting westernized at a constant rate. The global corporations and media, the two major carriers of western culture affect English speaking, richer parts of the country the most. But as India heads towards growing literacy and increasing access to internet and information, westernization through globalization cannot be averted for too long.

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