

Advertising Strategy and Cultural Blend: Glocal Identities in Indian TV Commercials

Abstract

In an increasingly globalised and competitive world, companies tend to revise their communication strategy by mixing up global and local cultural appeals in TV commercials to attract maximum audience and stimulate purchase intent. This practice is often described as 'glocalisation' – the strategic integration of global and local cultural concerns in transnational media and marketing. Evidences support that glocal cultural identities have emerged out of the negotiations between market forces and local cultural modes of consumption. Taking television advertising as a site of enquiry, this study explores the use of global, local, and glocal cultural appeals, the variations in the patterns of glocalisation across brands and products, and the strategic importance of the representation of glocal cultural identities in Indian TV commercials and their implications for cultural studies. Two studies have been undertaken to achieve these objectives. Study one explores the generic trends in glocalisation through a content analysis of 538 Indian TV commercials. Results suggest that TV advertising in India constructs a glocal cultural space where global and local cultural phenomena are present in asymmetrical interdependence. Though glocal cultural elements dominate commercials across brand origin and product categories followed by the global, and marginal local cultural elements, the constituent elements of the glocal indicate an overriding global presence. Study two explores glocal cultural identities constructed in Indian TV commercials through a discourse analysis of nine Indian TV commercials. Analysis shows that liberal and progressive ideas linked to femininity, youth, and family values are either toned down or given local images, sounds and other associations to appeal to both conservative as well as liberal consumers. Traditional values often stand in conflict with modern liberal values in the same TV commercial without assimilation. Their unique discursive features entail that the cultural boundaries in contemporary India are becoming blurred where the local culture is accommodated in new configurations releasing new identities amid the increased cultural dislocation. Our analysis also suggests that the debate between cultural progress and hegemony remains unresolved, since hybrid identity embedded in glocalisation is case specific, and therefore, neither an exaltation of local Indian culture nor its distortion. However, advertising is just one of the ways of marketing communication. Further research on production, employment, marketing, public relations and lobbies can support or reject whether global corporations and brands are anti-local and hegemonic.

Key words: Glocalisation, cultural appeals, asymmetrical interdependence, Indian TV commercials, advertising strategy, glocal identity.