



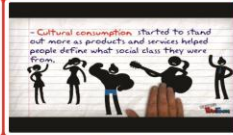
# Cultural Perspective of Consumer Product Design: A Case of Handloom Sarees of Odisha

Manas Ranjan Sahoo, Department of Anthropology, Utkal University, Vanivihar, Bhubaneswar



## INTRODUCTION

- Culture refers to the beliefs, values, behavior and material objects that, together, form a people's way of life.
- Culture determines how we view the world around us.
- Culture includes the traditions we inherit and pass on to the next generation.
- All cultures have five common components: symbols, language, values and beliefs, norms, and material culture, including technology.



## RESEARCH GAP

- The two aspects of culture:
- **Material culture** reflects a society's values and a society's technology, the knowledge that people apply to the task of living in their surroundings.
- **Non Material Culture** reflects beliefs, values, concepts, customs. Examples include Beliefs, values, Religions, ethics and philosophies.

- In the present era of globalization most of the products become multicultural in nature.
- Therefore, producers are deeply concerned about the consumers' taste pattern for the successful designs of marketable products.
- This new perspective of product designing leads to the emergence and necessity of studying consumer culture.
- However, although the product became multi cultural, it always reflected its original culture with its core elements.

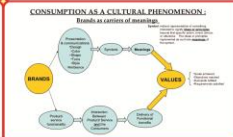
## CULTURE IN GLOBALIZED WORLD

- Many modern societies are **multicultural**—people follow various ways of life
- The most common, and oldest ways of dealing with multiple cultures is **assimilation**.
- More recently, we have witnessed the development of **pluralistic cultures**.
- Multi-Culturalism is a more recent development that recognizes the cultural diversity and promotes the equality of all cultural traditions.

- There is little in-depth research conducted which acknowledge the relevance of culture in product design (Norman, 2004).
- The appropriate methods to assist designers on how culture can be consciously integrated in product design are lacking in literatures (Moalosi et al., 2007).
- So, such a framework is required to address how the core components of culture could be embedded in designing products.

## CULTURE AND PRODUCT DESIGN

- The consumers' needs and desires get reflected in their purchase decisions.
- The needs are translated into wants, which coupled with purchasing power, become demands.
- Cultural influences on consumer behaviour and consumption can be summarized in their tendency to purchase specific products.
- The design of a product is important as a means of communicating information to consumers.
- The perception and usage of beautifully designed products may provide sensory pleasure and stimulation.
- Thus, design of a product may contribute to its success in several ways.



## SAREE AS A MULTI-CULTURAL PRODUCT

- The saree is one of the world's oldest and perhaps the only surviving unstitched garment from the past.
- The cotton and the art of weaving it into fabric came to India from the Mesopotamian civilization.
- The men and women of the contemporary Indus Valley Civilization were therefore familiar with cotton fabrics. Early history records that this style of clothing was not only limited to Mesopotamia but was common to Egypt, Sumer, and Assyria.
- As far back as the Biblical age, India's dyeing processes were considered dazzling by connoisseurs even in Rome and Greece.

- The saree evolved very slowly through the ages. Its final form, as is seen today, came about only in the Moghul period.
- Many new designs and techniques of weaving, dyeing and printing came to India with the repeated invasions.
- The tie-and-dye method of fabric dyeing was brought into Gujarat and Rajasthan by the nomadic Central Asians.
- In due course of time this process of tie-and-dye is migrated to the western Odisha.
- As a process of cultural diffusion the local people adopted the process which is known as **ikat**.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- Handloom is one of the richest traditions in India in general and Odisha in particular. The fact that the government of Odisha is taking lot of initiatives but it is far from the target mark, especially in regard to this context, marketing of saree as a multi-cultural product, its product design, and understanding of consumer culture are quite important.
- The same is such type of product which reflects the deep cultural heritage of the producers and their cultural identities through symbolism.
- On the other hand, weavers also have to take into considerations the consumption pattern of different consumers while designing a saree.
- Therefore, it is very much necessary to study the product design from a cultural perspective of both the producer and the consumer in order to produce a marketable item.

## HYPOTHESIS

- **H1:** Traditional designs were mostly influenced by the traditional knowledge, value systems and perception of the weavers, hence are weavers' culture-centric innovations.
- **H2:** Market demand of consumer products are mostly guided by the modern lifestyles of the consumers and her attached.
- **H3:** The preference of a product mostly depends upon its unique design at one end and context of consumption at the other.

## METHODOLOGY

- **Ethnography of producer and consumer culture:**
- (a) Observing human interactions in social settings and activities and the observation of people in their 'cultural context' and understands the point of view from inside the group
- (b) Gives a voice to a culture to express their views, which might not otherwise be heard and also may reveal embedded cultural values that were not obvious to the group
- **Tools:** Participant observations, participant interviews and case studies utilizing several audio-visual techniques, Netnography, etc.
- **Statistical analysis:** factor analysis.

## STUDY AREA

- The two handloom clusters of Odisha, viz., Barapali of Bargarh district and Nuapapana of Cuttack district are considered as the areas for studying producer culture.
- To study the consumer culture, consumers will be selected from different consumer segments considering their age groups, occupational pattern, income, caste and ethnic status etc.

## UNIQUENESS OF THE STUDY

- An interdisciplinary Research work: Combines the knowledge of Anthropology with Business studies.
- Mapping Cultural Identity of the producer through "Symbolism".
- Application of both qualitative (ethnography) and quantitative (statistical modelling) research.
- Culture-specific approach towards a sustainable development of the society.
- Contribution to "Happiness Index".
- Utilization of intangible cultural resources in the development of product.



## DATA FINDINGS

- The various designs that these weavers follow are based on the stories related to Ramayana, Mahabharata and Jagannath Culture at large.
- They also interpret various symbolic motifs in their designs. For example:
  - **Chakra(wheel)**—It is a symbol of power, absolute completeness and emblem of protection.
  - **Shankh(conch)**—An attribute of Vishnu and the power to bestow opulence and to grant wishes.
  - **Fish**—Symbolizes of fertility, abundance, conjugal happiness, providence and a charm against the evil eye.
  - **Peacock**—the power against poison as a snake eater.
  - **Horse**—A symbol of power, energy, wealth and abundance.



## PROBABLE OUTCOMES

- A new model for a marketing management problem in a cultural context.
- Design solutions incorporating consumer behaviour studied in an anthropological approach.
- Development of attractive new products for maximum efficiency and effectiveness of consumers' purchase.

