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# A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Cognitive Responses, Beliefs, and Attitudes Toward Advertising in General in Two Asian Countries

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## A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF COGNITIVE RESPONSES, BELIEFS, AND ATTITUDES TOWARD ADVERTISING IN GENERAL IN TWO ASIAN COUNTRIES

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*An important research topic in advertising is the study of consumer advertising perceptions. As shown by previous research, these perceptions affect attitude-toward-advertising-in-general which, ultimately, affects consumer brand attitudes and purchase intentions. Understanding consumer ad perceptions is useful to advertising practitioners in developing and implementing effective ad campaigns both nationally and internationally. Our study extends previous research efforts by comparing the cognitive responses, beliefs, and attitudes of consumers regarding advertising in two countries located in Southeast Asia. While results indicate similar advertising beliefs (in direction) and favorable attitudes, differences in cognitive responses and magnitude of beliefs and favorable attitudes exist. The implications of various results are then discussed.*

### INTRODUCTION

The topic of advertising perceptions has been of considerable interest to both academics and practitioners alike. Academic studies have focused attention on advertising perceptions because these perceptions (e.g., cognitions, beliefs, and attitudes) affect consumers' attitudes toward advertising in general (Muehling 1987). This attitude-toward-advertising-in-general construct was considered as an antecedent to attitude-toward-the-ad which, in turn, affected consumers' brand perceptions and purchase behavior (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989, Biehal, Stephens and Curlo 1992). It is equally important for practitioners to understand consumers' advertising perceptions as it helps them design and implement effective advertising campaigns. O'Donohue (1995) found both complexity and ambivalence toward advertising when comparing England to the USA. She advocates that more attention be given to probing this complexity.

While most studies on advertising perceptions have focused only on understanding United States subjects' ad perceptions (Andrews 1989, Muehling 1987), others have focused on specific countries outside the United States (Tuncalp 1990, Zhang and Gelb 1996). A recent study on USA public attitudes toward advertising by Shavitt, Lowrey and Haefner (1998) found that Americans enjoy the advertisements they see and find advertising to be informative and useful in their decision making. In contrast, a study in Saudi Arabia by Safran et al. (1996) found that some Saudis view television advertising as a serious cultural threat while others see it as benign. Do other countries share such disparate views about advertising?

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the relative liberalization of previously closed economies (e.g., China, India, Vietnam, Eastern Europe), the world has become more of an interdependent marketing system than ever before. As such, a cross-cultural examination of advertising perceptions has assumed added significance. To elaborate, if cross-cultural studies were to find that consumers across countries share similar ad perceptions, it would lend support to the school of

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thought advocated by Levitt (1983) regarding standardization of advertising and development of global ad campaigns such as the "Chicken Tonight" ad campaign. If, on the other hand, the ad perceptions were found to be different cross-culturally, it would lend credence to the argument that ad campaigns be country-specific and customized because of significant international differences on advertising attitudes (cf. Fullerton and Nevett 1986). For example, Witkowski and Kellner (1998) found that attitudes toward TV advertising in Germany and the USA were largely convergent but cultural differences were evident. Grier and Brumbaugh (1999) found that asymmetries in cultural groups do impact the meaning they attach to ads while Rustogi, Hensel, and Burgers (1996) found that cultural values affect attitudes towards advertising appeals.

Research has indeed begun to access cross-cultural difference on ad perceptions. Previous studies found that notable differences existed internationally on the following: perceptions of subjective as opposed to functional attributes of advertising (Green, Cunningham, and Cunningham 1975), sex role portrayals in advertising (Lysonski and Pollay 1990; Sengupta 1995; Ford, LaTour and Honeycutt 1997; Browne 1998), humor in advertising (Unger 1995), comparative advertising (Donthu 1998), TV advertising (Witkowski and Kellner 1998; Sherry, Greenberg and Tokinoya 1999), and perceptions regarding advertising's functions, practices, affective responses, the industry, and advertising users (Andrews, Lysonski, and Durvasula 1991). In addition, consumers' attitudes toward advertising also differed significantly across various countries (Durvasula et al. 1993; Andrews, Durvasula, and Netemeyer 1994). Most of these studies examined either advertising beliefs and attitudes or cognitive responses (i.e., thoughts toward advertising), but not both.

To obtain a better insight into differences across cultures on ad perceptions, this study will focus on all of the various aspects of advertising perceptions, including advertising thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes. For comparison purpose, two countries, both located in Southeast Asia, but differing on per capita advertising expenditures, media mix and the extent of

advertising exposure were chosen. Data were analyzed using several parametric and nonparametric techniques to identify similarities and differences in advertising perceptions. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First, previous research on advertising thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes is briefly reviewed. Second, the study methodology is discussed. Next, the results of the study are provided and discussed.

### **Cognitive Responses, Beliefs, and Attitudes Toward Advertising in General**

The term "perceptions of advertising" refers to cognitive responses (i.e., thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes toward advertising). As discussed by Durvasula et al. (1993), these perceptions of advertising are viewed as an integral part of models which examine advertising's effect on purchase behavior. In particular, consumers' attitude-toward-the-advertisement ( $A_{ad}$ ) is considered as an important determinant of their brand attitudes and purchase intentions. One of the important determinants of attitudes-toward-the-advertisement is the attitude-toward-advertising-in-general (attitude-general) construct (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989).

Though the ( $A_{ad}$ ) construct has been extensively investigated, not much is known about attitude-general or its determinants. Muehling (1987) studied the attitude-general construct and proposed that this construct is affected by consumers' advertising thoughts and beliefs. Using a thought-elicitation exercise, he obtained images of advertising that consumers stored in their memories. He categorized these thoughts into the following five groups: advertising functions, practices, industry, advertising users, and miscellaneous. To measure consumers' advertising beliefs, he used Bauer and Greyser's (1968) belief statements that represented the economic and social aspect of advertising. Based on the resulting analyses, Muehling (1987) identified the various relationships existing among advertising thoughts, beliefs, and overall attitude-toward-advertising-in-general.

In another study, Sandage and Leckenby (1980) proposed that attitude-general is also affected by

people's attitude-toward-the-institution-of-advertising (or attitude-institution, i.e., advertising's purpose or effects) and attitude-toward-the-instrument (or attitude-instrument, i.e., advertising's methods and practices). They provided separate measurement scales for attitude-institution and attitude-instrument, and also provided empirical evidence supporting the two scales. These advertising thoughts, beliefs, attitude-institution, attitude-instrument, and attitude-general were the focus of subsequent studies (e.g., Durvasula et al. 1993, Andrews, Durvasula, and Netemeyer 1994). This study will extend the previous efforts by examining differences between subjects of two Asian countries in their thoughts, beliefs and attitudes toward advertising.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

**About the Samples**

Two countries, India and Singapore, both located in Southeast Asia, are the focus of this study. While India occupies the major portion of the Indian subcontinent, and has a population of one billion people, Singapore is a small city-state with a population of about three million. The two countries share some similarities in social values in that people of both countries have a positive view of family, exhibit respect for elders, and do not display forthright criticism of others. There is also a sizeable population of those with Indian origin in Singapore (about 6 percent). However, this country in many ways is culturally different from India, with people of Chinese origin forming a dominant majority (i.e., about 80 percent). In terms of economic development, Singapore is viewed as a newly industrialized country while India is classified as a developing country. Given its strong tourism base and an open economy, Singapore is flush with international retailing and other marketing institutions, making this country a truly global or international city while India represents primarily a traditional domestic marketing environment with considerable isolation from international markets. The change orientation in two countries is equally different with Singapore, as a high

growth economy, more dynamic than India, where changes take place at a much slower pace.

There is also a significant difference between the countries in terms of advertising expenditures. For example, the ad expenditure in India is \$0.90 per capita and represents 0.3 percent of the gross national product (GNP). In Singapore, the corresponding expenditures are \$88.70 per capita and 0.8 percent of the GNP respectively. The differences are even more revealing when examining the per capita print and television ad expenditures. While \$52.80 and \$26.10 per capita were spent respectively on print and TV advertising in Singapore, these expenditures were a minuscule \$0.50 and \$0.10 respectively in India (Survey of World Advertising Expenditures, 1989). Further, in India, television media is relatively new and until recently, TV advertisements generally appeared either at the beginning or end of sponsored programs on the state owned Doordarshan. On the other hand, in Singapore TV ads appear during normal programs, causing some people to comment that "...there are too many ads, interrupting good programs."

In both countries the samples consisted of undergraduate students, all majoring in business administration. The average age was about 20 in India and 21 in Singapore, and both samples were evenly divided by sex. A total of 388 subjects participated in the study in Singapore. Even though the two samples were clearly not representative of their countries' total populations, they were relatively more homogeneous in a matched-sample sense with respect to age, sex, English language usage and study major. The use of matched samples is considered as necessary in cross-national research (Douglas and Craig 1983), hence the matched student samples of our study are appropriate for the comparison of results cross-nationally.

**About the Measure and Questionnaire Administration**

The questionnaire measured consumers' thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes toward advertising. Thoughts about advertising were elicited first by asking

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respondents to indicate the thoughts that come to mind with the word "advertising." Numbers and spaces were provided for subjects to list as many as ten advertising thoughts. An upper limit of ten thoughts was considered sufficient, as a previous study indicated that subjects generally listed no more than four thoughts on the average (Olsen and Mudderrisoglu 1976). Once the listing of thoughts was complete, subjects were asked to go back and indicate, next to each thought, whether it was positive (+), neutral (0), or negative (-).

Beliefs toward advertising in general were measured with seven seven-point Likert type (i.e., agree/disagree statements, cf. Bauer and Greyser 1968). They included four statements measuring the economic aspects (i.e., Advertising is essential; In general, advertising results in lower prices; Advertising helps raise our standard of living; Advertising results in better products for the public) and three statements measuring the social aspects of advertising (i.e., Most advertising insults the intelligence of the average consumer; Advertising often persuades people to buy things they shouldn't buy; In general, advertisements presents a true picture of the product being measured).

Attitude-institution was measured by four seven-point semantic differential pairs: weak/strong, valuable/worthless, unnecessary/necessary, and important/unimportant. As compared to Sandage and Leckenby (1980), the good/bad measure was not used as it was a measure of attitude-general. Attitude-instrument was also measured by four seven-point semantic differential pairs: dirty/clean, dishonest/honest, insincere/sincere, and dangerous/safe. Finally, three seven-point scales, good/bad, unfavorable/favorable, and positive/negative served as measures of attitude-general (Muehling 1987). The questionnaire in both India and Singapore were administered in university classrooms. Detailed instructions were provided to the respondents before the questionnaire administration. As a result, no major difficulties were encountered by them in either country in completing the survey.

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## RESULTS

The advertising thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes were analyzed using various parametric and nonparametric statistical techniques. Results are provided below.

### Thought Coding and Inter-coder Reliability

Since the advertising thoughts were self-generated, a coding scheme developed by Muehling (1987) served as the basis for categorizing the thoughts. The various thought categories used were: function of advertising (i.e., thoughts about advertising effects or effectiveness), practices of advertising (i.e., thoughts about advertising execution, media, procedures), affective responses (i.e., simple feeling toward advertising), ad industry related thoughts (i.e., thoughts about ad agencies, advertising work, careers in advertising), user related thoughts (i.e., thoughts about advertising companies, products, and brands), and miscellaneous thoughts (i.e., thoughts that did not fit into any of the other categories). Of the above six categories, only the affective responses category was not used in the Muehling study as it was developed later.

A total of 1735 thoughts were listed. The subjects in Singapore listed a mean of 6.8 thoughts, and the Indian subjects listed a mean of 4.1 thoughts. The disparity in the thoughts listed between the two countries may be due to the greater exposure, and therefore awareness, those in Singapore have to advertising. Using the standard methodology and after receiving proper training two coders, each for the Indian and Singaporean samples, coded the thoughts and assigned them appropriately to the six thought categories. Those thoughts over which the coders differed in their classification were later evaluated and classified by an expert. Overall, the inter-coder reliability (as measured by the percent of thoughts over which the coders agreed in their classification) was 0.88 for Singapore and 0.93 for India, both of which are considered acceptable.

### Analysis of Thoughts

Table 1 provides the frequency and percentage by thought category for Singapore and India. In both samples, the dominant thought categories were advertising function and practice, followed by affective responses. Together, these three thought types accounted for 90 percent or above of the total thoughts in the two countries. In comparison, advertising industry and user related thoughts were relatively few in number. While thoughts about advertising functions occurred most frequently in India (accounting for 50.8 percent of total thoughts), thoughts about advertising practices appeared most often in Singapore (accounting for 36.3 percent of total), closely followed by function-oriented thoughts (32.8 percent). Overall, in both countries, subjects listed positive thoughts more frequently and had similar percentages of negative thoughts (about 29 percent).

*Within-group comparison of thought frequencies* To obtain better insights about thought frequencies, nonparametric tests were performed. An interesting question is whether it is likely for thoughts of some categories to occur more frequently than those of the other categories? To test this possibility, data were recoded such that for each country and each subject, if she/he had a function oriented thought, a code of "1" was given and a "0" otherwise. This procedure was repeated for other five thought categories. Resulting dichotomous repeated measures data were analyzed for both samples and the Cochran's Q statistic computed. It was found that subjects indeed were more likely to have thoughts of some categories (e.g., function, practice, and affective response oriented) than the others, both in the Singapore sample (Cochran's  $Q=546.73$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p<.00$ ) and the Indian sample (Cochran's  $Q=212.24$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p<.00$ ).

Next, we proceeded to determine whether the subjects' median advertising thoughts were different across the six thought categories (including miscellaneous), and if so, whether the same difference existed in the Singapore and the Indian samples. A Friedman's 2-way analysis of variance of the repeated measures data provided a  $\chi^2$  of 416.60 ( $df=2$ ,  $p<.00$ ) for the Singapore sample and a  $\chi^2$  of 155.28 ( $df=2$  and  $p<.00$ ) for the Indian sample.

Therefore, a significant difference did exist in median advertising thoughts across the six thought types in the samples of both countries. Next, for each country sample a series of pair wise comparisons of median thoughts were performed across the thought categories while adjusting the alpha value to control for Type I error at .05. We found that in both the samples, median function, practice, and affective response thoughts were significantly higher than the medians of the other three thought categories. Further, in Singapore, both median function and median practice thoughts were significantly higher ( $p<.05$ ) than median affective response thoughts. While in India, the only significant difference was that the median of function thoughts was higher than the medians of both practice and affective response thoughts.

*Between-group comparison of thought frequencies* The thought frequencies were also compared between India and Singapore samples. Results of z-test for two proportions are shown in Table 1. Since several between-group comparisons were made, the critical z-value was adjusted to control the Type I error at .05. This critical z-value was 2.77. Comparison of the z-statistics in Table 1 with the critical value of 2.77 revealed that among the dominant advertising thoughts, the proportion of function-oriented thoughts were significantly higher in India, whereas the proportion of affective responses thoughts were significantly higher in Singapore, with no significant differences existing for practice-oriented thoughts between the two samples.

### Advertising Beliefs and Attitudes

*Frequency comparisons* Table 2 shows the percentage of subjects who had favorable, neutral, or unfavorable responses to various advertising beliefs and attitudes. These results were obtained by recoding the seven-point scale data, as described in the footnote to Table 2. An inspection of this Table shows that both Indians and Singaporeans agree that advertising is essential, it results in better products, and advertising often persuades people to buy things that they would not otherwise buy. Both samples disagree that advertising results in lower prices. A slightly higher percentage of

**TABLE 1**  
**Perceptions Toward Advertising in General: Cognitive Response Categories and Thought Frequencies by Country**

Thought Category		Country				z-value
		Singapore (n=299)		India (n=89)		
		Frequency	Frequency			
		Number	%	Number	%	
Function	+	311	17.9	111	28.5	
	0	110	6.3	21	5.4	
	-	<u>148</u>	<u>8.5</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>16.9</u>	
	Total	569	32.8	198	50.8	6.69
Affective Responses	+	178	10.3	27	6.9	
	0	23	1.3	3	0.8	
	-	<u>159</u>	<u>9.2</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>2.6</u>	
	Total	360	20.7	40	10.3	4.75
Practice	+	264	15.2	63	16.2	
	0	193	11.1	25	6.4	
	-	<u>172</u>	<u>10.0</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>8.5</u>	
	Total	629	36.3	121	31.0	1.98
Industry	+	12	0.7	10	2.6	
	0	20	1.2	7	1.8	
	-	<u>3</u>	<u>0.2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0.8</u>	
	Total	35	2.1	20	5.1	3.37
User	+	49	2.8	2	0.5	
	0	23	1.3	3	0.8	
	-	<u>11</u>	<u>0.6</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1.0</u>	
	Total	83	4.8	9	2.3	2.19
Miscellaneous	+	23	1.3	1	0.3	
	0	25	1.4	1	0.3	
	-	<u>11</u>	<u>0.6</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	
	Total	59	3.4	2	0.5	3.10
Total	+	837	48.2	214	54.9	2.39
	0	394	22.7	60	15.4	3.18
	-	<u>504</u>	<u>29.1</u>	<u>116</u>	<u>29.7</u>	0.24
Grand Total		1735	100	390	100	

Note: 1. In the table '+'= positive thoughts, '0'= neutral thoughts, and '-'= negative thoughts.

2. For each country, the percentages reported are based on grand total of thoughts.

3. For each thought type, the z-test compares whether the proportion of thoughts is the same for the Singapore and Indian samples. The critical z-value, because multiple comparisons were made was 2.77, for an alpha of .05.

Singaporeans feel that advertising raises the standard of living. The two samples, however, also exhibited some negative opinions towards advertising. For example, a higher percentage of Singaporeans do not believe that advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised. In contrast, a higher proportion of Indians feel that advertising insults the intelligence of the average consumer.

Next, the attitude results show that a higher percentage of both Indians and Singaporeans have favorable attitudes toward the institution of advertising and favorable attitudes toward advertising in general. With minor exceptions, both samples also have a relatively more favorable attitude toward the instrument of advertising. While both samples agree (or disagree) on many belief and attitude measures, the relative magnitudes of agreement percentages between the samples were, however, often different as indicated by a series of Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance tests ( $p < .05$ ).

*Mean differences* The mean responses to various belief and attitude measures, along with multivariate analysis of variance and univariate analysis of variance test results, are shown in Table 3. For these tests, the dependent measures were the advertising beliefs and attitudes while the sample type was the independent variable. A multivariate analysis of variance was performed first, as the dependent measures were theoretically correlated. The multivariate results suggest significant difference in the vector of mean belief and attitude measures between the two samples. The subsequent univariate Anova tests indicate that with the exception of one belief measure (i.e., better products) and two attitude measures (i.e., weak/strong and unnecessary/necessary), most of the belief and attitude measures had significantly different means. However, and consistent with frequency test results of Table 3, both Singaporean and Indian subjects exhibited modestly similar (in direction but not in magnitude) beliefs and attitudes toward advertising.

### **DISCUSSION**

Understanding consumers' advertising perceptions is considered important because these perceptions eventually influence brand attitudes and purchase

intentions via their impact on attitude-toward-the-advertisement. For advertising practitioners a better awareness of what consumers think about advertising will help them design better advertising campaigns. Nationally, if the advertising perceptions vary among different consumer groups, then a separate ad campaign is warranted for each market segment. Cross-nationally, an assessment of the similarities and differences in consumer ad perceptions would place researchers in a better position to decide whether to run standardized or customized ad campaigns across various countries. Given the usefulness of this stream of research, our study examined whether consumers in two Asian countries (Singapore and India) that have both commonalities and differences in culture, social values, economic orientations, and ad expenditures share similar ad perceptions. As such, our work extends previous cross-national studies in this area.

Results indicate that Singapore and India exhibit many similarities in ad perceptions. In both countries thoughts about advertising functions, practices, and to some extent, affective responses comprise a very high proportion (90 percent or above) of the respective samples' total thoughts. Subjects in both countries also believe that advertising is essential, it results in better products, it persuades people to buy products that they do not need, and it does not result in lower prices. Further, attitude-toward-the-institution-of advertising and attitude-toward-advertising-in-general are favorable in both samples.

However, some differences do exist between the two samples. In India, advertising function thoughts occurred most frequently (>50 percent), with many of those thoughts being concerned with the economic effects of advertising (e.g., "Advertising does not result in lower prices", "Advertising provides useful product information"). Perhaps the low per capita ad expenditures (<\$0.90), relatively less exposure to TV and other forms of advertising, coupled with the perception that advertising could play a useful role "...in providing useful product information" contributed to the high percentage of function-oriented thoughts. In contrast, Singaporeans expressed advertising



**TABLE 2**  
**Beliefs and Attitudes Towards Advertising in General: Percentage Agreement**

Dependent Variables	<u>Agree</u>		<u>Neutral</u>		<u>Disagree</u>	
	S'pore	India	S'pore	India	S'pore	India
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>A. Beliefs</b>						
<b>1. Economic Issues</b>						
Essential	90.6	95.5	6.4	2.2	3.0	2.2
Lower prices	8.0	27.0	10.7	19.1	81.3	53.9
Raises std. living	46.5	41.6	29.4	16.9	24.1	41.6
Better products	47.2	56.2	25.8	18.0	27.1	25.8
<b>2. Social Issues</b>						
Insults Intelligence	19.7	51.7	27.4	10.1	52.8	38.2
Often persuades	62.2	49.4	16.1	15.7	21.7	34.8
Presents true picture	17.1	58.4	17.7	9.0	65.2	32.6
<b>B. Attitudes</b>						
<b>1. Attitude-Institution</b>						
Strong/Weak	66.6	61.8	29.1	16.9	4.3	21.3
Valuable/Worthless	59.5	70.7	29.4	16.9	11.0	12.4
Necessary/Unnecessary	79.6	70.8	12.0	5.6	8.4	23.6
Important/Unimportant	66.9	75.3	18.7	9.0	14.4	15.7
<b>2. Attitude-Instrument</b>						
Clean/Dirty	31.4	57.3	43.5	22.5	25.1	20.2
Honest/Dishonest	13.0	51.7	31.4	16.9	55.5	31.5
Sincere/Insincere	21.4	42.7	40.8	15.7	37.8	41.6
Safe/Dangerous	28.4	59.6	55.5	21.3	16.1	19.1
<b>3. Attitude-Toward Advertising-In-General</b>						
Good/Bad	67.9	84.3	26.4	14.3	5.7	7.9
Favorable/Unfavorable	65.9	68.5	25.1	11.2	9.0	20.2
Positive/Negative	63.9	82.0	27.1	10.1	9.0	7.9

- Notes: 1. Percentages in the table are categorized by sample type.  
2. For the attitude measures, responses to 7-point semantic differential scales were recoded such that agree represents favorable response. For example, 84.3% of the Indian students feel (or agree) that advertising is good.  
3. The responses in the table were analyzed using Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA by ranks. With the exception of some belief measures (essential, results in better products) and the attitude items (strong/weak, valuable/worthless, important/unimportant, sincere/insincere, and favorable/unfavorable) the median responses to all other belief and attitude measures were significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) for the Singapore and India samples.

**TABLE 3**  
**Multivariate and Univariate Tests of Mean Differences:**  
**Beliefs and Attitudes Toward Advertising in General**  
Multivariate results

Wilk's L = 0.65 F-value=10.87, F-probability=0.00

Dependent variables	<u>Univariate Results</u>		F-value	Prob<
	Singapore (n=299)	India (n=89)		
<b>A. Beliefs</b>				
<u>1. Economic Issues</u>				
Essential	5.87	6.30	11.79	0.00
Lower Prices	2.38	3.19	20.43	0.00
Raises std. living	4.26	3.87	4.43	0.04
Better products	4.27	4.51	1.67	0.20
<u>2. Social Issues</u>				
Insults Intelligence	3.53	4.01	6.81	0.00
Often persuades	4.72	3.81	7.09	0.01
Presents true picture	3.14	4.56	60.77	0.00
<b>B. Attitudes</b>				
<u>1. Attitude-Institution</u>				
Weak/Strong	5.05	4.88	1.24	0.26
Worthless/Valuable	4.73	5.23	11.54	0.00
Unnecessary/Neces.	5.31	5.20	0.38	0.54
	4.95	5.38	5.56	0.02
<u>2. Attitude-Instrument</u>				
Dirty/Clean	4.10	4.87	22.66	0.00
Dishonest/Honest	3.34	4.38	43.31	0.00
Insincere/Sincere	3.76	4.01	2.45	0.12
Dangerous/Safe	4.15	4.98	36.49	0.00
<u>3. Attitude-Toward Advertising-In-General</u>				
Bad/Good	5.04	5.81	27.97	0.00
Unfavorable/favor	4.89	5.18	2.93	0.09
Negative/Positive	4.82	5.83	47.44	0.00

Notes: 1. Means in the table are presented such that the belief items are measured with 7-point Likert scales, scored from 1='strongly disagree' to 7='strongly agree'.  
 For the attitude items, measured with 7-point semantic differential scales, the score of 1 represents the unfavorable response and the score of 7 represents the favorable response.

practice-oriented thoughts most often and entertained more affective response thoughts. Perhaps the higher per capita ad expenditures (about \$88) and wider advertising experiences because of greater exposure to television, newspaper, and magazine advertisements explain this result. Further, as the TV ads are relatively more image-oriented than informational, it may explain why Singaporean subjects also exhibited a higher percentage of affective thoughts than those in India. It is interesting to note that these results obtained for the Singapore sample are consistent with those noticed in other developed countries (e.g., the United States), as discussed in the advertising literature.

In other noteworthy differences, Singaporeans felt that advertisements in general do not portray a true picture of the advertised product. Such a negative view toward practices of advertising may have contributed to the relatively less favorable views about attitude-toward-the-instrument-of-advertising as compared to the Indian sample. Another finding was that a higher proportion of Indians (as compared to Singaporeans) felt that advertising insulted the intelligence of the average consumer. This probably arises because of the perceived gaps between aspirations created by advertising and reality experienced by consumers in their standard of living as well as marketers' promises of product quality, value, and consumption benefits in India. As an import-oriented consumer economy, Singapore offers wider brand choices as well as higher quality standards when compared to a primarily self-reliant domestic economy of India.

An interesting question is whether our study supports those who advocate standardization in advertising and use of common and campaigns across countries. This issue is particularly relevant to India and Singapore, as the economic cooperation between them is increasing. With Singaporean companies marketing products in India and Indian firms encouraged to do the same in Singapore, is it possible for these companies to use the same ad campaigns in the two countries? While some results of this study (e.g., similar beliefs and generally favorable advertising attitudes between India and Singapore) provide support for standardization in advertising, other results show differences, suggesting that

attempts to develop standardized cross-national ad campaigns must take place cautiously.

For example, and as discussed earlier, while the Singaporeans are more likely to entertain advertising practice thoughts about media, ad execution, and practices (perhaps due to the higher media expenditures, more open economy, and ad campaigns of multinational campaigns in Singapore) and affective response thoughts (perhaps due to the emphasis on visual imagery in advertising), Indians are more likely to entertain advertising function thoughts about the effects and effectiveness of advertising (perhaps due to relatively low advertising expenditures, greater exposure to information oriented ads than image oriented ads). The rapid industrialization, change orientation, and Western economics practices may have contributed to the type of ad perceptions noticed by Singaporeans. In contrast, subjects in a 1973 study (Mehta 1973) conducted in Western India had almost similar attitudes towards advertising in general as found for the Indian subjects in this study, implying that two decades of economic development efforts do not seem to have brought any significant changes in advertising perceptions of Indians, particularly in advertising beliefs.

In view of the differences in advertising thoughts as well as differences in *magnitudes* of beliefs and favorable attitudes between the two samples, it is likely that consumers in India and Singapore analyze advertisements differently. It would, therefore, appear to be inappropriate to standardize all advertising campaigns, particularly between India and Singapore. One important issue to be addressed by future studies in this area is whether ad campaigns for some products elicit similar consumer responses cross-nationally as compared to those for other products. Further, what factors besides ad perceptions contribute to such similarity in responses to ad campaigns cross-nationally?

Future research needs to answer other important questions. Are Singaporean Indians similar to their countrymen (i.e., Chinese majority) in their advertising perceptions or is ethnicity so strong that these Indians continue to be culturally and perceptually closer to Indians in India? If the later

is true, it poses complex communication tasks for Singapore advertisers who may need to differentiate between ethnic groups in a multi-cultural environment of Singapore, which, because of its small size, will make the task more difficult and expensive. This issue of acculturation on advertising acceptance has been given some focus with Asian-Indians in the USA (Zhairullah and Zhairullah 1999). In sum, by systematically comparing advertising thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes between two Asian countries, this study contributes to a better understanding of cross-national consumer advertising perceptions.

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