

Religious Symbolism in Advertisements: A Content Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how religious symbols are presented in advertisements as peripheral cues. Advertisements of different products such as paints, food products, jewelers, and matrimony were selected as samples. Four brands of each product were analyzed through content analysis. A total of 150 samples were selected through purposive sampling. Television advertisements were used for the present study. The first inference made from this study is that most of the advertisements shown on television contain religious content. They are presented in the form of characters and events, religious doctrines and Concepts, and other religious symbols.

Keywords: *Advertisements, Religion, Religious symbols.*

Humans' relationship to whatever which they perceive as holy, sacred, absolute, spiritual, divine, or worthy of special devotion is known as religion. Religious symbols have varying degrees of significance for adherents of a given religious affiliation, depending on their level of identification with the faith. Religious dogmatism, or strong belief in the ideas promulgated by the religious organization in issue, is a sign of immersion in a religious system (Giuseppe, 1981).

Advertising is increasingly obvious in its use of religious imagery symbols, tales, and characters to achieve its commercial goals. Effect of Advertisement on Consumer Buying Behavior was investigated by Dhaliwal (2016). This study looked into how commercials affect people's perceptions and attitudes, and it was discovered that advertising has a significant impact on customer behavior. Religious Symbols in Italian Advertising: Symbolic Appropriation and the Management of Consent was a study undertaken by Nardella (2012) that looked at religious symbolism in ads. This research looks at how religious symbolism has been depicted in magazine advertising in Italy during the last two decades. A huge sample of commercials is evaluated, with the results arranged into a typology. Four basic types of religious references and their sub-types are identified in this classification.

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Objectives

- To identify the cues of religious symbolism and how it has been presented in advertisements.
- To identify the role of religious symbolism in advertisements.

Sample

A total of 150 advertisements of different products such as paints, food products, jewelers, and matrimony were selected as samples. Three or four brands of each product were selected. Respective advertisements shown on television during the period of April to July 2021 were selected. A purposive sampling technique was used.

Procedure

The data for the present study were collected from different advertisements. For that researcher selected different types of advertisements of food products, jewelers, paints, and matrimony. After selecting these categories of advertisements three or four brands of each product were fixed. Each advertisement was keenly observed by the researcher as per the objectives. The four categories of advertisements were analyzed separately. As per the objective religious contents in each advertisement were found and recorded in tables.

Statistical techniques

Content analysis technique was used by the researcher to analyze data. As per the objective religious contents in each advertisement were found and recorded in tables. The religious acts, events, and symbols were identified and extracted from each advertisement. The content of a large sample of advertisements was analyzed and the results were subsequently organized in the tables. After identifying these factors the religious symbolism was noted.

Table 1: Religious symbols, acts, events, and religious symbolism in various jewelry advertisements.

	Kalyan jewelers	Tanishq Jewelers	Jos Alukkas
Religious symbols	Jewelers sculptures of Hindu Goddess	temple Putting kolam jewelry sculpture of God	Gold
Acts	Wearing bridal dresses that belong to a different religion. Practicing dance in presence of a sculpture. The traditional method of teaching from home, under the guidance of a teacher.	Praying to God Lighting lamp giving blessings drawing Kolam presenting gifts doing mantras and Pujas. Inviting friends from other religions.	Wearing jewelry, respecting elders, following old traditions.
Events	marriage	Diwali	Onam

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Table 1 shows the religious symbolism present in jeweler's advertisements. Jewelry has a symbolic meaning in Indian culture. They have ethnic and spiritual significance, which is why they are commonly used during weddings. According to some religious traditions, the bride's jewelry indicates that she will become a member of her husband's extended family. Because it is a jeweler's advertisement, gold is prominent, and weddings are a common occurrence in most of the advertisements. In many religions, gold is regarded sacred, particularly in Hinduism, where evidence suggests that goddesses from the Hindu religion wore gold and jewelry in ancient times. In jeweler's advertisements, religious places such as temples, mosques, and churches can be seen; there is always a presence of god in ads.

Table 2 Religious symbol, acts, events, and religious symbolism in various food products advertisements.

	Red Label	Dairy Milk	India Gate
Religious symbols	Sculpture of God. Namskara voice from the mosque	Praying	Eating traditional sadhya
Acts	A Hindu family refuses to enter into an Islam family when they invite for a cup of tea.	child praying to God for more chocolate Respecting elders, parents teach not to harm others	Eating sadhya in the traditional way, the child asks for a blessing from parents, Following Hindu tradition.
events			Marriage

Table 2 shows advertisements for food products. Food product advertising is also linked to God's presence. Secularism is the most prominent theme in these types of commercials. While preparing supper, attending rituals such as Christian Communion and Hindu deity feedings, or eating every day according to the kashrut or halal regulations of Judaism and Islam, meaning can be created through food. Food is still a major topic of discussion in religious circles today. A key mode of ritual action is eating in a sacred place and at sacred times. While it is widely acknowledged that religious tradition and belief have influenced diet and eating habits in the past, modern observers tend to focus on the decline of religious influences on eating. Another essential religious principle is to share food.

Table 3 Religious symbol, acts, events, and religious symbolism in various paints' advertisements

	Berger paints	Asian paints	Nerolac paints
Religious symbols			Depiction of Raven and Raman in Ramayana
Acts	Kerala cultural programs, lighting lamps, and other practices.	Marriage in the presence of fire, traditional way of marriage.	Ravan shows his power with ten heads. Islamic family paints their house with green paint.
Events		Marriage	

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Paint adverts are seen in Table 3. Many religious traditions are featured in commercials for paints. These advertisements were dominated by cultural traditions. Religion, as we all know, is conveyed and dressed in cultural garb. The reciprocal link between culture and religion has been acknowledged, with religion influencing culture as well as being influenced by it. In some of these advertisements, religion is heavily stressed. For example, in one advertisement, a Muslim family wants to use green paint on their walls. In Islam, the color green has a number of traditional meanings. It is related to paradise in the Quran. The color green was used on Muhammad's tribe's flags.

Table 4 *Religious symbol, acts, events, and religious symbolism in various matrimonial advertisements.*

	M4 marr.com	Kerala matrimony
Religious symbols		
Acts	The new generation follows the old generation.	Girls holding 'thalam' at the wedding.
Events	Showing respect towards elders is morality as per religious teachings.	A tradition of marrying from the same community.

Matrimonial advertising is shown in Table 4. The main focus of the campaign, as it is a marital advertisement, is marriage, with everyone attempting to follow the traditional process of marriage. A religious marriage is one that takes place under the auspices of a religious institution and has religious substance. In the viewpoint of that faith, religious marriage recognizes and creates the rights and obligations inherent in matrimony. Because same-sex marriage is against religious beliefs, none of the advertisements advocate or promote it. We can clearly observe from all of these advertisements that marriage between people of various religions is not encouraged.

It's crucial to examine the prevalence of religious symbolism in commercial advertising. The purpose of this research was to see how religious symbols were depicted in ads. Broad sorts of religious references were found from these advertisement categories. Symbols, events, and characters are criteria that include references to religious figures, places, narratives, and quotations from widely held religious beliefs.

The first conclusion we can get from this research is that the majority of television advertisements have religious themes. Advertisers are interested in including religious themes in their commercials because religion is thought to be dramatic enough to catch and hold viewers' attention.

The fact is that advertisements are showing the religious contents implicitly as well as explicitly. In the same way as religion is getting more importance nowadays they might think that if advertising is connected with religion people would respond positively to it as most of the people in India are believers.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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