

Content Analysis of Gift Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to conduct a content analysis of gift themed advertisements that appear in the Indian print media. It seeks to contribute to the neglected area of gift advertising by seeking to understand the practitioners use of the gift theme. Three coders were trained to analyse advertisements on select criteria culled from gifting literature viz., type of product, type of relationship, gift-giving occasion, type of emotional appeal, verbal and visual cues and gender portrayal. The study reveals the limited popularity of the gift theme as a complete years vigil on two popular media vehicles resulted in only 53 usable advertisements. On the elements of type of product featured and gift giving occasion the results are as expected but they are contrary to literature on all the other variables. There is evidence of lack of variety in the use of the gift theme in advertisements. This theory- practice gap in yet another area of marketing is potentially worrisome and the possible reasons for it forwarded in this research need to be verified by future researchers.

Introduction

Gift-giving involves selection and transfer of something to someone without expecting direct compensation from the receiver, though expectation of a return can be in the form of reciprocity, a change in relationship with recipient, or a favour or any other psycholog-

ical benefit (Davies et.al, 2010).. Consumer behaviour involved in purchase of a gift is different from purchase for family consumption (Davies et al, 2010) or purchase for self consumption (Cardenas, 2014) because the buyer of the gift is not the end user of that gift and it involves a complex process of selection of gift and relationship building. The gifting market, both with

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regards to products and services, is large (Pillai and Krishnakumar, 2019) and generates high revenues for the retailers due to the many gifting occasions (Wang & Lans, 2018). The household spending on gifting is increasing in many countries (Unity Marketing 2015) and with gift-giving occasions serving as opportunities for relationship building, gift buying decision assumes importance. (Chan and Mogilner, 2017).

Gift-giving is thus a frequent consumer activity that has received attention from consumer researchers (Goodman & Lim, 2018) due to the considerable theoretical and commercial importance of the topic. While there is diversity of themes and methodologies in the literature on gifting, there is paucity of research on advertising and gifting. There are only stray recommendations to marketers on how messages should be crafted to influence the gift purchase decisions (Spolter et. al, 2015; Wang & Lans, 2018). This gap in the literature on gifting is disappointing, considering that the most prominent research streams in Marketing boast of seminal articles that examine advertising. To offer only a couple of representative examples: Marketing of Services (Cutler and Javalagi, 1993), Green Marketing (Carlson, Grove, Kangun and Polonsky, 1996), and Cross Cultural Marketing (Al Olayan and Karande, 2000).

This gap in literature, pertaining to gifting and advertising, deserves to be filled not only because of the importance of advertising but also the likely contribution from such research to the literature on gifting. According to de Waal Malefyt (2015) advertisements are the pre eminent marketing communication tool used to promote sales and also to reflect positive social relations among people, enhance social bonds and ideally inspire positive value exchange between consumers and producers. The existing research on gifting has been conducted either from the perspective of the gift giver or that of the recipient and has ignored the marketers perspective of gifting; but this neglect can be partially set right by examining the advertisements that use the theme of gifting.

The objective of the present research is to conduct a content analysis of Indian print advertisements, which use the theme of gifting, so as to describe the marketers' use of this theme and understand their perspective on gifting.

Using the robust methodology of content analysis (Kolbe and Burnett 1991) this study reveals that the gift theme is not a popular and well developed advertising theme, and nearly all the brands that use the theme, do so mainly around festivals. The gift themed advertisements usually ignore the recommendations contained in gifting literature about use of emotional appeal, focus on relationships, use of verbal/ visual cues and gender portrayal. These findings put the spotlight on the theory- practice gap in marketing (Wilkinson and Gray, 2007; Mason et. al., 2015; Smith et. al., 2015).

This research effort makes a contribution to the body of descriptive research in marketing, a type of research that, according to Pham (2013), is increasingly facing neglect even though it has immense ability to reveal hitherto unknown facts and give an impetus for further research. This research is pioneering research in the field of gifting not only in the choice of research objective and methodology but also in the choice of geographic scope. India has the second largest number of consumers in the world and is in the top half a dozen or so economies of the world and does not belong to western, industrialised and rich countries in which most of the marketing research is usually conducted (Pham, 2013).

Conceptual background

This section is organised around select variables, culled from gifting literature and even advertising literature, that would be relevant as executional elements of gifting advertisements viz - type of product, type of relationship, gift-giving occasion, type of emotional appeal, verbal and visual cues and gender portrayal. The seven specific research questions examined in this research effort are also given in this section.

Types of Product

The selection of the product to be gifted is a central decision in gifting because the product is used to express the meaning which the gift giver wants to communicate (Wolfenbarger, 1990), the same product cannot express the different roles that the giver wants to play in the

receiver's life. (Otnes et. al ,1993), buyers give importance to different product attributes (both extrinsic and intrinsic) in purchase decisions for personal consumption and for gift- giving (Lotz et. al ,2003;Boncinelli et. al.,2019)

A prominent typology of product that features in the literature on gifting is the hedonic/utilitarian classification with the hedonic products being pleasurable and experiential while the utilitarian products are functional and useful. Givi & Galak (2017) find that the top trade off decision made by gift givers is the one between hedonic products versus utilitarian products. A study by Williams & Rosenzweig (2016) suggests the preference mismatch between the giver's and recipient's choice of gift relates to hedonic and utilitarian products. People believe that the best gift they had given is more hedonic than utilitarian, while the best gift they have received is much more utilitarian than the best gift they had given.

RQ1: What type of products does gift advertisements feature- hedonistic products or utilitarian products?

The present researchers are of the view that that the popular classification of products into convenience, shopping and speciality products (Murphy and Enis ,1986) is also relevant for the present study because it is based on time, money and effort the consumer is willing to spend, and these are the very criteria used even in making gifting decisions (Beatty et. al, 1991). While convenience products are relatively inexpensive and frequently purchased; shopping products are durables which are evaluated comparatively more rigorously; and speciality products are complex products requiring a high involvement purchase decision (Kotler et. al., 2014).

RQ2: What type of products does gift advertisements feature- convenience products, shopping products or speciality products?

Type of Relationship

The relationship between giver and receiver has been given importance by many researchers in gift literature. Caplow (1982) suggests that the price of the gift selected depends upon the relationship between giver and receiver. Scholars have argued that social distance

and relationship building are important elements of the gift exchange process. Otnes et. al (1993) finds that the perception of type of recipients stems from the type of relationship between the giver and receiver and that certain strategies are chosen primarily because of the nature of relationship between the giver and recipients . They find that a majority of difficult recipients are older and more distant relatives; while in contrast the easy recipients are mainly children and friends of same gender. Even recent studies have recommended that marketers should design gift related campaigns in such a manner that they activate a target consumer's attachment orientations with the recipient. (Nguyen & Munch, 2014). Anton et. al (2014) find that while in Asians countries people focus on reciprocity and gifting to strengthen and maintain the relational bond, they do not desire reciprocity in case of gifting to family members.

RQ3: What is the type of relationship between the giver and recipient portrayed in the gift advertisements?

Gift-giving Occasions

It has been known for a long time that gifting on festive occasion is embedded in the culture of many societies. Lowes et al. (1968) found that only 6% of the participants contemplated the possibility of not giving gifts at Christmas. Christmas gifting has been a popular topic of research (Caplow, 1982; Otnes et.al, 1993) and so too Valentine's day.

RQ4: Do gift advertisements highlight specific gifting occasions? Type of Emotional Appeal

There are many empirical research studies which focus on emotional effects during the gift- giving process. Lawler et. al., (1995) point out that frequent exchanges of gifts engender positive emotions and make members involved in gift exchange affectively attached to the relationship .However, Wooten (2000) highlights that gift-giving can have less than desirable effects as it can give rise to negative emotions such as gifting anxiety. Larsen & Watson (2001) empirically test the effect of multiple emotions generated before the gift exchange takes place, that is in the gestation period associated

with gifting and highlight the importance of emotion valence (extent to which an emotion is positive or negative) and emotion agency (extent to which an emotion is caused by oneself or another person). Hooge (2014) finds that when givers experience a positive emotion such as pride or gratitude or even a negative self caused emotion, they feel the need to maintain or improve relations with receiver and thereby increasing gift-giving. Pillai and Krishnakumar (2019) show the influence of emotional understanding on the amount spent by the buyer while buying gifts. Buyers try to understand others' emotions to help in making purchase decisions; and thus even relationship closeness moderates the influence of emotional understanding on the amount of money spent on the gift.

RQ5: What are the emotional appeals, if any, that are used in gift advertisements ?

Visual and Verbal Cues

It has been known for long that pictorial information are processed faster than textual information by the brain, and pictures often promote a more holistic and integrative form of information processing than the textual cues (Holbrook and Moore, 1981) and in the case of print advertising research, there has been overall support for a picture – superiority effect (Stafford, 1996). The interactive effects of verbal and pictorial/visual stimuli in case of advertising have also been widely explored in communication research Kergoat et al.(2017)

Gift literature is silent about the types of cues that can be utilised by gift advertisers to persuade consumers through communication message. However, gift packaging, a relevant visual cue, has received attention in gifting literature. Segev et al. (2012) find that adolescents attach great importance to the appearance of the gift and use special wrapping paper as a tool to enhance appearance of the gift. Cardenas (2014) points out that gift wrapping increases the satisfaction of the receiver because it helps to generate surprise and is evidence of the time and effort the giver has put into the gift-giving process. These findings suggest the importance of wrapping as a visual cue while formulating gift advertisements

RQ6: Which is the type of visual or verbal cue that is used more prominently in gift advertisements?

Gender Portrayal

In gifting literature attention has been paid to the gift giving behaviour across different sexes. According to past researchers, women offer more gifts than they receive (Caplow, 1982) and are more satisfied with their gift selection in comparison to men (Fischer & Arnold, 1990). The literature review authored by Rugimbana et al. (2003) shows that males are more often gift givers and females are more often the gift recipients; and suggests that this can be attributed to the lesser social power exhibited held by females in many cultures. Saad & Gill (2003) provide a more nuanced insight when they argue that there are mixed results with respect to gender differences in gifting literature and these stems from the different context in which the research is conducted. Women may play a greater role in contexts other than romantic relationships (such as gift-giving during Christmas) while in a romantic relationship it is men who play a greater role in gift-giving because men find it difficult to express their emotions verbally and thus, they are more likely to adopt an instrumental role as gift givers. Cardenas (2014) highlights that while for women, the experience of receiving gift is more memorable, for men, the experience of giving gifts is more memorable; and receivers generally consider it more pleasant to receive gifts from opposite sex than from their own gender. Spolter et al. (2015) suggests that during the gifting season, retailers should prominently display and advertise feminine gift products; as they are more likely to be given in inter personal gifting.

RQ7: What is the role assigned to the different genders in gift advertisements?

Methodology

The methodology chosen for this study, is content analysis and further, within that the quantitative and inductive approach is adopted, because of lack of similar earlier research on the topic. In their seminal paper, Kolbe and Burnett (1991) point out that content analysis can provide an empirical starting point for producing new research insights in regards to the nature and effect of specific communications and is a frequently used method in advertising research.

This research effort has followed the guidelines for conducting content analysis given by Kassarian

(1977), which have been acknowledged by Kolbe & Burnett(1991) as the benchmark for this methodology in the field of consumer behaviour. Accordingly, this section is organised under the heads of sampling and choice of unit of analysis, data collection instrument, coding procedure and coder training, assessment of reliability of the coding and profile of advertisements.

Sampling and Choice of unit of *analysis*:

This study chose to examine print media advertisements, specifically those published in the English edition of The Tribune and India Today. Vijaylakshmi and Babu (2014) highlight that English in India is used not only for communicating with the outside world, but also for inter-state and intrastate communication and thus it acts as an indispensable link language in this vast country with great linguistic diversity. Data of September 2017 of the Indian Readership Survey (conducted by Media Research Users Council, MRUC) reported the highest total readership for The Tribune (in the newspaper category) at 651,000, as well as for the India Today (in the English magazine category) at 7,992,000. The Tribune is the oldest English newspaper of North West India having been established in 1881 and India Today is also a prominent news magazine of the country. The local Chandigarh based distributors of newspapers and magazines confirmed the appropriateness of choice of media. The minimum size of the advertisement considered for content analysis was half page advertisement. A one year time frame, specifically from October 2017 to September 2018 was determined appropriate for selecting gift advertisements as it would ensure inclusion of all the festivals, many of which are important gifting occasions.

Short listing of gift advertisements for content analysis was done by one of the researchers using the following criteria :- occurrence of at least one of the following words- “gift”, “giving”; or occurrence of at least one of the following image - gift boxes, ribbons, wrappings, and depiction of the act of gift-giving. Care was taken to ensure that the selected advertisements were of interpersonal gifting and excluded advertisements pertaining to self gifting, charity, dowry, free / promotional gifts by marketers for consumers. An advertisement was selected only once and repetitions were ignored. This

selection process yielded a total of 54 advertisements. Later, after receiving the opinion of coders about the appropriateness of specific advertisements one of the shortlisted advertisements was excluded from the study and 53 gift advertisements made it to the final sample. There is no commonly accepted sample size for qualitative studies because the optimal sample depends on the purpose of the study, research questions, and richness of the data (Elo et. al., 2014).

Data Collection *instrument*:

A two page long content analysis form containing eleven close ended questions and four open ended questions was prepared to record the responses of coders and thus find some understanding of the phenomena being studied (Morse & Richards, 2002). There were questions to record responses about each of the variables already described in the conceptual background. The content analysis form was pretested, using a sample of five advertisements, by one independent coder, who did not form part of the final coding team.

A set of instructions/ code book was also prepared for the coders in which the major technical terms used in the coding process were explained using definitions given by various marketing management textbooks. Convenience Products were described as “...relatively inexpensive and frequently purchased goods. They correspond with the routine response buying situation and therefore, the buyer puts rather little effort into the purchasing situation.’ Shopping Products were described as “durables, like for instance stereos, bicycles and furniture. In contrast to convenience products, shopping products represent a certain risk to the purchaser and thus, the evaluation between good and bad products fulfilling the need of the consumer starts. The consumer is likely to be more active in searching information and evaluating available alternatives. In this evaluation process, specialist sources and friends are frequently consulted.”. Speciality Products were introduced to the coders as “They possess a single unique characteristic on which buyers are willing to expend a considerable amount of effort to obtain. Speciality products may also be referred to as high-involvement products or complex products. While shopping products can be said to be high in involvement, special-

ity products mean an even higher involvement: The perceived risk is particularly high and the product is a very infrequent purchase. Luxury goods, such as a watch or designer clothing, represent speciality products.” Hedonic products and Utilitarian products also found a place in the code book . The coders were told that Hedonic Products are related to pleasures a consumer derives from the usage of the product. These involve products which are pleasurable and experiential; and that Utilitarian Products are based on more functional attributes of the product. Therefore, this category involves products which are useful.(Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000)

For types of relationship the options provided were family, romantic, friends, corporate, not specified and other relationship type. The coders were asked an open ended question about the possible occasion shown/suggested in the gift advertisement For types of emotional appeal , four positive emotions were identified from Laros & Steenkam(2005) – contentment, happiness, love and pride. The option of ‘no emotional appeal’ and ‘other appeal’ were also given.

Coding procedure and coder training: Coding was done by three independent coders who are post graduates and familiar with the discipline of marketing. Prior to main coding task, approximately half an hour training session was given to coders to make them familiar with the coding scheme and operational definitions of various variables used. This was done to enhance the inter-coder and intracoder reliability. Disagreements in the coding were resolved jointly on the basis of majority. To attain the coding reliability coders did the task independently so that no biasness can be reflected through the inputs of researcher and other coders.

Assessment of Reliability of Coding: Reliabilities were calculated with the help of percent agreement method, which is the most widely reported reliability measure in content analysis articles (Kolbe and Burnett,1991). This is calculated by dividing total number of agreements among judges by total number of coding decisions. Percent agreements for different variables are listed in table 1.

Table 1 depicts that for every variable percent agreement is more than 90 percent with 6 variables having

Table 1: Reliability test – Agreement among Coders

Variables	Percentage agreement among pair of coders		
	Coders 1 and 2	Coders 1 and 3	Coders 2 and 3
Product advertised	90.74	92.59	94.44
Type of Product	94.44	96.30	94.44
Product category	94.44	98.15	94.44
Qualifying as gift	100.00	100.00	100.00
Reason for Qualifying as gift	96.30	98.15	96.30
Reason for not Qualifying as gift	100.00	100.00	100.00
Gift occasion	98.15	96.30	98.15
Emotional appeal	90.74	94.44	90.74
gift giver relationship	94.44	96.30	94.44
Giver Gender	100.00	100.00	100.00
Receiver gender	100.00	100.00	100.00
Verbal Cue	100.00	100.00	100.00
Type of verbal cue	100.00	100.00	100.00
Visual cue	94.44	96.30	94.44
Type of visual cue	94.44	96.30	94.44

perfect agreement of 100%. From the results in table we can conclude that there is a strong reliability among the coders for this particular study.

Profile of Advertisements

The profile of the advertisements examined in this study is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that majority of gift advertisements are half page advertisements from newspapers, and that newspapers are a far more popular vehicle than magazines for gift advertisements. That even after a whole calendar year of data collection only 53 relevant advertisements could be procured points to the subdued acceptance of the gifting theme among practi-

tioners. Out of the innumerable brands that advertise in the foremost print media vehicles of a country that has one of the largest economies of the world, only a miniscule number of brands chose the gift theme. A perusal of the products adopting this theme shows that many of the products being advertised fall under the category of beverages, chocolates, snacks, biscuits, cakes etc-all relatively inexpensive items. Appendix I contains the product category wise full list of brands that used the gifting theme in their advertisement. The gift theme has seasonal popularity which peaks in the festival months of October to December, while very few gift advertisements are published in the first half of the year. This is not in keeping with Otnes et. al (1993) who found that gift purchasing takes place all year round.

Table 2: Profile of gift advertisements

Particulars	Number and percentage of Advertisements	
	n	%
1. Source and Size		
Newspaper Full page	17	31
Newspaper Half page	23	45
Magazine Full Page	9	17
Magazine half page	4	7
Total	53	100
2. Product		
Home decor	6	11
Beverages, Packed snacks	5 each	9 each
E Gift Cards, Chocolates, Biscuits & Cakes	4 each	7 each
Insurance scheme, Jewellery, Sovereign gold bond, Men grooming kit	3 each	6 each
Clothes, Decorative gifts, Electrical Appliances, Gift Cards, Watches and Accessories, Grocery items	2 each	4 each
Air & Water Purifiers	1	2
Total	53	100
3. Quarter in which published		
October 2017 – December 2017	29	55
January 2018 – March 2018	6	11
April 2018 – June 2018	4	8
July 2018 – September 2018	14	26
Total	53	100

Findings and Discussion

The subsections of this section correspond to the select variables used in the conceptual background section and the consequent research questions examined by this research effort.

Type of Products in Gift Themed Advertisements

Table 3 gives the number of advertisement for each of the product types.

As can be seen in Table 3 the majority of gift advertisements feature convenience products. The frequency of shopping goods is half that of convenience goods and speciality goods are the least frequently featured type of product in gift advertisements

Table 3 shows that the distribution of advertisements between hedonic products and utilitarian products is roughly equal, with hedonic products being featured a little more often than utilitarian products.

These results echo the more than three and a half decade old US findings of a study by Caplow (1982) who found that 30% of the gifts are token gifts and 45% were modestly priced. He found that very few people gave expensive gifts during Christmas. The results in previous literature about the frequency of gifting hedonic products versus utilitarian products can be said to be as equally divided between both the categories just like the results of this research effort. Caplow (1982) shows

Table 3: Type of product and gift advertisements

Type of Product	Number and percentage of Advertisements	
	n	%
1. Hedonic	24	45
2. Utilitarian	29	55
Total	53	100
1. Convenience Product	28	52
2. Shopping Product	14	27
3. Speciality Product	11	21
Total	53	100

that within family relations, the most common type of product as gift during Christmas is clothing, which in turn is utilitarian in nature. However, Belk (1976) suggests that gift purchases must be of hedonic products and in her study Vanhamme (2008) also proposed that purchase and giving of surprise gifts is driven mainly by a hedonic motive. However, all research efforts do not give clear one sided results. Wolfenbarger (1991) also suggests that the decision on product type is affected by motives and many situational variables. Lotz et al (2003) shows that in formal settings, gift giver lays importance to extrinsic qualities (similar to hedonic choices) and in informal settings, importance is given to intrinsic qualities (similar to utilitarian). Further, the preference mismatch between the givers and recipients choice studied by Williams & Rosenzweig (2016) also points to shared popularity of hedonic and utilitarian products as gifts. The profile of advertised products produced by the present research effort reflects the mixed results that are to be seen in gifting literature..

Type of Relationship in Gift Themed Advertisements

Table 4 gives the frequency of different relationships featured in gift advertisements.

Table 4 shows that a majority of marketers are not using any specific type of relationship in gift advertisements. Depiction of gifting among family members is found in one fourth of the advertisements, gifting in a romantic relationship is less frequently depicted while

Table 4: Relationship type and gift advertisements

Type of relationship	Number and percentage of Advertisements	
	n	%
1. Family	14	26
2. Friends	0	0
3. Romantic	8	15
4. Corporate	2	4
5. Not Specified	29	55
6. Other relationship	0	0
Total	53	100

portrayal of gifting to corporate associates is surprisingly rare. None of the advertisements in the sample featured gifting among friends.

These results are surprising, considering the importance given to relationships in the gifting literature and the collectivist nature of Indian culture (Hofstede, 1983). The probable reason is that by not becoming associated with a type of relationship advertisers are perhaps avoiding the pitfall of over positioning and are trying to secure the benefits of a mass market position. To what extent these findings are a reflection of the current trends in gifting literature, can only be a matter of speculation. Literature on gift-giving is moving to non dyadic setting (Giesler, 2006). Corciolani & Dalli (2014) move beyond the traditional perspective of the dyadic approach to gift-giving and highlight that new perspectives are required to study collective form of gift-giving. Their study included giving books as gifts to children, friends as well as some strangers in order to cement friendly relationships.

Gift-giving Occasions in Gift Themed Advertisements

The responses obtained are presented in Table 5

Table 5 shows that while almost one fourth of the advertisements are not tied to an occasion, the remaining advertisements target one or the other festival observed in India. Festivals of diverse origin find

Table 5: Gift-giving occasions and gift advertisements

Type of Occasion	Number and percentage of Advertisements	
	n	%
1. Casual / No occasion specified	12	24
2. Diwali	12	22
3. Festival	16	30
4. Karwa Chauth	4	7
5. Valentine's Day	4	7
6. Father's Day	2	4
7. Raksha bandhan	3	6
Total	53	100

a place in Table 5- the indigenous festivals of Diwali, Karva Chauth and Raksha Bandhan, as well as the comparatively recent imports like Valentine's Day and Father's Day, with Diwali being the most popular of the festivals. These findings support the findings that flow from the lower portion of Table 2 that gives the scheduling of gift advertisements in the calendar year.

The gift advertisements are leveraging the traditional gift-giving practise in society. The large presence of utilitarian products and convenience products in gift advertisements can be due to the popularity of gifting on occasions among all income classes. As the reader will recall, Lawler et al. (1995) point out that frequent gift-giving acts to closely bind the recipient and giver of the gift. The repetitive exchange of gifts on occasions makes it less risky and thus more profitable for the advertiser to run a gift advertisement during festivals.

Type of Emotional appeal in Gift Themed Advertisements

Table 6 contains the results obtained on tabulating responses for different emotional appeals, if any, used in the gift advertisements.

As can be seen in Table 6 the largest response of 44 percent is for the category 'no emotional appeal'. While contentment and pride have not been depicted in any gift advertisement, happiness and love have been featured an identical number of times

Advertisers who include an emotional appeal in the gift advertisement subscribe to the popular

Table 6: Emotional appeal and gift advertisements

Type of emotion	Number and percentage of Advertisements	
	n	%
1. Contentment	0	0
2. Happiness	15	28
3. Love	15	28
4. Pride	0	0
5. No Emotional Appeal	23	44
6. Other Appeal	0	0
Total	53	100

views that giving and receiving gifts adds to happiness (Goodman & Lim, 2018) and that gift-giving is an expression of love. However, the lack of emotional appeals in many gift advertisements is surprising, considering the importance given to emotions in the literature on advertising and gift-giving. Once again, the practise of advertising is different from the literature on gifting.

Table 7: Verbal and Visual cues and gift advertisements

Type of cues	Number and percentage of Advertisements	
	n	%
Type of Verbal cue		
1. Yes	45	86
a. Mentioning of word Gift	45	100
b. Mentioning of word Giving	0	0
c. Other	0	0
Total of verbal cues	45	100
2. No	8	14
Total	53	100
Type of Visual Cue		
1. Yes	30	55
a. Picture of a gift	15	50
b. Wrappings and ribbon	7	24
c. Act of Giving the Product advertised	8	26
Total of Visual cues	30	100
2. No	23	45
Total	53	100

Verbal and Visual Cues in Gift Themed Advertisements

While Table 7 contains data about the type of verbal cues and visual cues used in the gift advertisements, Table 8 contains results of cross tabulation of type of product and type of verbal/ visual cue used in the gift advertisement.

Table 7 shows that while verbal cues are more popular than visual cues, the only verbal cue used is the word 'gift'. There is however, more variety in the visual cues used, and they include the picture of a gift, or picture of gift wrapping and ribbon or even show the act of gift-giving. While contents of Table 7 hint to the joint usage of verbal and visual cues in gift advertisements, this is made amply evident in Table 8. This joint usage can be result of visual - textual resonance strategy identified by McQuarrie (1989) and explained as 'a play or twist within an ad's structure that serves to produce an echo or multiplication of meaning. It can also be seen that there is a difference in the cues used to advertise utilitarian and hedonistic products with hedonic products using more visual cues and utilitarian products using more verbal cues. The manner in which convenience products, shopping products and speciality products are advertised is also different with convenience products using far more visual cues than the other two categories and shopping goods using more visual cues

Further, although gift literature has highlighted the role of packaging and wrapping (Cardenas, 2014; Segev et. al., 2012), less than fifteen percent of the advertisements are using them as a prominent visual cue. Advertisers are using more direct cues like mentioning of word gift or picture of a gift in comparison

Table 8 : Verbal and Visual Cue by Type of Product

Type of product	Visual cue only		Verbal cue only		Both visual & verbal		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Hedonic	5	21%	8	33%	11	46%	24	100
Utilarian	3	10%	15	52%	11	38%	29	100
Convenience	5	18%	11	39%	12	43%	28	100
Shopping	2	14%	7	50%	5	36%	14	100
Speciality	1	10%	5	45%	5	45%	11	100

to indirect cues of packaging. The minimal use of visual cues is another divergence from theory.

Gender Portrayal in Gift Themed Advertisements

Table 9 reveals the results pertaining to gender portrayal of giver and receiver of gifts in the selected advertisements

Table 9 shows that an overwhelming number of advertisements are not using gender portrayal of gift giver or recipient. This is contrary to gift giving and advertising literature which have given immense importance to gender portrayal in advertising. These results are in keeping with the findings of Saad & Gill (2003) who suggest that there are mixed results with respect to gender differences in gifting literature which are contextual based. These results once again point to the theory-practice gap in gift giving.

Conclusions and implications

The objective of the present study is to conduct a content analysis of Indian print advertisements, which use the theme of gifting, so as to describe the marketers' use of this theme and understand their perspective on gift-

ing. This objective was considered appropriate given the paucity of literature on gift advertising.

Taking the help of gifting literature, seven specific research questions are identified pertaining to select variables that are relevant for gifting advertisements viz - type of product, type of relationship, gift-giving occasion, type of emotional appeal, verbal and visual cues and gender portrayal.

Content analysis is used to analyse gift themed advertisements that appeared in two prominent vehicles of the Indian print media-The Tribune and India Today . They were scanned for a whole calendar year, using predetermined criteria, and 53 unique advertisements using the gifting theme were identified. The responses of three trained coders were obtained on a content analysis form and were subject to reliability tests before being analysed.

The findings of this study are largely unexpected as most of the findings are not in accordance with the literature on gifting. That only 53 advertisements were identified after a search that lasted a whole calendar year, in the world's second most populous country with an economy estimated to be in the top half a dozen economies of the world is surprising. More so because of the considerable research attention received by gifting and the estimates of a large market for gifting of products and services. The results on types of products featured in gift themed advertisements are in keeping with the findings of earlier literature. Both types of products are promoted as gifts almost equally- hedonic as well as utilitarian. The incidence of convenience products as gifts is more than the incidence of shopping and speciality products. And as expected, most of the advertisements highlight a festival associated with gift giving and there is a spike in gift advertisements in the festival season in India. However, most of the gift themed advertisements do not portray a relationship where as literature has emphasised the importance of relationships in gifting. The gift themed advertisements either do not portray an emotion or then they associate a very limited range of emotions with gifting, which is also unexpected considering the importance given to relationships in gifting literature. Even with respect to use of verbal and visual cues, the gift themed advertisements defy Marketing literature and uses more verbal cues while many studies have demonstrated visual cues

Table 9 : Gender portrayal and Gift Advertisements

Gender Portrayal	Number and percentage of Advertisements	
	n	%
Gender of giver		
1. Male	8	16
2. Female	3	4
3. Not specified	42	80
Total	53	100
Gender of receiver		
1. Male	2	4
2. Female	8	14
3. Not specified	43	82
Total	53	100

to be more effective than verbal cues. A vast majority of the gift themed advertisements shy away from gender portrayal, where as literature has elaborated the many gender differences in gifting and based on that has given specific prescriptions to advertisers.

We now draw upon the inferential and predictive roles of content analysis Neuendorf (2002) to explore what the findings reveal about the advertisers and their assumptions about the market that they target. The theory-practice gap in gifting evident from the findings adds to the growing concern in Marketing about the diminishing practical value and relevance of its theories. Wilkinson and Gray (2007) point out that the problem in the applicability of the theory is mainly because there are discrepancies in the supply and demand of marketing theories as production and consumption of these two are predicated on different technologies and processes. Smith et. al (2015) have also highlighted this gap and suggest that researchers study the narratives of marketers to understand their perspective for a particular phenomenon. They use the analogy of practice as a multiple stage where theory is an aspect of the script in three different ways. Firstly, that is known and believed by some characters who mostly follow it; secondly, that is known yet not completely believed by others who choose instead to selectively alternate between improvising and following the script; and lastly, that is completely unknown by others who make it up as they go along by improvising in the moment without any reference to the script. Taking a cue from Smith et al.(2015) we propose that the theory- practise gap in gift themed advertising is due to the nascent stage of literature on gift advertising.

We can only speculate even about the other possible reasons for this theory practice gap in gift advertising. The Indian marketers may be choosing to ignore the prescriptions of research that has been conducted almost entirely in foreign countries, whose markets (Rama Bijapurkar, 2014) are very different from the Indian market, both culturally and structurally. Or it may be due to uninformed decision making, as Zaltman (2003) highlighted that too many marketers don't understand how their own and their consumers' minds interact. He stated the difference between espoused theory (what we say we believe) and theory-in-use (belief that underlies what we actually do) and marketers often end up using certain fallacies about consumers.

Gifting is not a popular theme in advertisements ,as is evident from the modest (though adequate) sample size of this study. It is not even a well developed advertising approach as revealed by the lack of diversity in the execution of gift advertisements. The multiple zero value entries in the tables pertaining to type of relationship, emotional appeals used, and visual and verbal cues and gender portrayal used point to many unused options- while these options exist in the literature on gifting, they have not been adopted by the practitioners.

Brands avoid being positioned solely as gift items. The combination of a large preponderance of routine utilitarian products/ convenience goods and heightened use of the gift theme during festivals points to an opportunistic use of the gift theme to take advantage of traditional gifting practices in the society. And mindful of the need to appeal to a wide market, brands are shying away from positioning themselves narrowly by depicting specific relationships.

This study has implications for practitioners and academicians. There is need for advertising and marketing professionals to stay updated with the theory in their field of work- in this case the development of new positioning strategies and advertising themes. The academicians need to conduct more studies on the practise of marketing/ advertising in different parts of the world and they need to disseminate research findings with more vigour than they are doing at present. This paper can act as a catalyst to find reasons for the theory practice gap being with respect to gifting.

Limitations and future research directions

The limitations of scope that exist in this study can be overcome by subsequent research efforts, which can examine more newspapers and magazines, published in different languages in different countries. Gift advertisements in the increasingly popular online media can be examined, using methodology that is specifically designed for online media. This research has only been able to speculate about the reasons that led to the findings revealed by the content analysis. There should be a study of advertising agency accounts executives and

Appendix 1

Product category wise full list of brands that used the gifting theme in the advertisements

Product Category	Brand Name
Home Decor	At Home Home store Trident
Beverages	Minute Maid Verka
Packed Snacks	Nik Bakers Kurkure Cinnabon
Chocolates	Cardbury Nik Bakers
E Gift cards	Amazon PVR Cinemas
Biscuits and Cakes	Nik Bakers Cinnabon Bonn
Insurance scheme	LIC
Jewellers	PP Jewellers Orra Sham Jewellers
Sovereign Gold Bonds	Government Sovereign Gold Bonds
Men Grooming Kit	Man's Company Ustra
Clothes	Ambala Wholesale Complex Your Cloth House
Decorative gifts	Gujari Home Store
Electrical Appliances	LG Clearline Appliances
Gift Cards	Taj Hotel
Grocery items	Central Supermarket
Watches and Accessories	Titan
Air and Water Purifiers	Aquaguard

* Some advertisers published advertisements for multiple times

marketing managers of advertisers to identify the reasons for the findings obtained by this study. A study is needed on consumer response to gift advertisements to provide the consumer perspective on gift themed advertisements.

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