



An Empirical Study on the Effects of Television Advertising among Mullukuruma Tribes in Kerala

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Abstract

This research endeavors to examine the influence of Advertisement among Mullukuruma tribe (Vellappata colony) in Poothadi Panchayath, Wayanad District of Kerala. In the last 50 years the media influence has grown exponentially with the advance of technology. We live in a society that depends on the ICT to keep moving in the right direction and do our daily activities and the influence of advertisement made them to travel in to an another world which is of consumer world . And due to the Magic Bullet theory of the media they struggle hard to choose which is right or which is wrong they themselves blindly believed the media and they listen to the media advertisement to sort out the best this had influenced them both positively and negatively. The modernization of the country has led to the Kuruma becoming more and more deprived of their former habitat. Hunting and shows with performing monkeys are forbidden and strictly controlled and therefore seldom practiced. The Kurumas source of income is therefore very limited. Now days they mainly live off trading bamboo basket, pottery making, agriculture etc. They live in small settlements of about 80 people. It was found that watching more television channel has change their mind set in some cases like previously they used to follow their traditional way of life by using their on goods but today it was not followed anymore. Today they listen to television advertisement to choose their goods, Thus it can be said that the advertisement influenced them both positively and negatively and media has broaden their outlook of the Kurumas in the region of Poothadi. This research seeks to explain and understand the influence of Advertisement on the Kuruma tribe of Poothadi Grama Panchayath in Wayanad district of Kerala.

Keywords: Media impacts, Tribal life, Changing habit, Cultural change.

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Introduction

Advertising is a form of marketing communication used to persuade an audience to take or continue some action, usually with respect to a commercial offering, or political or ideological support. In Latin, *ad vertere* means "to turn toward" The purpose of advertising may also be to reassure employees or shareholders that a company is viable or successful. Advertising messages are usually paid for by sponsors and viewed via various old media; including mass media such as newspaper, magazines, television advertisement, radio advertisement, outdoor advertising or direct mail; or new media such as blogs, websites or text messages. The reason that we accept all this advertising is that we assume that we can tune most of it out. If we don't pay attention to the ads, then they won't have that much of an effect on our behavior. The aim of doing this research on Mullukuruma community (Vellappata colony) in Poothadi Panchayath is to understand how advertisements are influencing them and their traditional

way of life. Hence the study is more specifically on the degree and category of Influence of Advertisements on them and how they react to these advertisements. For the upcoming generation, some time advertisements are highly influential and they may change their lifestyle. Now they are undergone the process of modernity in their life styles with the onset of Television advertisements. Thus there is a need to do a study on this and reach a correct conclusion.

Tribal people

A tribe is viewed historically or developmentally as a social group existing before the development of or outside of states. Many people asked the term tribal society to refer to societies organized largely on the basis of social, especially familial decent groups. A customary tribe in these terms is a fare to fare community, relatively bound by kinship relations, reciprocal exchange and strong ties to place (Aiyappan.1993).The English word tribe has come from the Latin word '*tribus*' which signifies a particular types of common and political organization which is alliance in all these societies. The name tribe refers to a category of people and designates a step of development in human society. As a type of society the term signifies a

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set of typical features and as a point of advancement. It cannot a definitive form of social organization (Behuru.1990).

Tribes in Wayanad

Wayanad has the largest population of aborigine people in Kerala. The native *Adivasis* mainly consist of various sects like *Paniyas, Kurumas, Adiyars, Kurichyas, Ooralis, and Kattunaikkans* etc. This is the land where tribes live in thatched roof, mud, bamboo and brick houses set in swampy valleys and plateaus. Of particular mention are their indigenous streams of holistic herbal medicine which is getting increasing attention in recent years. The *Adivasis* also have a rich legacy of arts and crafts. This includes music, dances, ornamentation and handicraft that draw inspiration from natural themes, motifs and materials. The *Kurichyas* of Wayanad have a great martial tradition. They constituted the army of Pazhassi Raja who engaged the British forces in several battles. The descendants of those warriors are still expert archers.

Mullukuruma tribe

The mullukuruma, [mullukurumba] being an agricultural tribe are in continuous contact with their neighbors since centuries and this contact condition has led them to adopt or accept many cultural elements from the dominant Hindus living around them. The mullukuruma are distributed within a radius of 30 kilometers including the Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu and Wayanad district in Kerala. The term 'mullu' means *thorn* and 'kuruma' means *mischievous*. Thus the word mullukuruma means *mischievous thorn makers* (Tribal Dictionary 2014). They are expert in hunting and they are good shots with their bows and arrows. The middle aged people, both men and women look to be healthy and strong. The women look more attractive in their traditional dress. Their dialect is a mixture of Tamil and Malayalam languages. They are well versed in Malayalam and many of them are multilingual.

Dress pattern

Usually the woman wears *Kettumundu*. It is wrapped on their body and by taking it below the right armpit; it is tied on the left shoulder. The right shoulder remains free. Boys started to wear piece of cloth around their waist called *Thorthumund*, usually when they reach the age of five or six. The dress pattern of men is very simple. Men usually wear a white *mundu* (Dhoti). Covering up to their knee called *velu-kambi* and white cloth over the shoulder called *Panchi*. Men also used to wear shirts known as *Pinnadan* shirts, brought by the *Pinnattukar* (outsiders) from Karnataka state. *Panchi* and shirts are worn only when they are going out. Mullukuruma man keep three items as an insignia, *Peesankathi*, (a knife), *Rool* (silver waste band) and *Pakku* (acloth bag). *Peesankathi* is always seen kept inserted in the *mundu* at the waist. Like dress, ornaments of mullukuruma are also very simple. Most of their

ornaments are comparatively cheaper and are made of copper, iron, brass, silver, plastic etc. ornaments made of gold are rare. The mullukuruma are fond of tattooing, which is locally known as *Kurikuthuka*. Girls below twelve years old generally habit, and the tattooing marks on their hand forearms are generally stars and half-moons. (jose mathew. 2011)

Food habits

Now rice is the staple food of the mullukuruma and earlier it was *Ragi* (Finger millet) and *Muthari* (Mundal). They use vegetable and non vegetable items. Every culture has its own idea about food and based on its territory, culture applies certain restrictions on that. It could be reflected among the mullukuruma also. They prepare *Kathal or Kanji* (rice gruel). Rice prepared for supper is called *choru*. In addition to these, Mullukuruma prepare secondary food items like *Nuralappam, Panampittu, and Kelluputtu* etc. Another important aspect of their food habit is that they don't have special menu for children, elderly or females; nor is any food item special for pregnant and lactating women. Meat and fish are preserved either drying under sunlight or by hanging in the roof of the *Attam (Hut)*. These tribes are not consuming food like beef, meat of monkey, civet, *Varamus bengalensis*, mongoose and etc. (Haridas.2000)

Economy

The economic activities of the mullukurumas have undergone a series of changes from hunting and gathering to settle agriculture. Their priorities relating to economic pursuits have also been varied from time to time. In the past hunting and food gathering were their primary economic activities and cultivation was the secondary. Later shifting cultivation became primary and hunting and food gathering become secondary source of living. (Ananda Banu, 2007)

Fairs and Festivals

Festival is a social institution, which provides an occasion of gaiety for them. The festivals of the mullukurumas are like *Puthari, Parayedukal* and *Makarachovva*. It is seen that these festivals get into the society of Mullukuruma from the neighboring caste Hindus through the process of acculturation and festivals distinct to mullukuruma are seldom noticed.

Family

Nuclear family is the basic socio-economic unit among the Mullukuruma. Joint families are also seen, but extended families are rare. The father, who is usually the eldest male in a house hold. The family consists of father, mother, and children and may be grandparents. There is a clear cut division of labor within the family. Almost all household activities vest on the hands of females. Young ones are entrusted with elder siblings, when their parents go out for work.

Analysis and Interpretation

Wayanad is one of the beautiful geographical areas in Kerala and also a region of highest number of tribes in Kerala. Mullukurumas are the dominant tribe in Poothadi Panchayath. The mullukuruma, being an agricultural tribe are in continuous contact with their neighbors since centuries and this contact condition has led them to adopt or accept many cultural elements from dominant Hindus living around them. Etymologically, Mullukurumas which means ‘mischief thorn makers’ is derived from the words “mullu” and “Kurama”. They are hunters and it has been their traditional occupation for generations. Mullukuruma settlements in Vellappata colony in Poothadi Panchyath include 80 households, thus 50 have television sets. The study shows that among Mullukurumans majority of them have their own television sets in their house and almost every one watches Television and they prefer local channels. The womens up to 18 to 45 are addicted to T.V Serials like “Chandana mazha” “Parasparam” etc etc...and many of them watches Sun T.V,Asianet, Mazhavil manorama.

And also they watch Television while they eat or they do their work time but they don't prefer reading Newspaper and most of them listen to television for more than four hours and also there is a trend among them like buying products which offers discount and free (One plus One product) because these types of television advertisement confuses them and some go in back of attractive offers thinking they can save their money. Actually these types of Advertisements make them waste their money without thinking. Majority of Kurumans are living in average income. But some are living in Below Poverty Line and find it difficult to make both the food and Money. Today's new generation look at these people with a bad eye and foot of development are denied to them and also there is a bad trend among the new generation that they are shifting from modern consumerist world from their Traditional way of life. Their eating habits are rice is the staple food of the mullukuruma now and earlier it was Ragi and Muthari.

Meat and fish are also preserved and other wild Animals though bows and arrows are been seized by the cops and government banned them from hunting wild animals. “I am college student from Mullukuruma tribal community; Because of I cannot follow the tradition if I follow the tradition am facing sigma from the society so I am following the new trends to cope up with the situation.” Said Snila 21 year old girl, this is exactly happening with them they are watching advertisements of new trend of garment shop and they watch local channel advertisement for finding out the nearest cloth shop which offers discounts and most fashion clothes most of them being attracted by the advertisements acted by any of the film actors or actress. Majority of the ads are like joy Alukkas (Tamil actor Vijay Fame) cool drinks advertisements, Furniture advertisements, and local advertisements like Yes Barath Textiles, Vivel, Colgate, Dhathri [film actress Kavya Madavan fame] face wash etc. The government that

came to power in Kerala has been taken numeric initiatives to upliftment of Mullukurumans. That policies and programmes are done on the basis of Panchayath level through their tribal offices.

Now a day's current generation started to buy Modern products but the old people still depends on the traditional shop because they are afraid of the modern diseases the children's in the age gap between 10-20 are addicted to cool drinks and fast foods as a result of Advertisement and the youngsters keep on changing phones due to the attractive advertisements. Now mobile phone is their main communication device. Women's are used products like *Stiff and shine, Comfort, Horlicks* etc. The teenage girls are much more influenced by the cosmetics items, like *face wash, cream, hair oil* etc. They say they select hair oil through television advertisements. The criteria for selection related to the presentation of advertisements and its actors. Housemaids said they watch advertisements especially on household items like Mixi, induction cooker etc.

Even the modern shops like Fast food, Bakery, Stationary shops keepers introduce the new products in the market and make them aware about the new products. And most of the products they provide in the shop are the products they noticed in the Television. The men said, their wife and children often remembering products name when they are going to consume, especially food and stationary items. And Majority of them uses Mobile phones to connect to the world and even the present generations are conscious about the advanced development in the technology. And they all know how to use each and every phone.

Majority of them of them are started consuming soft drinks daily and also they prefer fast foods than their traditional food. They liked to have Noodles and each and everybody are conscious about the change in their lifestyle but they have their own reasons, like they have to make themselves fit to the society. The ‘Kudi’ [settlements] of Mullukuruma had undergone vast changes within a span of two decades. In 1989 almost 92% of the kudi were traditional and only 8% were modern. After 2008 a field work revealed a changed situation. It is observed that now 85% of kudi are modern whereas the traditional kudi is reduced to 13%. (Rajalakshmi misra.2001). Most of the mullukurumas won't stay in a particular place for long time they always shift from one place for long time they always shift from one place to another this constant Migration has affected the education of children even at very dented age the children of mullukuruma are been sent for work.

Majority of them are happy with their change in the life style and they like to be in the same life. They don't want to go back to their traditional way of life. Television Advertisement acts them both positively and negatively they follow the new fashions and even they compare the schools to choose the best so the effect of the advertisement is straight to them there is no shield to protect them from the direct effect of advertisement. The study also reveals that the modern communication

systems made greater changes in their life, especially this television advertisement. They are aware about the social practices, public awareness etc. especially they are in a consumer behavioristic manner. After a small interactive session with their children (aged between Seven to fourteen) are revealed that they are more addicted with sweets and snacks items also they are influenced by advertisement visual presentation and actors. *Kinder joy and Jems* are the product they widely use. Most of the parents say their children watch advertisements more on them. The Mallukuruma tribes says their life is much more influenced by television everything changed, they practice their own culture and tradition even though they are undergone in a consumerist nature. They says still if they are not ready to change their life style, the society won't accept them and they arise a question, Why we stay back from a modern life like u? But this is only the voice of these new generation, the oldest people are still keep one step behind to the so-called modernity.

Conclusion

These are the findings from the interview and discussion schedule, the study shows that 100% of them watch television the advertisements influence them both positively and negatively. majority of them is conscious about the change in their lifestyle. To dress modern they use the help of the advertisements by which their children don't feel discrimination, were parents force them to follow certain advertisements movies. They choose their most entertain medium as films and also influenced by film actors. Asianet is the channel mostly they watch than other channels. The second preference given to *Mazhivil Manorama* and any news channel which is not specified the youth are more influenced by Tamil movies at a great level. The old people do not prefer beauty products and perfumes because of their phobia towards skin allergy but the new generation they prefer to use fair and lovely and other cosmetics items. They don't know more about branding. Even though now a days they consume products on the basis of brand like Nestle, Eastern, Colgate etc. Even for finding the best school they seek help from advertisements the small scale shop keepers follow the trend in advertisements to know the needs of the buying population in their shops you can find the traditional items on one side and what the present consumer wants which is largely influenced by these advertisements. A rare number watch public service advertisement. They are influenced by public awareness programmes others are not familiar with these kind of advertisements. Majority of the people fall for the money saving advertisements for one such instance observed was *Kinder joy + Masala bottle* which is widely sell in the area. They tend to change their mobile phones often which is one way of the youth wasting money in the tribe, youngsters are drawn to the consumption of soft drinks and fast food on a daily basis

The shopkeepers in the area itself introduce new products in the market. They have started changing their

traditional names and started putting contemporary names influenced by the television they use *Limca* as a medicine for stomach problems. Local channel advertisements also influence them The Kuruma tribes are the most educated people compare to other tribes. The new generation is now trying to get higher education. Lack of proper housing and common market place doesn't allow them to earn a steady income. Then the tribal's suffer a lot because of the change in their food habits as hunting was banned they had to find the new food habits which was alien to them now they are influenced by the media to go for junk foods which is propagated through advertisements. The tribal's approach their local deity in the instance of a disease they prefer worship over medicine animal sacrifices are common to get rid of diseases such superstitions still hold ground to the minds of the tribal's. They have their own tribe temple. Worship of God and Goddess. But now their temple built by using concrete rather than mud. They are influenced by their favorite actor in advertisement they possess brand loyalty to the film star. Most of the tribal population is addicted to liquor more than 50% of the tribal's doesn't have steady income majority of them choose advertisement to choose the best, depends on fast foods women are addicted to television serials they don't prefer to dress traditionally, they depend only on advertisement for buying a product They spend more time on television. They said it is the most effective, cheapest and colourful medium. These people are not care of newspaper or other magazine advertisement.

They are now confused with the rise of consumerism which is alien to them and with their traditions with they have long held the new world which they have seen through television has surely influence them in both positive and negative ways still they are losing the faith on their own culture and falling in to an unreal world they try to rise in life idealizing the television advertisements and movies there rapid change in lifestyle has badly affected their culture and way of living hence consumerism has taken away yet another ethnic way of living. Actually they are not much more aware about the bad effect of advertisements. They believe advertisements help them make to fulfill their wishes. So they are not ready to go beyond the 'artificial reality'.

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