This Day Is to Be Special: the Role of Exaggerated Contrast in an Indian Wedding (18:24)

Ekant Veer, University of Bath, UK

The film documents how audial and visual cues are purposely exaggerated in Indian weddings, arguably to distinguish the sacred from the profane. In one instance, wedding participants use the colors gold, red, orange and silver. Significantly, these colors are rarely seen in such brilliance and concentration in everyday Indian life. In another instance, the groom approaches the bride on the wedding day accompanied by a large band which involves traditional auspicious instruments such as the Shehnai. The sound of the band contrasts starkly with the traffic and white noise of Delhi streets. The film supports Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry’s (1989) idea that a key characteristic of sacredness in contemporary consumer culture is its separation from the profane.

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FILM FESTIVAL

Summary
Russell Belk, York University, Canada
Marylouise Caldwell, University of Sydney, Australia

This was the seventh annual North American ACR Film Festival. Despite competition from the Latin American, European, and Asia-Pacific ACR Film Festivals that have also emerged in recent years, as well as at least three consumer research journals with special DVD issues, the quality and number of submissions just keep getting better. This year’s submissions continue to represent a truly global interest in film, both in terms of topical focus and the geographic origin of the filmmakers. This is evident in this year’s two prizes as well. The Jurors’ Award went to Marta Rabikowska and Matthew Hawkins, University of East London, for their feature length film Consumption, Belonging and Place. The film shows how members of a multi-racial community located in South London negotiate their identities via a range of socially embedded consumption activities largely located in the local High Street. An earlier version of this film garnered a parallel prize at 2007 European ACR Conference. The prize carries a cash award from the Center for Consumer Culture (3C), Georgetown University, and the University of California, Irvine. The People’s Choice Award went to Ebru Ulusoy and Handan Vicedan, University of Texas-Pan American, for their capsule-length entry: Bodily Experiences of Second Life Consumers. Their film provides preliminary evidence of how consumers experience their bodies as avatars in virtual worlds such as Second Life. Ebru Ulusoy has also become a repeat winner and this was her third film to win an ACR Award. Additional Film Festival submissions covered a variety of topics, including amongst others, the consummate loving relationships that some consumers have with their cars, the way Middle Eastern house design reflects Islamic gender power relations, the meaning of luxurious experiences to upper class Japanese consumers, and the methodological and representational challenges that researchers face when striving to produce academically sound films. For the time being these films are not available online. Those wishing to see or use one of the films are encouraged to contact the filmmakers.

PRESENTATIONS

“Can Buy Me Love”
John L. Lastovicka, Arizona State University, USA
Nancy J. Sirianni, Arizona State University, USA
Danny Kunz, Arizona State University, USA

The videography “Can Buy Me Love” portrays exhibitors of classic cars, muscle cars, and hotrods at public car shows in the Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan area. In contrast to Susan Fournier’s work, these auto-enthusiasts reveal deeper and more intimate relationships with their possessions than previously reported in the consumer research literature. We show how these auto-enthusiast consumers have personified their automobiles as partners in–as what psychologist Robert Sternberg defines as–a consummate loving relationship. Consummating loving relationships exhibit three components, namely: passion, intimacy and commitment. Our videography contains a sampling of the behaviors, emotions and words of informants manifesting these three components with respect to their beloved cars.

“Can’t Buy Me Love” also discusses the emotive benefits consumers receive from these relationships with their cars. We reveal that such relationships appear to fill an emotional void in their lives. Thus we conclude that the loving relationship that consumers have with their beloved possessions is asymmetric. Consumers invest their own time, energy, money and emotions into their possessions. In exchange, these beloved possessions help fill an emotional need for consumers. This is similar to what psychiatrists Donald Horton and Richard Wohl have characterized as the "para-relationships" that some television viewers have with media personalities.

The videography concludes by discussing what our insights offer marketers. First, we note that monogamy is not required in these loving relationships. Thus those who madly, truly, and deeply love one car have the opportunity to have more than one of these special cars in their garage. It was not uncommon for our informants to have more than one special car. Second, part of achieving intimacy with a loved possession means investing time, money, and effort into the loved possession. That means a host of complementary material possessions are often needed in support of the loved possession. We illustrate this point with the hundreds of dollars of potions, lotions and machines that informants can spend on keeping a dazzling mirror-like finish on the car’s body. As the French philosopher Denis Diderot noted, consumers’ possessions require other possessions. We believe this is especially true for consumers’ most be-liked possessions.

“This Day is to be Special: The Role of Exaggerated Contrast in an Indian Wedding”
Ekant Veer, University of Bath, UK

The role of sacred and profane objects has been well founded in consumer research for some time. Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry’s (1989) seminal paper underlines the pervasiveness of the sacred within modern consumer culture. This research takes a reflexive look at one particular aspect of the sacred and profane relationship; that is, the way in which the sacred is kept separate and detached from the profane as a means of maintaining the importance and power associated with the sacred.

By drawing on a reflexive stance to this research the film presents the results of one interpretation of an Indian wedding. Reflexivity in this case, allows for the researcher to engage with the research site, but also accept his or her own biases and theoretical dispositions (Joy et. al 2006). The results presented show how audial and visual cues are exaggerated to illustrate the importance of sacred events in the lives of Hindu Indians. Although this research focuses specifically on a North Indian Hindu wedding the results from the research offer explanations for the exaggeration of audial and visual cues in other contexts.

This research uses the artistic concept of negative space as an analogy for how the sacred is contrasted with the profane. White space, Negative space or Silence all refer to the role that pauses or emptiness play in promoting the focus of a particular subject (Murray 2005).