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“Dreaming the global future - identity, culture and the media in a multi-cultural age”

In 2003 COI Communications, the Government’s communications agency, commissioned a comprehensive, in-depth study of media use and attitudes to advertising among Britain’s ethnic minority communities. This research was groundbreaking in a number of ways and was the largest project of its kind ever conducted in the UK.

This paper gives a flavour of the key findings of the research, which we believe is of relevance to all brand managers, marketers and advertisers. The paper also presents a analytical framework that can be used to explore the relationship between identity, culture and the media in the global context. Those who are interested in more detailed findings can refer to the COI Website (www.coi.gov.uk) where a summary report can be downloaded.

The paper is structured in three sections:

1. Section One outlines the background to the research, the sample and method, and our analytical framework;
2. Section Two discusses the three major themes of the paper – identity, culture and the media;
3. Section Three outlines the implications for marketers and advertisers, asking whether marketing and the media should reflect current reality, or present an image of what the future might hold.

Section One: Introduction

Background

COI Communications is the Government’s communications agency, managing research and advertising for issues as diverse as Armed Forces recruitment, the benefits and tax systems, food safety, and health, among others. In addition to managing the Government’s above-the-line advertising, COI also handles digital media, sponsorship, press, public relations and events for a wide range of public sector bodies.

Historically, many Government campaigns have targeted similar audiences – youth, elders, or employers, for example. However, research has focused on specific campaigns rather than target audiences. Thus, there was a lack of overarching research on specific target groups to aid strategic planning. To address this gap, in 2002 COI Communications initiated the Common Good Research Programme, so called because its findings were to be shared across all Government departments and

agencies. Over thirty Government departments were consulted in defining the brief, scope and coverage of the research. The programme has so far encompassed two audiences – Small and Medium Enterprises, and ethnic minority groups. In both cases, initial desk research was conducted followed by a major programme of qualitative research.

The aims of the Common Good research programme are:

- To deliver fresh insight and inspiration to Government departments and their agencies;
- To provide effective and practical information;
- To be a long term planning tool to assist in strategic, creative and media planning.

There is also a proactive dissemination strategy for the research, including a website and a series of workshops – this is most certainly not research designed to sit on a shelf!

The objectives of the research among ethnic minority groups were to explore:

- Lifestyles, culture and feelings of identity;
- Media consumption and attitudes towards the media;
- Attitudes towards the representation of ethnic minorities in advertising;
- Information sources and delivery channels.

Research methods and sample

The Common Good research programme aimed to uncover new insights and to go deeper than previous research among these communities. We wanted to know what people said about their media habits, but we also wanted to know what they did in the home and how families interacted in their day-to-day life. Thus, new methods were used and new target audiences included, to gain the maximum insight from the research.

The project used entirely qualitative methods, comprising a mix of conventional and more innovative approaches:

- Two-hour workshops were the primary method used; these are similar to group discussions, but include a wider range of tasks and activities for respondents.
- Standard group discussions were used for respondents over 65, as we thought two hours would be too long for this group;
- Individual depth interviews were conducted among those who had recently sought information about a range of public issues (careers, schools, health, etc.)
- Family visits were conducted in order to explore media consumption in the home; these sessions lasted between two and three hours and took place in people's homes, videoing their media consumption patterns and observing

their behaviour. Although this method has been used in media research with the general population, we believe this is the first time it has been used among ethnic minority groups.

- Community centre visits were also conducted, to see how intermediaries such as advice workers actually used the Government information that they received. In addition to interviewing the workers, we also spent time observing the activities of the centre, taking photographs, and talking informally to centre users where possible.

We also asked respondents to take photographs of their day-to-day lives and to fill out a media diary prior to attending the groups, interviews and workshops.

The sample covered the major visible ethnic minority communities in the UK, with a focus on those who had not been adequately covered in previous research, or who might have particular communications difficulties. Refugees and asylum seekers were not covered, as they were likely to have very different concerns. Also white ethnic minorities, such as Polish, Albanian or Kurdish people were not included. The table below contains details of the ethnic breakdown of the UK population in April 2001.

UK population by ethnic group, April 2001

	Total population		Ethnic minority population
	Count	%	%
White	54,153,898	92.1	N/A
Mixed	677,117	1.2	14.6
Asian or British Asian			
Indian	1,053,411	1.8	22.7
Pakistani	747,285	1.3	16.1
Bangladeshi	283,063	0.5	6.1
Other Asian	247,664	0.4	5.3
Black or Black British			
Black Caribbean	565,876	1.0	12.2
Black African	485,277	0.8	10.5
Black Other	97,585	0.2	2.1
Chinese	247,403	0.4	5.3
Other	230,615	0.4	5.0
All ethnic minority populations	4,635,296	7.9	100
All population	58,789,194	100	N/A

Source: 2001 Census/ Office for National Statistics

Thus, the final sample covered:

- Indians, including Hindus and Sikhs;
- Pakistani Moslems;
- Bangladeshi Moslems;
- Chinese people, including Christians and Buddhists;
- Black Caribbean people, mainly Christians;
- Black African people, from a range of African countries;
- Young people of mixed race origin – from a range of mixed backgrounds.

The total sample comprised twenty-four workshops, four group discussions, fourteen depth interviews, four paired depth interviews, ten family visits and six community centre visits.

As stated above, we aimed to include those people who had not been adequately covered in previous research. The Chinese community, for example, has rarely been researched in depth largely due to recruitment difficulties (Gervais and Jovchelovitch 1998). Black African people have rarely been researched separately from Black Caribbeans. The mixed race population – one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the UK – has also been absent from much research. Finally, we went to considerable lengths to ensure that non-English speakers were included in the Asian and Chinese groups.

Recruiting the sessions was a challenge, as some of these groups have been omitted precisely because of difficulties gaining access to the community. We did not use fieldwork agencies to do the recruitment on this project, as our experience is that they have difficulty accessing certain sections of the community – especially non-English speakers and more traditional Africans and Chinese people. We used specialist recruiters, many of whom were from an ethnic minority background themselves, to ensure that our sample was as representative as possible (for a fuller discussion of these issues, see Desai and Sills 1996, and Sharma and Bell 2002).

We also had the benefit of a fully multi-cultural research team, including researchers from Black, Asian and Chinese backgrounds. Sessions conducted in Mother Tongue languages were translated back into English, and internal debriefs were held to ensure that the insights from each cultural group were not lost.

Analytical framework

This paper has three themes – ethnic identity, culture and the media. In exploring these themes, we have found the work of Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai to be very helpful. Appadurai (1990) has written widely on ethnic identity and global cultural change. He suggests that in the current global context, national boundaries no longer define the limits of identity, culture or the media. Rather than exploring these concepts within national boundaries, we should focus on how people and ideas move from place to place. He identifies five key areas in which these movements take place, and he terms these “dimensions of global cultural flow.” The five dimensions are as follows:

- The ethnoscape – the movement of people within and between countries, either voluntary or enforced;
- The ideoscape – the flow of ideas, theories and concepts (eg, democracy, individuality);
- The mediascape – the global media which facilitates much of this movement;
- The finanscape – the movement of capital in international markets;
- The technoscape – the transfer of technologies between nations.

There are three aspects of Appadurai's theory which are especially useful for our purposes:

1. He focuses attention on the movement of people and ideas, which makes his theory helpful for understanding change;
2. He emphasises that globalisation is best understood in terms of the flows of people and cultures between specific locations, rather than as a general idea of a "global culture" which is "everywhere";
3. He points out that cultures often change in translation, so that being a Moslem in a Pakistani village may be quite different from being a Moslem in Bradford.

The next section of our paper outlines some key ideas that have emerged from the research, in the contexts of ethnic identity (the ethnoscape), cultural production (the ideoscape) and the media (the mediascape). In all three cases, we explore how an understanding of the movement of people and ideas can help illuminate the changes taking place in contemporary culture and society.

Section Two - identity, culture and the media

Identity and the ethnoscape

The first large scale migration to Britain came in the 1950s and 1960s in response to post-war labour shortages. A Caribbean presence in Britain had already been established during the Second World War as large numbers of Caribbean men and women had come over to join the British armed forces and to work as nurses. Following the war, the National Health Service and organisations like London Transport recruited directly from the Caribbean in order to build up their work force. Concurrently, following the partition of India in 1947 and the 1948 British Nationality Act which guaranteed free right of entry to British subjects, South Asian migration to Britain increased. Some of the early Indian migrants were from towns and cities and held professional qualifications – many were doctors. Others came from farming backgrounds and came over to fill jobs in the iron, steel and textile industries. Migration from the Indian sub-continent peaked in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Clearly, as people moved from one continent to another, they adapted to fit in with the new society in which they found themselves and new national and ethnic identities emerged to take account of these cultural changes. This has occurred all over the world – not just in Britain. For example, the term 'African American' is used by black people in the States to bring together their cultural roots and their

place of residence. Similarly, in Britain, we found that younger British born ethnic minorities often referred to themselves as Black or Asian British (we elaborate on this later in this paper).

In our research, there was considerable variation in people's 'closeness' to their British identity. It varied from community to community, from generation to generation and from person to person. It also varied from situation to situation and there was a complex fluidity between different forms of identity. As we shall see later, this relates to the different media opportunities available which resonate with these varying identities.

Taking one of our Black British respondents as an example.

Curtis was born in London of Jamaican parents. When he has to fill in any official forms or apply for a job, he describes himself as British. However, at home, he feels much closer to Jamaican culture because of the way he has been brought up. His mother cooks traditional Jamaican meals most of the time. His parents speak Jamaican patois and he incorporates some of this into the way he speaks. He spends a lot of time with his grandmother who tells him stories of "home" and advises him on the traditional Jamaican way to cure any ailments he has, such as drinking cerassie tea (a bitter tasting tea made from a Caribbean herb) to relieve stomach upsets. He sees himself as Black British most of the time, but culturally, he feels he falls between two stools. He might support England playing in the football World Cup, but he might also support the West Indies when they play England at cricket. He might watch CD UK on Saturday afternoon but he also listens to pirate radio and has a collection of ragga CDs which he brought back from Jamaica. And sometimes, it is when he travels to Jamaica that he feels most English as he realises that his culture and lifestyle is not the same as his Jamaican cousins.

"I feel very welcome when I go to Jamaica and I have a lot of family there, but I don't regard it as home because I was born and brought up in England."

In contrast, many of the first generation ethnic minorities we spoke to did not see themselves as British, regardless of whether or not they had British citizenship. For example, Pakistani and Bangladeshi adults often described themselves as a "Pakistani or Bangladeshi living in Britain", to emphasise that their cultural identity had not substantially altered since leaving their country of origin. They felt that their culture, lifestyles, clothing and values were all more strongly related to Pakistan or Bangladesh than to Britain and that their religious identity as Moslems meant that they were 'different' to white British people.

Levels and types of identity

Thus, there are a number of factors impacting on ethnic minorities' sense of identity in Britain today and we list the main ones below.

First, **British nationality** played a role in how people saw themselves, but to a lesser extent than one might expect among a mainstream British sample. As touched on earlier, many first generation ethnic minorities were British citizens, but they only saw themselves as British in the sense of formal nationality. It was not

meaningful to them in a cultural sense. They felt a greater cultural affinity with people from their country of origin than white British people, regardless of how long they had lived in the UK.

Interestingly, the Black Caribbean and Indian pensioners we interviewed had a stronger sense of citizenship and exhibited greater loyalty to the British state than did younger respondents. This was because many of them were British subjects when they arrived in this country in the 1950s and 1960s. However, although they emphasised their legal status as British citizens, they did not feel culturally British. It was clear that, for many of the parental generation, their **ethnic and cultural origins** were more important in defining their identity than their nationality.

Our language, our culture and traditions are all very Bangladeshi, so how can we think and feel differently?

Older Bangladeshi woman

In contrast, hybrid identities of the type mentioned earlier were common among younger British-born ethnic minorities, as they sought to reconcile their lifestyle and living environment with their family and cultural background. The second and third generations acknowledged that Britain was their home, and many aspects of their lifestyle and identity derived from living in Britain. Nevertheless, they also identified with their parents' countries of origin. Thus, Black young people described themselves as Black British, young Asian people described themselves as Asian British and Chinese young people often used the acronym 'BBC' meaning 'British Born Chinese'.

"I'm mainly Bengali, because originally back home my parents are Bengali, but I am a bit English on the side. I have come to this country and I have to abide by their rules, go with their laws. Follow the same society, you have to fit in with the society and do what they do, try and get along."

Teenage Bangladeshi boy

These identities had partly developed because young people felt that being Black, Asian or Chinese in appearance meant that they would never be accepted as simply 'British'.

In addition, these hybrid identities reflected young people's belief that significant differences exist between ethnic minority British cultures and white British culture. While in the public domain, at college, school, or work, they might take part in many aspects of the mainstream British culture, talking about the same football teams, TV programmes, and Hollywood movies. However, in the family home they participated in their parental culture, which they also felt was part of their identity. The family culture might include, for example:

- Food and eating habits – it was common for young people to eat traditional food at home and for girls, in particular, to be taught how to cook traditional meals
- Religion and religious observance – particularly in relation to non-Christian religions
- Language – i.e. some of the ethnic minority young people spoke mother tongue languages with their parents at home
- Family relationships – respect for elders and the importance of the extended family were two themes common to all of the ethnic minority communities in the research, and represented values which they felt were less pronounced among white British people
- Values and customs – which were often most apparent on family occasions such as weddings and funerals, or during religious festivals when family members of different generations would gather together.

Overall, **religion** and religious identities were central in the lives of many of the ethnic minority people in the research. This was true of Black Christians as well as Hindus, Sikhs and Moslems. However, religious identities appeared to be relatively less important to the Chinese people interviewed [check?].

Lastly, some respondents used **regional and local** identities depending on the context, particularly among the Black Caribbean and Indian communities. This may relate to the fact that these were well established communities in the areas where we did the research, such as London, Leicester, Harrow and Birmingham. Local identities might come into play when interacting with family members or friends from elsewhere in Britain. So, if a Gujarati person from Harrow were to visit relatives in Leicester, they might tell others that they were from London. This is reflected in the high profile of local and regional newspapers among ethnic minority groups noted by other research (Mediaedge:cia 2002).

Cultural change

Overall, however, as identities and cultures have merged and been transformed, so parental attitudes and family dynamics have changed within the new environment. Ethnic minority parents are traditionally quite strict with their children, particularly Asian parents towards their daughters. However, attitudes and values have shifted. In our research, we found that family relationships were generally well balanced and positive, with few reported conflicts between parents and children. Young Indian women in our sample said that their parents had become more open and willing to accept that life in the UK was different from life in India, and that they could not expect their children to abide by the norms of behaviour in India. They commented that as their siblings had grown up, their parents had allowed them more freedom to go out and socialise and also allowed them to delay marriage, in contrast to the old fashioned preference for “marrying girls off” in their teens. Equally, new arrivals from the country of origin may have more modern attitudes than older first generation

migrants who have been in the UK for decades. For example, in the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities, some women in their twenties and thirties who have recently arrived from the sub-continent are more keen to learn English and take part in mainstream society than their older, British-resident relatives.

Having said this, some vestiges of traditional parental discipline remain. For example, many of the younger respondents from all ethnic groups said that it was still taboo for young people to smoke in the presence of their parents or elders. Similarly, some of the young Chinese women complained that their parents did not want them to start dating boys until they had finished their university studies. Indian and Bangladeshi young women complained about being “spied on” by their mother’s friends and relatives if they went out with boys.

The process of cultural interchange has meant that, not only have ethnic minorities taken on aspects of British culture, they have also had a profound influence on it. We see evidence of this around us every day. Curry is now the nation’s favourite dish. Musical genres like reggae and calypso are well known and popular. White British people are familiar with festivals such as Chinese New Year and Diwali.

Representations of Black and Asian British culture are becoming more commonplace in the mainstream. The influence of black urban culture can be seen in the hairstyles, fashion, music tastes and speech patterns of young people from all ethnic groups – such as David Beckham choosing to cornrow his hair. The success of Asian British comedies and films – such as *Goodness Gracious Me* and *Bend It Like Beckham* – are testament to the increased profile of Asian culture. One young woman commented that in the current cultural climate, “Asians are cool”. Clearly, multicultural Britain in the 21st Century is not the same society as first generation ethnic minorities met when they arrived after the war.

Mixed race young people

A small sample of mixed race young people was included in the research in order to explore the similarities and differences between their views and those of other ethnic minority young people. These interviews suggested that, although most referred to themselves as ‘mixed race’, the majority identified with either their mother’s or their father’s ethnic origins rather than a combination of the two. There was just a small minority who felt equally at ease with both their parents’ cultures.

For some mixed race young people, the **visibility** of their ethnic origins had had an impact on their sense of ethnic identity i.e. whether they looked white, mixed, Black, Chinese or Asian. Those who looked white tended to have experienced less racism and were more likely to feel accepted as British or English by the wider society as a result.

Family relationships, environment and upbringing were also important. For example, some of the respondents had grown up in single-parent households with their mother and consequently felt closer to their mother’s ethnic group than their father’s.

The **cultural mix** of the respondent’s local area and the ethnic backgrounds of the friends they mixed with might also lead them to favour one cultural identity over

another and this might shift during their lives if they relocated. For example, one respondent, who has an English father and a Hong Kong Chinese mother, saw himself mainly as English despite growing up in Hong Kong. This was because he went to school in a very English environment and mainly mixed with the children of expatriates, with whom he mainly spoke English. However, since coming to London a couple of years ago, he had begun spending more time with Chinese people and was starting to pick up Cantonese again (which he spoke fluently up to the age of four).

Finally, **religion** played an important role for those mixed race young people who had been brought up in the Muslim faith. They all felt a stronger allegiance to Asian culture than to English culture as a result of their religious upbringing. For example, one respondent, who has a Pakistani Muslim mother and white father, officially has an English name, but said he prefers to use his Muslim name because he sees himself as an Asian person.

The reversal of hybridity

The research also revealed that, while hybrid cultures and identities had developed for many British ethnic minorities, so a reversal of hybridization had occurred among certain minority groups who felt increasingly marginalized. This was particularly the case for young black and young Pakistani Moslem men.

Many of the young black men often felt distanced from – and in some cases rejected altogether – their British nationality, describing themselves as simply ‘Black’. This was because of their experiences and perceptions of racism, which made them feel rejected by mainstream British society. They talked about police harassment, discrimination from employers and other forms of exclusion, such as being followed around shops by shop assistants frightened that they had come in to steal something.

As one young man put it:

“I wouldn’t say I see myself as British, but then I wouldn’t say I see myself as anything else. I don’t feel that I’m very welcomed or very wanted here. I just find that there’s a lot of racism, especially the further out of London you go. It makes me feel like this is not home.”

Pakistani young men felt that there had been an increase in discrimination and hostility towards Moslems in Britain since the events of September 11th 2001 (this was noted across the Moslem sample but was of particular concern to young men). As a result, they too often felt unwelcome in Britain and not accepted as a part of British society. Pakistani men in Bradford felt a mixture of bitterness and sadness at what they perceived as the deterioration of relations between Moslems and other members of society.

So, it is clear that identity is a complex and varied issue among ethnic minority communities. They want to feel and be accepted as part of mainstream British society, but acknowledge the influence that their ethnic and cultural roots have upon their culture, lifestyle and values. Thus, marketers should seek to present positive representations of British Asian, British Black and British Chinese hybrid cultures,

reflecting the reality of life for young ethnic minority people. In addition, positive images of families, showing different generations and their different issues, would be welcomed by many.

The ideoscape – the global flow of culture

As people move through the shifting ethnoscape, so they bring ideas and cultural products with them. This section explores the global flows of culture which accompany the movements of people and identities. We'll start with a few examples of what "global cultural flow" means in practice. We have changed some of the details of these stories to maintain confidentiality.

During a family visit to the home of a British Chinese family, we were upstairs with the children watching television when a relative arrived downstairs. The children, aged seven, eleven and thirteen rushed down and were presented with a carrier bag full of DVDs of the latest Chinese and Hong Kong movies. Their relative had recently returned from holiday and had been stocking up on new films – as the children pointed out, you can wait years for new Chinese films in the shops.

Later in the research, we were in the fourth floor flat of a mixed race family in South London. The father, Michael, was brought up in Jamaica and the mother was white Scottish. They have an eight year old son who spent most of the summer evening skateboarding along the landing of their block of flats with his Eastern European friends from upstairs. We asked if he liked living in South London, and he replied that this was not his real home. His real home, he said, was in Jamaica, and was a large farm surrounded by fields, where his father's parents currently lived.

On another occasion, we were conducting a workshop among 18 – 24 year old Pakistani women in Birmingham. They arrived at the group wearing a mixture of western fashion brands, Indian jewellery and traditional Moslem headscarves. During the discussion they told us how they enjoyed combining Asian and western clothing to make their own unique style – reflecting their position within both cultural traditions.

As these anecdotes suggest, the global movement of culture accompanies the movements of people outlined above. Fashion and clothing, films and DVDs, music and dance, celebrities – all move between nodes in the global network. Also, they often change in translation, acquiring new forms and meanings in their local contexts. Two key areas of cultural flow are between the UK and Jamaica, and between the UK and Bombay (now Mumbai).

British Jamaicans frequently travel to and fro, bringing with them CDs of Jamaican musicians, learning the new dances in the clubs, and picking up new words used by the singers. Dance moves seen in clubs in Kingston quickly arrive in Brixton and Handsworth, and pirate radio stations in the UK play the new Jamaican music before the official media pick it up. As we have already pointed out, these cultural forms are not restricted to the black communities. Musicians from Jamaica have a huge

influence on the global music scene, such as the dancehall singer Sean Paul or the ragga singer Shabba Ranks. And the forms of speech and accent are picked up by white and Asian young people alike, so that in parts of south London, British Jamaican patois is now *lingua franca* among inner city youngsters.

However, this is not a simple transfer of culture from one place to another. In fact, the version of Jamaican identity that has been adopted by many black, white and Asian young people in the UK is by no means universally approved of in Jamaica. Many parents in Jamaica would want their children to avoid these forms of “street argot”. The same is true of British Caribbean parents, who can see this form of Jamaican identity as a damaging stereotype rather than an empowering ethnicity. We can see this in reactions to a recent TV execution for Wotsits, a cheesy snack food for children. The execution features children of different ethnic backgrounds in a school classroom singing a rap-style song about Wotsits. The Caribbean parents in our sample felt that the advert portrayed a negative stereotypical of black school pupils, and they certainly did not want their children to speak or behave like the children in the advert.

The Indian film industry – known as Bollywood, because of its base in Bombay – is another case of global cultural flow. Bollywood films are very popular among British Asians, with cinemas in Harrow and Birmingham fully booked days in advance for popular new films. DVDs are also brought back from India and lent to relatives, or hired from private video shops before they have passed through the official import process. Songs are broadcast on Asian radio stations long before the films are released, ensuring high awareness of new releases.

For British Asian girls in particular, Bollywood provides good-looking Asian men and beautiful Asian women - characters who are notably absent from much mainstream media. Bollywood also serves as a source of ideas about make up, music and dance routines. Indeed, one can attend Bollywood dance classes in many parts of the UK today. Film premieres or weddings of Bollywood stars are the equivalent of fashion parades, with young women keen to see and adapt the fashions worn by the stars in Bombay or Karachi. Similarly, film magazines such as *Stardust* and *Cineblitz* provide more detail of the lives and loves of the stars, while numerous websites offer further opportunities for celebrity watching.

Once again, however, these cultures change when they arrive in the UK. The girls adapt the Asian fashions to their western lives, combining them with jeans, trainers, or chunky, Kickers-style shoes. In the advertising world, Bollywood fashions and dance styles are now common currency, as the recent Halifax “Bollywood” execution demonstrates. This advert shows a black bank manager, with his white, black and Asian staff, doing a Bollywood dance scene in front of a set reminiscent of the Taj Mahal. Gary Lineker can parody a traditional Indian wedding in his Walkers Crisps adverts. London theatregoers can watch *Bombay Dreams*, one of the hit musicals of 2002, produced by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Shekar Kapur, with music by the famous Indian film music composer, AR Rahman.

Global cultural movements, however, are not restricted to mass-market products such as film and music, or to the younger generations. As previously observed, the importance of religion was a key theme in our research among elders and some

young people. Among Pakistani and Bangladeshi people in Britain, Islam is central to their sense of identity, and in many cases to how life is lived. Islam can be relevant in choosing a marriage partner, deciding on careers, choices about fashion and dress, and media consumption.

Many first generation migrants came to the UK from the rural areas of Kashmir and Sylhet, and have preserved their traditional religious practices. In rural Pakistan and Bangladesh, many aspects of how Islam is practiced derive from Asian culture and local tradition rather than from the text of the Koran. These include village traditions such as the worship of saints and holy men, as well as mystical traditions such as Sufism, associated with music and song.

However, the UK born generations of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis often have a different interpretation of Islam, which can be at odds with their parents' religious practices. These younger people have not been brought up within a village tradition, but rather may be studying the Koran at college or university, or at Islamic circles organised by youth organisations. For these youngsters, Islam can become a much more political force, linked to notions of local and global injustice. It is often highly textual rather than based on living tradition, and indeed some younger Muslims want to purge their religion of all cultural specificity, returning to what they see as a purer version of the religion. They may even tell their parents that traditional village practices are not truly Islamic, and try to persuade them to give these up and adopt their own interpretation of the religion.

Among the British Caribbean population too, religion can be a powerful force. In the Caribbean, going to church is much more part of normal social life than in the UK. There is a tradition of "putting on your Sunday best" to go to church and this has been maintained by some communities in the UK. For older women in particular, church could be an important social as well as religious venue. The church provided a sense of "fellowship" and was like an extended family for some women. Churches also organised activities such as Bible study and youth activities. They might also be involved in charitable activities, such as visiting old people's homes or prison visiting. And this role of religion can be successfully used in advertising if sensitively handled. For example, BT's recent TV advert featuring the wedding of a Caribbean woman and a Scottish man refers affectionately to the role of the Church in Caribbean families.

Once again, this Caribbean tradition of church going influences the UK's religious culture. Indeed, pastors from the Caribbean and African communities appear to be taking the lead in much evangelical work in the UK, whilst the traditional Church of England congregations continue to decline.

Thus, marketers cannot analyse identity and culture only within national or regional boundaries. It is also important to analyse how cultures flow between specific locations. These cultural flows are frequently beyond the control of media and marketing, as people circumvent formal distribution channels via their own community networks. Also, cultural products such as films, fashions or music, even language and religion, often change in translation. Marketers and advertisers need to understand these processes of cultural flow and change in order to create meaningful messages targeting these groups. They also need to understand the

complex media environment in which they can place those messages, and this is the subject of the next section of our paper.

Mapping the mediascape

Once again, let us start with an example from our family visits.

The Shah family live in a two-bedroom maisonette in North London. Mrs Shah is a homemaker, Mr Shah works for the Post Office and their son Rajiv is thirteen. They are East African Asians, originally from India.

At 6.00pm Mrs Shah is cooking in the kitchen and listening to Sunrise Radio. Rajiv is in the living room watching the *Simpsons* on BBC2. After watching the beginning of the *Simpsons* he changes to watch an Indian children's programme on STAR TV.

Around 6.30 Mr Shah gets home from work. He has been to the shops on the way home so he unpacks the shopping and then goes to watch TV with Rajiv. From 6.30 – 7.00 they watch the news on ITV. Mrs Shah is still preparing dinner.

At 7.00pm they clear the living room table and Mrs Shah serves dinner. They all watch an Indian drama on STAR TV while having dinner. Dinner comprises rice, chapattis, two vegetable curries, dal, samosas, chutney and fresh mango for desert.

At 7.30pm a football match starts on ITV which Rajiv watches. His parents are in the room but are not really watching. Mrs Shah clears up and washes the dishes and Mr Shah looks at *Garavi Gujarat*, an Indian magazine.

At 8.00pm Mrs Shah goes into the bedroom to watch her favourite Asian dramas, which she watches from 8.00 – 9.00pm. Rajiv and his father remain in the living room, Rajiv watching the match and his father reading the paper.

At 9.00pm Mrs Shah is still watching Asian dramas in the bedroom. Mr Shah is going to lie down and rest for a while before going out to work again at 11pm for his night shift.

We can see a number of important aspects of the media landscape from the Shah's evening. Firstly, there are differences between the generations in terms of what media they consume, and how actively they consume them. Secondly, there is a division in time and space within the home regarding who watches what, and in which rooms. And thirdly, both mainstream and specialist ethnic media are consumed within a single evening, some by the whole family and some by younger or older members alone.

As we have suggested above, the media is one of the key channels through which global flows of culture occur. Satellite and digital television, the international press, the internet, cinema and DVDs allow people access to media from around the

world. The global media can bring images, ideas, news and entertainment from people's countries of origin. It can also provide access to globalised western culture – from the US or Europe – through American TV programmes, music, and news channels. This provides a wide range of opportunities for communicating with ethnic minority audiences, fitting in with the different identities that they may feel at different points in time – sometimes part of the global mainstream, sometimes part of an ethnic community.

Before embarking on a detailed analysis of the media landscape, it is worth outlining the role of specialist ethnic media for minority communities in the UK. There are now a range of specialist media targeting different ethnic groups in the UK, including television channels (e.g., Zee TV for the Asian community, Phoenix for the Chinese community), radio stations (e.g., Kiss and Galaxy which have strong black audiences, Sunrise among Asian people), newspapers and magazines (e.g., *The Voice* for the black community, *Sing Tao* for Chinese people, *Garavi Gujarat* for Indians and the *Daily Jang* for Pakistanis).

Specialist media fulfil a range of roles not met by mainstream channels, providing:

- **News from people's countries of origin**, often relating to political issues;
- **International news**, where specialist stations were thought to provide a broader range of news and a less UK-centred approach;
- News about the **communities in the UK**, such as local events, festivals, achievements and social issues;
- **Entertainment** from people's countries of origin, such as films, music, dramas and comedies – these provided a reminder of home and a feeling of “ethnic closeness” for some people;
- **Programming in people's own language**, valuable for those who spoke little or no English and also for younger people trying to learn their Mother Tongue;
- **Religious and cultural programming**, of interest to older people and of education value for younger people and children.

I usually have to [watch Chinese Channel] 'cos [my mum] wants me to learn Chinese and she thinks it's a good way of learning. She forces me but half the time I just go off and do my own thing. It depends - some of it's good and some of it is boring, you've seen it all before anyway. It's always the same things like, oh - love stories or whatever - fighting, you know?
Teenage British Chinese girl

Most of the programmes on Zee TV are serials. My children laugh at me and can't understand why I like watching sob stories. I like these programmes because they reflect what is really going on in our culture.

Indian pensioner

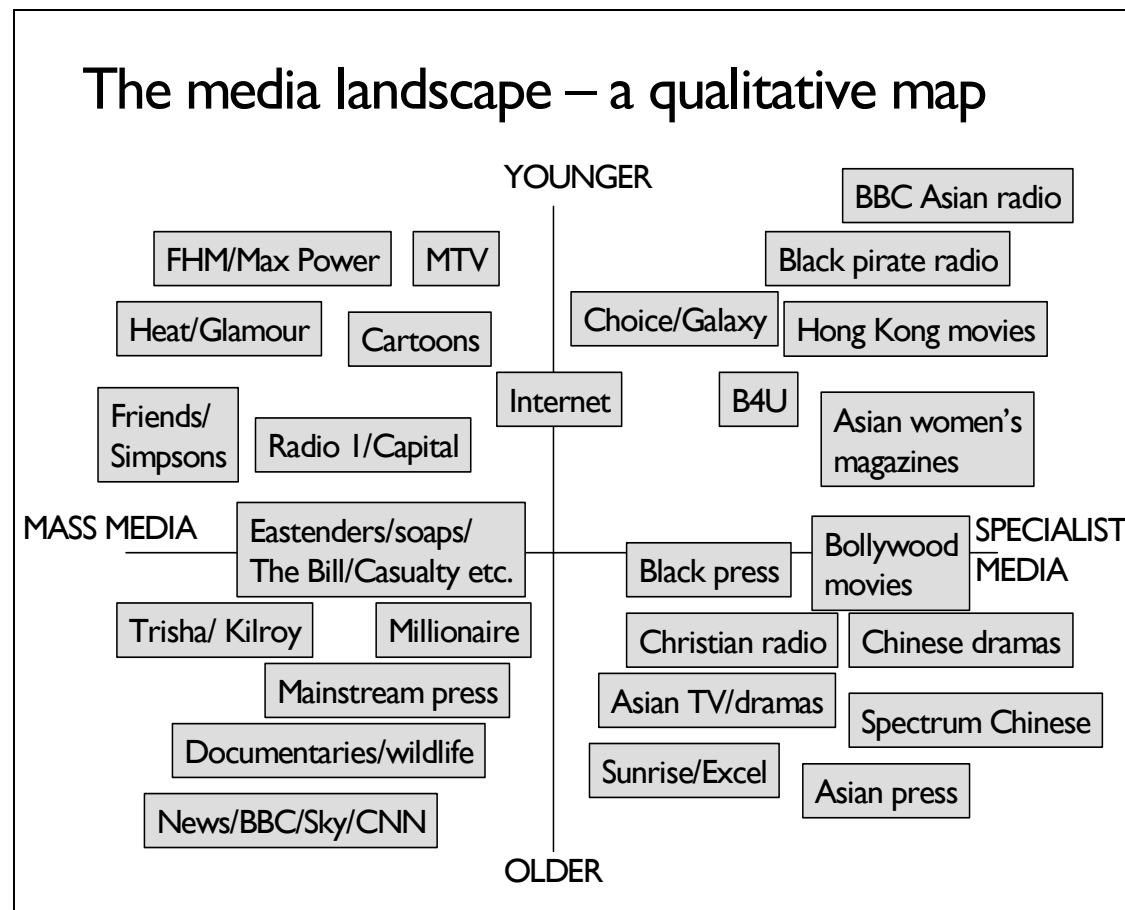
By way of illustration, we present below the main media targeting the Chinese communities in the UK.

Chinese media in the UK

- **TVB Chinese Channel** – European subsidiary of a Hong Kong-based television network, broadcasting mainly programmes from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Programmes include news, dramas, comedies, films, and educational programmes in Cantonese and Mandarin.
- **Phoenix TV** – a Hong Kong-based television network broadcasting in Mandarin, offering films, music, drama, news and lifestyle programmes.
- **Spectrum Radio** – a London-based radio station with two Chinese programmes, one in the early evening and one late at night. Broadcasts in Cantonese and Mandarin.
- **Sing Tao** – Chinese newspaper available in UK, part of Sing Tao Newspaper Group.
- **Zone East** – A Chinese monthly current affairs and entertainment magazine.

The above only includes the media mentioned by respondents – not an exhaustive list.

We explore below the range of communications opportunities offered by this media proliferation, and suggest how different media relate to the different states of identity outlined at the beginning of our paper. We do this through qualitative map of the media landscape outlined below. This impressionistic map represents the communications opportunities open to information providers and the likely target audiences which each will access. It is not intended to be an exhaustive representation of all media opportunities nor a quantitative depiction of the profile of each media. Rather, it indicates the contours of the media landscape and the relationships between different media. The map is divided by a horizontal axis, representing a division between mainstream and specialist media, and a vertical axis, dividing younger and older generations.



Starting in the top left hand quadrant, these are the media which access the younger generation within ethnic minority communities and which are also popular among white young people. In effect, this represents a shared youth culture. Specialist interest magazines for young men and young women, music television, popular comedies, mainstream radio stations and TV soaps are all found in this quadrant. When consuming media in this area, young people from ethnic minority communities are likely to identify less strongly as black, Asian or Chinese, and more as members of a single, multi-cultural youth culture. When targeting young people through these media, advertisers can certainly benefit from including positive images of ethnic minority young people, but it may not be necessary to have specific ethnic strategies or messages. Indeed, such approaches may even be rejected in these contexts.

Moving to the top right hand quadrant, these are specialist ethnic media that are consumed by the younger generation more so than by their parents. In this quadrant, young people identify as members of an ethnic group but also specifically as the younger generation. Black urban music stations, pirate radio and some BBC Asian radio stations are found in this quadrant. These often have British born presenters discussing topical issues, as well as playing music that appeals more to the younger generation. These are the media which reflect the hybrid identities of young people discussed above. Also in this quadrant are media related to British Asian culture and Hong Kong youth culture, including Asian fashion magazines and Hong Kong films and celebrities.. When targeting through media in this area, advertisers need to be

very aware of both ethnic and generational identities in order to strike the right note, and purely mainstream strategies might jar in this context.

In the lower right hand quadrant we have media which appeal to the older generation of ethnic minority communities but which have less relevance to young people. In many cases, these media broadcast in Mother Tongue and therefore can be less accessible to younger, British born people. Firstly, the black press, Bollywood movies and, to a lesser extent, Chinese dramas, appeal to younger and older generations, hence their middle position. Lower down in this quadrant are those media which appeal more strongly to the older generation – Asian dramas, press, and religious radio, as well as Christian radio for the black communities. In these contexts, people are likely to identify strongly with their ethnic or cultural heritage, and to see themselves as members of an ethnic community. Thus, these media are suitable for messages targeting the whole family, or for issues that affect the entire community. In these contexts, specific ethnic executions and messages are likely to be most effective, and indeed executions that are not congruent with people's sense of ethnic identity may be rejected.

Finally, the lower left hand quadrant indicates programmes which are mass media and which are preferred by the older generation. In the middle of this side we have the soaps, quiz shows and dramas that are watched by the whole family, and lower down we have documentaries and news programmes which are favoured by the parental generation. In these contexts, the whole family may be watching mainstream programming and may see themselves as members of the mainstream UK population. This is the context in which people are most likely to consider themselves “the same as everyone else.” Thus, explicit ethnic strategies or executions might appear out of place in these contexts. However, people from minority communities certainly do notice Asian, Black or Chinese characters in mainstream programming, and so in this quadrant advertisers could stand out by including positive, surprising representations of ethnic minority people.

Thus, there is a range of media opportunities for communicating with people from ethnic minority groups, including mainstream and specialist channels. They appeal to different sectors of the community, and also relate to the different sense of ethnic identity that any one person may have at different points in time. Advertisers and marketers need to understand this relationship between media channels, ethnic identity and cultural change. A clear understanding of this relationship can provide valuable guidance on the most effective marketing messages, media channels, and creative executions. Do marketers want to follow the crowd, merely reflecting the status quo? Or do they want to identify what is new and emerging in diverse communities, and position themselves at the forefront of these changes? The remainder of our paper considers these questions.

Section three - implications and recommendations

Should the media be reflecting or driving social change?

Commentators have long been divided on whether the media is a force for social change or whether it simply reflects social trends which are already in evidence. The truth is probably a little of both. As well as informing and entertaining us, the media

can provoke debate, illustrate moral lessons, inspire new ways of thinking and shed light on cultural, political, environmental and social issues. The media also has the power to create positive role models for people to aspire to.

Yet, when we discuss the media with ethnic minorities, we invariably find that their views of how they are represented are more negative than positive. They complain that the portrayal of ethnic minority communities in the media is often:

- Stereotypical
- Tokenistic
- One dimensional
- Not 'authentic' (meaning that fictional ethnic minority characters do not accurately reflect their cultural origins in the way they speak, what they eat, their interests, religion and so on).

There are undoubtedly more ethnic minorities on our TV screens compared to a decade or so ago. However, it is also true that, in many areas, the media does not reflect the multicultural reality of life in Britain. For example, while ethnic minorities form 8% of the British population overall, the proportion is much higher in major cities such as London, Birmingham and Manchester. So, while it might be realistic to include just one or two ethnic minority characters in a rural soap opera such as *Emmerdale*, one could reasonably expect *Coronation Street*, which is set in the Manchester area, to include more than a sprinkling of Asian and Black characters.

While many in the Common Good research felt that the use of ethnic minorities in mainstream programming and advertising was becoming more widespread, there was less certainty about the quality of the portrayals.

Respondents were often critical of ethnic minority characters appearing in isolation i.e. with no family or friends around them from the same cultural background. Examples would include Nita from *Eastenders* and Sunita from *Coronation Street*. The scriptwriters explained their 'isolation' by saying that both were estranged from their families.

People also felt that ethnic minority characters were generally not as well developed as white characters. People wanted ethnic minority characters to be "fleshed out" and therefore someone that they could relate to.

One consequence of having a single ethnic minority character in a programme or advertising campaign, is that the particular individual may be taken to represent an entire community. Ethnic minorities are as diverse as white British people. Thus, the same character who is a positive portrayal for one person is unrealistic and tokenistic to another. For example, in other work we have carried out, we found that some black people considered Dr Trueman (from *Eastenders*) to be a positive role model for black men because of his professional status and well spoken, polite manner, while other black people complained that his character was "a wimp". Similarly, *The Cosby Show* was an enormously successful show in America and around the world, featuring an upper middle class black family where the father was an obstetrician and the mother was a lawyer. While many black people loved the

show's aspirational and appealing characters and positive portrayal of black family life, others criticised its lack of "authenticity" and its failure to comment on social issues such as racism and poverty.

We feel that much of this could be solved by having a wider range and balance of representations. In other words, if ethnic minorities were more used to seeing themselves portrayed in greater numbers and in all walks of life, then it is likely that individual portrayals would be less harshly judged.

In the Common Good research, we also found that issues of representation differed by community.

Chinese people felt that they were virtually invisible in mainstream advertising, except when they were required for a stereotypical role involving Kung Fu. Similarly, there are no Chinese characters in any of the major British soaps or drama series. Contrast this with American TV, where Lucy Liu became a star playing the lawyer Ling Woo in *Ally McBeal* and Ming-Na stars as Dr Jing-Mei Chen in the medical drama *ER*. From the range of ads we used as stimulus, many of the Chinese respondents liked an ad for Glade Air Freshener featuring a Chinese boy and his mother because they said it made a refreshing change to see a Chinese person in an ad where their ethnicity was not an issue.

Asian people generally described the representation of Asians in the media as limited but gradually improving. They were aware of more Asian characters appearing in comedies and soaps – such as *The Kumars at No 42*, the Ferreira family in *Eastenders* and Sunita and Dev in *Coronation Street*. However, they said it was still not the norm to see an Asian person in a mainstream advert. Indeed, many felt that Asian characters were only used when the role required an Asian person – for example, if the product were stereotypically "ethnic" such as spice or curries. Therefore, similar to the Chinese, Asian people felt they were rarely shown in 'neutral' roles which were unrelated to their ethnic identity, such as a teenager, mother or commuter. One exception was a recent ad for ASDA, featuring a young Asian mother with a newborn baby, talking about the challenges of being a new mum.

Black characters were considered to be a relatively normal presence in advertising nowadays, both by black people and people from other communities. However, black characters were almost exclusively of Black Caribbean origin, with black African characters rarely represented in the mainstream. Black people wanted to see a broader range of roles for black characters, to include, for example, more images of black family men and black professionals. The BBC drama series, *Babyfather*, (which follows the lives of four black men from South London and their families) was seen by some as a step in the right direction. Other than this, black respondents often looked to American TV for positive role models and for positive images of black family life. Shows such as *Moesha* and *My Wife & Kids*, which are shown on satellite TV channels such as Trouble in Britain, were frequently mentioned.

Thus, ethnic minorities felt they rarely saw themselves represented in a positive way in the mainstream. They wanted marketers and advertisers to move beyond

stereotypes and produce programmes and campaigns in which ethnic minorities are shown as 'normal' members of society.

They called for the media to:

- Reflect the range of ethnic minority cultures in Britain
- Feature appealing and positive role models from ethnic minority communities
- Portray ethnic minorities as 'ordinary' consumers, parents, motorists etc.
- Integrate ethnic minority characters with white characters (except where messages or issues were specifically targeted at a particular ethnic group)
- And, make appropriate use of cultural reference points to bring portrayals of ethnic minority culture to life, such as food, language, customs or family relationships.

Inspiring change

As mentioned earlier, this research was designed to support more effective communication between government departments and ethnic minority audiences. With this in mind, a number of steps have been taken in disseminating the research to encourage COI's clients to make practical use of the findings.

These include:

- **Themed seminars** – the Common Good project is extensive in terms of both breadth and depth of coverage and might therefore have been difficult for clients to digest if presented in its entirety. Therefore, COI decided to run a short series of client seminars to present parts of the data in a focused and easily digestible format. The seminars covered youth audiences, elders and media and creative development strategies (as these themes were felt to be most relevant to government communicators). The seminars involved a presentation from the researchers involved in the project, and an open discussion and Q&A session.
- **Workshops** – during which the agency and COI researchers navigate clients through the wealth of data available. Each of the workshops has been tailored to clients' specific needs, with an emphasis on finding practical solutions and examining issues of particular importance to the client in depth.
- The development of a **Common Good website** – to ensure that the findings are widely accessible to all government departments and their agencies. The website is designed to encourage interrogation of the findings for planning purposes and to maintain the longevity of the research.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the results of ground breaking research into the identities, culture and media habits of ethnic minority communities in the UK. We have suggested a new analytical framework for the analysis of global culture, one which emphasises the movements of people and culture between nodes in the global

network. We show the value of exploring these movements in the ethnoscape, ideoscape and mediascape. Through an analysis of these specific cultural flows, marketers can gain a better understanding of people's shifting, complex identities, of the cultural references which are meaningful to them, and of the media opportunities which resonate with these different identities.

The six key messages which we would like marketers from both the private and public sectors to take away from this paper are:

1. Ethnic minorities notice when their communities are represented in the mainstream and appreciate when this is done accurately and well. Multicultural approaches can cut through the media noise as black, Asian and Chinese people do pay attention when they see interesting characters from their own ethnic backgrounds
2. People do not want ethnic minority characters to be presented exclusively as a source of humorous stereotypes. Instead, they want to see a wide range of realistic and credible ethnic minority characters playing "normal", mainstream roles.
3. The Black African and Chinese communities feel ignored by the mainstream media. There are opportunities to break new ground by introducing positive representations of African and Chinese culture into British programmes and advertising campaigns.
4. People want ethnic minority characters to be credible and recognisable in terms of their ethnic and cultural identity, but not stereotypically "ethnic". In advertising, cultural references can enhance the salience and recall of campaigns if they are executed with accuracy and affection.
5. Multicultural communications and marketing approaches are preferred by young ethnic minorities, reflecting the reality of their lives and identities and their aspirations for the future.
6. Media opportunities can be matched with the shifting identities of these diverse communities, to ensure the best fit between the media, the message and the creative execution.

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