A content analytic approach to services advertising in India

Aditi Naidu*, Symbiosis Centre for Management and Human Resource Development, India
(aditi_naidu@scmhrd.edu; aditinaidu74@yahoo.co.in)
Jagdish Bhagwat**, Jaipuria Institute of Management, India
Priyanka Mokshmar***, Acropolis Faculty of Management and Research, India

Abstract

This study attempts to gauge the extent to which services advertisements in Indian magazines differ in terms of advertising styles and types of service. The findings suggest that services advertising styles differ across the service types considered, while the 'documentation' style or informative advertisements are predominant. The study concludes by offering managerial guidelines in terms of services advertising insights, especially to international services providers wishing to enter or expand in India.

Keywords: services advertising, India, content analysis, services advertising styles, service types

Aditi Naidu* is Assistant Professor of Marketing with more than a decade's experience in teaching and research. Her major teaching and research interests include marketing, service marketing and marketing communications. She has various publications in international journals and conference proceedings.

Jagdish Bhagwat** is Assistant Professor with over 15 years of teaching and research experience. His major teaching and research areas are in the area of branding and marketing research.

Priyanka Mokshmar*** is Associate Professor and entrepreneur who has introduced low priced air cooling products in tier 2 cities of India.

0. Introduction

The services sector has been growing at a phenomenal rate globally. The 2011 World Development Indicators showed that the services sector accounted for almost 71% of the global GDP in 2010 and is expanding at a quicker rate than agriculture and manufacturing (unctad.org). The growth of the services sector is apparent in established, as well as in emerging economies (Zeithaml et al. 2011). Indeed, in India – a major emerging economy- according to the Services Sectoral Report (2018), the services sector is a key driver of the country's economy, contributing an estimated 54% of India's Gross Added Value for the period 2017-18. In 2014, India's services sector registered a growth of 10.3% which was higher than China at 8% (www.business-standard.com).

In light of business services' global expansion, there is a pressing need for developing international services advertising research (Stafford 2005; Mortimer and Grierson 2010). Indeed, India has been witnessing a large number of international services providers, such as global retailers, foreign banks, international hotel chains entering the local market (economictimes.com; businesstoday.in) or reported as planning to do so- such as foreign universities (livemint.com), as well as international players in the hospitality sector (economictimes.com). These developments clearly indicate a need for a study that develops an understanding of international services advertising (Mortimer and Grierson 2010) in the ambit of India, in terms of stylistic orientation and type.

Additionally, Stafford et al. (2011) reported that services advertising research has stalled. While the topic has attracted some attention since then, particularly in the area of public services (e.g. Kelly et al. 2010; Berros and Pastor 2013; Nan, Futerfas and Ma 2017), Berros and Pastor (2013) suggest that public and commercial services advertising differ in format and objectives. Particularly, the examination of design guidelines in commercial services advertising requires further development. Furthermore, except for a few studies (e.g. Keshari, Jain and Jain 2012; Utkarsh, Maurya and Medhavi 2016; Naidu and Attri 2018), the topic is sparsely addressed in India. Research in the context of India is also required in light of the country's cultural uniqueness, thus accounting for the potential comparison of findings from prior studies with culturally specific contexts. Kanso and Kitchen (2004), in fact, claim that due to personal involvement, cultural influences may be stronger in services.

Moreover, apart from culture, the level of a country's economic development has been considered, with a focus on the applicability of services advertising guidelines. Although such guidelines have been offered (Clark and Rajaratnam 1996), they have not yet been put to practice.

Bang and Moon (2002) conducted a content analytic study in order to identify the extent to which advertising guidelines, as proposed in the services marketing literature, are followed in US and Korean services advertisements. As hypothesized, the study found that more developed economies, such as the US, used more of the services advertising guidelines than newly developed services economies, such as Korea. India is described as an emerging economy where a similar examination of the utilization of services advertising guidelines-particularly those proposed by Berry and Clark (1986) - would help obtain a comparative outlook. Given the strong position of South Asia in global markets (Harper and Sriram 2012), Indian focused research has its rightful merit.

Using content analysis, this study makes certain key contributions. First, the study advances research in the services advertising field by focusing on how services are advertised in a context that is culturally different from those where such studies have mostly been carried out. Particularly, this study demonstrates whether and how services advertising differs by service type. Second, with international services providers entering India to establish and grow their organisations, this study highlights managerial implications as to how to market services in India. Thirdly, what may be considered as a social contribution: the study's findings may allow services providers in India to manage their advertising more efficiently, in terms of optimal utilization of marketing resources, thus reducing waste in a trial and error approach.

1. Literature review and development of hypotheses

1.1 Specific guidelines for advertising services

That services advertising differs from advertising of goods has been well supported for long in the literature (Stafford 1996), leading to the proposition that services advertising message design requires unique planning and execution considerations.

For instance, early proponents Hill and Gandhi (1992) argue that the unique aspects of services including intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability require special creative approaches. Similar challenges in advertising services have been repeatedly reported (Holford and Yam 2003). Regularly mentioned guidelines for advertising services include: displaying the physical elements of the service; employing explicit language to make the service tangible; featuring service employees; advertising to the employees; presenting the service as a sequence of acts for better comprehension and using a logo for pictorial representation of the nature of the service (George and Berry 1981; Legg and Baker 1987; Hill and Gandhi 1992).

Particularly in this study, the implementation of three unique services advertising strategies was considered: physical representation, documentation and visualisation, as

proposed by Berry and Clark (1986). These three styles were selected since the bulk of prior research has been undertaken on these grounds, while allowing for comparisons to be made in this study.

1.2 Conceptualisation of the three services advertising styles

a. Visualisation: Proposed by Berry and Clark (1986), visualization primarily involves a depiction of an individual or a group of individuals using a service and enjoying its benefits (Utkarsh, Maurya and Medhavi 2016); a strategy whereby the communication "evokes in the minds of the customers a sense of experiencing the service itself" (Bang and Moon 2002: 450), involving a vivid, mental picture of the service benefits or qualities; a style that involves visuals of customers consuming the core, intangible benefit of the particular service, as well as the use of vivid words to deliver a concrete mental picture of the service provider's primary benefits or qualities; examples including customers enjoying themselves, dancing and dining on a cruise ship (Mittal 1999; Hill et al. 2004; Stafford and Stafford 2001).

b. Physical representation: Involves the depiction of physical service elements that are used directly or indirectly in its provision (Utkarsh, Maurya and Medhavi 2016), as well as the presentation of tangible elements that are directly or peripherally part of the service, such as employees, furnishing, equipment, building, interiors in order to create a favourable perception of service quality (Mittal 1999; Stafford and Stafford 2001; Hill et al. 2004).

c. Documentation: A services advertising style where objective data, factual information, and figures related to the service provider's performance or the service delivery system are used to demonstrate the benefits, values and quality of the service provider (Mittal 1999; Hill et al. 2004); a strategy involving concrete information that augments service credibility (Bang and Moon 2002); specifically involving the presentation of statistics and facts, as well as comparative informational content (Utkarsh, Maurya and Medhavi 2016).

1.3 Types of services: The context of services advertising

The impact of service type on services advertising development has garnered significant attention among scholars: the main thesis is that services advertising research becomes more relevant when characteristics of services are considered (Hill and Gandhi 1992; Mortimer 2000; Mortimer 2001).

Advertising strategies may differ by service type. Studies have examined this issue by comparing advertising strategies of business-to-business services with business-to-consumer services (Utkarsh, Maurya and Medhavi 2016). Naidu and Attri (2018) contend that whereas services have been classified in a number of ways, services advertising

research has primarily adopted Stafford and Day's (1995) experiential-utilitarian categories (Albers-Miller and Stafford 1999).

1.4 Conceptualisation of services typology

a. Experiential services: They have been described as those that are targeted to people (Albers-Miller and Stafford 1999) instead of objects; as involving higher levels of employee contact; characterized by personal and individual attitudes, similar to value expressive services (Johar and Sirgy 1991; Stafford and Day 1995; Albers-Miller and Stafford 1999).

b. Utilitarian services: They include services that are targeted to objects rather than people; they are characterized by a lower degree of contact and customization (Albers-Miller 1999) and are rational and functional in nature (Johar and Sirgy 1991; Stafford and Day 1995; Albers-Miller and Stafford 1999). Albers-Miller and Stafford (1999) associate utilitarian services with rationality and functionality in nature and consumption (Naidu and Attri 2018). Telecoms, credit cards, insurance, oil-change have been provided as examples of utilitarian services in the extant literature, whereas hotels, holidays, airlines and hairstyling as examples of experiential services (Mortimer 2001; Albers-Miller and Stafford 1999; Stafford 1996).

1.5 Effectiveness of services advertising execution styles

Previous studies have identified two schools of thought as regards the effectiveness of services advertising styles: the one school suggests that one particular advertising style is effective across services in general, whereas the other that effectiveness varies by service type.

For instance, visualisation in the form of narratives has been found to be effective in services in general (Matilla 2000; Hill et al. 2004). Additionally, transformational advertising, similar to visualisation, has been proposed to be more suited to services in general (Mortimer 2008). Additionally, Décaudin and Lacoste (2016) revealed that the portrayal of customers – an element of visualisation - improves advertising effectiveness for both utilitarian and hedonic services, since it allows customers to relate to the advertised service.

Contradicting the favourable reports on visualisation, documentation has been found to be more effective in services in terms of measures such as positive attitude towards the ad, superior attitude towards the service provider, recall, as well as positive cognitive responses (Stafford et al. 1995, 1996, 2001).

Other conflicting studies have found physical representation to be more effective in the case of services in general, as it provides cues that allow customers to associate the service with something tangible (Mortimer 2008), thereby facilitating customers' service evaluation prior to purchase (Shostack 1977).

However, an opposing set of studies have established that services advertising effectiveness depends on the experiential service type, as against the utilitarian one. The matching concept suggests that appeal-rational or emotional- must match product type, in which case rational appeals correspond to utilitarian products whereas emotional appeals to experiential ones. The matching concept has had its proponents (Vaughn 1986; Johar and Sirgy 1991), as well as opponents (Laksey, Fox and Crask 1995). Hill et al. (2004) found visualisation to be effective for both experiential and utilitarian services, but documentation only in the case of experiential services. Additionally, Zhang et al. (2014) found that emotional advertising appeal led to a higher purchase intention in the experiential service type whereas a rational appeal generated higher purchase intention in the utilitarian service type. Supporting the contingency approach, effectiveness of advertisements in terms of brand attitude and purchase intention in services has been reported to depend on the type of services: hedonic/utilitarian and high/low involvement (Banks and Pelsmacker 2014).

Furthermore, rational appeals have been approached as being akin to the documentation strategy (Hill et al. 2004), while parallels have been drawn between emotional appeals and transformational advertising. In a similar fashion, transformational advertising has been found to be akin to visualisation (Mortimer 2008) which may be considered as a deployment of emotional appeals. Therefore, it may be claimed, as per the matching concept, that emotional appeals/visualisation are suited for experiential services whereas rational appeals/documentation for utilitarian services.

The second stream of services advertising research adopts a contingent approach: the choice of services advertising execution style depends on the type of service, i.e. whether it is experiential or utilitarian.

Two argumentative avenues emerge from the above discussion: one that supports a particular services advertising style and recommends the execution of that style irrespective of service type; and another that adopts the contingency approach whereby the effectiveness of the execution style depends on service type. Since one of the major questions this study examines is whether services advertising execution styles-visualisation, documentation and physical representation- vary according to the type of service- experiential and utilitarian- this study subscribes to the contingency approach. It is accordingly hypothesized that:

H1: The utilisation of the three services advertising styles, Visualisation, Documentation and Physical Representation, varies significantly across the types of services, Experiential and Utilitarian.

1.6 Indian culture and services advertising

It has been well established that advertising varies in content across different cultures (Albers-Miller and Gelb 1996). Advertising messages that match the values of local cultures tend to be more persuasive and hence more effective than those that ignore them (Cho et al. 1999).

Hofstede's (1980) framework of national culture is one of the most cited and popular frameworks with specific cultural dimensions (Purohit and Simmers 2006). The model has been used extensively in cross-cultural studies, thereby allowing for comparisons (Mortimer and Geierson 2010). The cultural dimensions in Hofstede's model include individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity/femininity. The authors of this study selected Hofstede's (1980) cultural values of 'uncertainty avoidance' and 'masculinity' along with 'context' –a cultural dimension reported in prior studies (Cho et al. 1999)- since these cultural values were deemed to be particularly relevant for execution styles in services advertising.

The uncertainty avoidance dimension of cultural values (Hofstede 1980) designates the extent to which a society is risk averse or can tolerate environmental ambiguity (Singh, Zhao and Hu 2005). Hofstede (1980) put forth that societies scoring high on uncertainty avoidance display a preference for clear directions, instructions and rules or, in other words, a preference for higher degree of information (Singh, Zhao and Hu 2005). Banks and Pelsmacker (2014) claimed that customers' attitude towards ambiguity/certainty impacts effectiveness of services advertisements. Using the Value Survey Module (1994) developed by Hofstede, Christie et al. (2003) found that India scored considerably higher on uncertainty avoidance compared to the US. Therefore, Indian customers may be assumed to prefer a higher degree of information in services advertisements.

Additionally, contextuality is a cultural dimension often used to compare Asian cultures with Western ones (Cho et al. 1999). As per Hall (1976), a high context communication is a message wherein most of the information is either present in the physical context or internalised by a person, such that very little information is explicitly transmitted in the message whereas in low context messages most of the information is explicitly contained in the message. Accordingly, as per Lin (1993), advertisements reflecting low context are more informational than those in high context (Cho et al. 1999). As per Hall's theory of high/low context cultures, Nishimura, Nevgi and Tella (2008) argue that India is closer to a low context culture with certain high context cultural features; with Chella (2007) proposing that due to technology, travel and television, Indians are moving towards a low context culture. Furthermore, studies based in India have found information advertisements to be more effective in terms of purchase intentions than transformational advertisements in service settings (Dey et al. 2015; Keshari, Jain and Jain 2012).

The above indicate that the information content of services advertisements is important for Indian customers: when it comes to service purchase, the Indian customer seems to exhibit characteristics of a low context culture, thereby preferring advertisements where information needs to be explicitly embedded in the message (Hall 1976). Since Documentation style of services advertising is mostly informational in nature, we accordingly hypothesize:

H2: Services advertising in India utilises the Documentation execution style at a significantly higher rate, compared to the other two styles, viz. visualisation and physical representation.

A masculine culture values assertiveness, ambition, success and performance. This entails that 'big is beautiful' and a product's superior performance and capacity to achieve goals are highly valued (Singh, Zhao and Hu 2005). The Masculinity score for India, as reported by Hofstede (1980, 1991, 1993), is 56, close to that reported for the US (62). Other studies have identified India as a highly masculine culture (Christie et al. 2003).

With the Indian culture exhibiting higher masculinity wherein superior product performance is considered important, and with physical representation being a services advertising style that allows for service quality evaluations through the presentation of tangible elements associated with a service (Mortimer 2008), it is expected that physical representation will be frequently used in service advertisements in India.

H3: Physical representation services advertising style is utilized at a higher rate compared to the other two services advertising styles- visualisation and documentation.

In a nutshell, the present study addresses the following research objectives:

1. How are services in India advertised in terms of the three major services advertising styles as proposed by Berry and Clark (1986) – visualisation, documentation and physical representation?

2. Do these three advertising strategies vary by service type - experiential and utilitarian, and if so, how?

3. What is the influence of culture on the use of services advertising strategies in India?

2. Methodology

2.1 Content analysis

Similar to studies which have examined services advertising styles and appeals (Albers-Miller and Stafford 1999; Mortimer 2008; Utkarsh, Maurya and Medhavi 2016), a content analysis was carried out. Content analysis is a "scientific, objective, systematic, quantitative and generalizable description of communications content" (Kassarjian 1977: 10). Bang and Moon (2002) contend that content analyses of services advertisements have been extensively undertaken, primarily to explore appeals (Zinkhan, Johnson and Zinkhan 1992), information content (Abernethy and Butler 1992) and visual content (Cutler and Javalgi 1993). However, there is a lack of studies examining the extent to which services advertising guidelines have been followed by practitioners.

2.2 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used by considering services advertisements that were at least half a page long. Advertisements of services that appeared in two prominent Indian, general news and lifestyle magazines were featured: *India Today* and *Outlook* spanning the year 2013. The magazines' selection criteria consisted in not being targeted to a specific audience, as well as in the utilization of mixed appeals. The appeal orientation of magazines may have an impact on services advertising findings, as reported by Mortimer and Grierson (2010). For instance, Bang et al. (2004) found that rational appeals prevailed in a study that comprised business and professional magazines.

The sample size consisted of 131 advertisements, in line with similar sample sizes employed in the extant literature (cf. Gremler 2004). Advertisements spanning a wide range of services were considered, including airlines, banking, hotels, couriers, education, health care, financial services, consultancies.

2.3 Coding scheme and categories

Two major categories were considered in the coding scheme, namely advertising style and type of service, as per our hypotheses development. The advertising style category included the three subcategories of visualization, physical representation and documentation. The type of service category included the two subcategories of utilitarian and experiential.

The coding process was carried out by two of the authors, and consisted in identifying, first, the type of service of each advertisement, and then in segmenting them according to advertising style(s).

To ensure consistency in the coding process we employed a code-book including detailed 'Field and Code notes' (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Where more than one advertising

execution styles was noted, all were recorded. For styles that could not be subsumed under the categories of Visualisation, Physical Representation or Documentation, the execution style was coded as 'Other'.

2.4 Intercoder Reliability

The reliability of the coded output was determined via intercoder reliability: the degree to which two or more coders agree that a given observation should be classified (coded) in a particular way. A widely used reliability statistic in content analysis- the coefficient of reliability- was used which designates the total number of agreements divided by the total number of coding decisions (Gremler 2004).

2.5 Hypothesis testing

To address our hypotheses, the data were tabulated into frequencies and percentages. Then, they were subjected to a Chi-Square of independence test, in line with previous research (e.g. Albers-Miller and Stafford 1999; Grove, Carlson and Dorsch 2002; Bang and Moon 2002; Uttkarsh, Maurya and Medhavi 2016).

3. Main findings

The intercoder reliability score was found to be 81.2%. Whereas Kassarjian (1977) proposed an 85% threshold value for intercoder agreement, Gremler (2004) suggested that 80% is sufficient. Differences were resolved through discussion and mutual agreement. Advertisements for which agreement could not be reached were discarded from the final sample. This resulted in a total sample of 131 service advertisements, out of which 71 belonged to the experiential services type, whereas 60 to the utilitarian one.

With a number of advertisements using multiple styles, it was found that the incidence of services advertising styles (units of analysis) was higher than the number of advertisements that made up our sample (sampling units). Some advertisements were found to be using all three styles. Service advertisement styles occurred 248 times, out of which the three focal styles occurred 237 times. The remaining 11 were styles that did not match the conceptualisation of the three services advertising execution styles of interest, and were subsequently coded as 'others'.

In the 71 experiential services ads that were part of this study, visualisation was observed 25 times, documentation 59 times and physical representation 55 times (see Table 1). Among the 60 utilitarian services ads, visualisation was observed 36 times, documentation 56 times and physical representation six times.

Table 1. Incidence of services advertising styles by service type (frequencies)

	Visualisation	Documentation	Physical Representation	Total
Experiential	25	59	55	139
Utilitarian	36	56	6	98
Total	61	115	61	237

Upon testing for independence, a chi-square statistic of 35.38 was yielded (p<0.05), much higher than the critical value. The SPSS output is presented in Table 2. This entails that execution styles vary significantly by service type, leading to the acceptance of H1.

Table 2. Utilisation of the three services advertising styles across service types

Table 2 (a) Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Service Type * Ad Type	237	100.0%	0	0.0%	237	100.0%

Table 2 (b) Service Type * Ad Type Crosstabulation

			Ad Type			Total
			D	PR	V	
Service Type	Experiential	Count	59	55	25	139
		Expected Count	67.4	35.8	35.8	139.0
	Utilitarian	Count	56	6	36	98
		Expected Count	47.6	25.2	25.2	98.0
Total		Count	115	61	61	237
		Expected Count	115.0	61.0	61.0	237.0

Table 2 (c)Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	**35.389[a]**	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	40.289	2	.000
N of Valid Cases	237		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 25.22.

Overall, documentation was found to occur in 87% of the advertising executions, while physical representation and visualisation combined occurred in 46.5% of the total sample. Clearly, documentation is utilized at a much higher rate compared to the other two services advertising execution styles, thus confirming H2.

The comparison of services advertising styles (two at a time) across the two types of services at a 5% significance level yielded a chi-square statistic of 1.7 (Table 3), lower than the critical value, indicating that these two styles do not vary significantly across the two types of services.

Table 3. Comparison of utilisation of visualisation vs. documentation

Table 3 (a): Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Service Type * Ad Type	176	100.0%	0	0.0%	176	100.0%

Table 3 (b) Service Type * Ad Type Crosstabulation

			Ad Type		Total
			D	V	
Service Type	Experiential	Count	59	25	84
		Expected Count	54.9	29.1	84.0
	Utilitarian	Count	56	36	92
		Expected Count	60.1	31.9	92.0
Total		Count	115	61	176
		Expected Count	115.0	61.0	176.0

Table 3 (c): Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	**1.702**[a]	1	.192		
Continuity Correction[b]	1.313	1	.252		
Likelihood Ratio	1.709	1	.191		
Fisher's Exact Test				.208	.126
N of Valid Cases	176				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 29.11.

b. Computed for a 2x2 table

Comparing documentation and physical representation across the two service types, at a confidence level of 95%, the chi-square statistic was found to be 26.37, higher than the critical value. This means that the incidence of documentation is significantly higher than physical representation in our sample (Table 4).

Table 4. Utilisation of Documentation vs. Physical Representation across service types

Table 4 (a)Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Service Type * Ad Type	176	100.0%	0	0.0%	176	100.0%

Table 4 (b)Service Type * Ad Type Crosstabulation

			Ad Type		Total
			D	PR	
Service Type	Experiential	Count	59	55	114
		Expected Count	74.5	39.5	114.0
	Utilitarian	Count	56	6	62
		Expected Count	40.5	21.5	62.0
Total		Count	115	61	176
		Expected Count	115.0	61.0	176.0

Table 4 (c) Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	**26.378[a]**	1	.000		
Continuity Correction[b]	24.702	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	29.828	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
N of Valid Cases	176				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 21.49.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Hypothesis H3 which assumed that with India being recognised as a culture high in masculinity, physical representation would be highly utilised in services advertising, was partially supported. Physical representation was found to have a higher incidence compared to both visualisation and documentation in experiential services as compared to utilitarian services. Visualisation was encountered in 25.7% of the total sample. Although no significant differences were found in the utilization of visualization and documentation across

the two types of services, visualisation was found to be utilized at a significantly higher rate than physical representation in utilitarian services.

Finally, the service sectors considered in the study –airlines, higher education, financial services, travel, hospitality- were found to be using different combinations of the three major services advertising strategies. This implies that different service sectors use distinct advertising styles. For instance, as may be gauged from Table 5, Documentation is used mostly by financial services (mutual funds, insurance), followed by higher education, while being least used by airlines. Visualisation is also used mostly by financial services and banking services, of which many use a combination of 14isualization and documentation. Physical representation is used mostly by higher education and tourism – the former represented by their campus, buildings, and laboratories, while the latter by the physical sites of tourism (Table 5).

Table 5. Services advertising styles observed counts across sectors/industries

Service Sector/Industry	Visualisation	Documentation	Physical Representation
Airlines	3	8	8
Banking	11	15	2
Financial services	20	30	0
Higher Education	7	25	14
Tourism	9	7	14
\Hotels	2	10	10

4. Discussion of findings

The implementation of services advertising styles does vary across the two types of services, in affirmation of the matching concept (Vaughn 1986; Johar and Sirgy 1991; Hill et al. 2004). However, when two styles were considered at a time, it was found that documentation and visualisation did not vary by service type. Both experiential and utilitarian types utilize visualisation and documentation styles equally. Hill et al. (2004) had reported visualisation to be effective for both experiential and utilitarian services, while documentation for experiential, but not for utilitarian services. This suggests that visualisation can be used for both experiential and utilitarian services, however documentation should be used for experiential, rather than utilitarian services. Our study, however, counteracts this suggestion, as both visualisation and documentation were found to be utilized equally across the two service types.

Overall, amongst the three execution styles, documentation is most used, followed by physical representation and visualization. This finding supports Stafford's (1996) study where documentation was found to be more effective, and hence recommended for services in general. This finding also supports the assumption of this study that insofar as India scores high on Hofstede's (1980) uncertainty avoidance dimension, local advertising should be more information intensive. Additionally, this finding is aligned with Nishimura, Nevgi and Tella (2008) and Chella (2007) who found that Indians exhibit Hall's low context cultural characteristics. However, that documentation is highly utilized contradicts prior studies (Abernethy and Butler 1992; Abernethy et al. 1997; Mortimer 2000) which report that services use less information or documentation (Leong et al. 2018). Additionally, in another content analysis of service advertisements in major magazines in India, documentation was the most frequently used strategy, encountered in 66.4% of ads (Uttkarsh, Maurya and Medhavi 2016) which supports our claim that the Indian customer favours informative content in their service advertisements.

The partial support of H3 is similar to Holford and Yom (2003) who reported a lower utilization of elements of physical representation in a pharmacy service - which may be considered as utilitarian. Two interlinked reasons could underlie this finding: On the one hand, as shown by Hill et al. (2004), the level of customer involvement is higher for experiential compared to utilitarian services. On the other hand, as reported earlier, India scores highly on the masculinity cultural dimension which is concerned with performance. With customers having a higher involvement in experiential services, they may be more concerned with service quality: scholars report that service quality is manifested in the use of tangible peripherals to the focal service, i.e. physical representation. Another probable reason for the higher utilisation of physical representation in experiential services compared to utilitarian services might consist in the type of service: the experiential services that were examined in this study, such as tourism, hotels and entertainment resorts, are characterized by more tangible content than utilitarian services, such as mutual funds and insurance.

Moreover, that documentation occurs more in utilitarian services appears to be plausible since most of the utilitarian services examined in this study were financial. It may be the case that the Indian customer is more interested in higher levels of information to take decisions for financial services where s/he perceives higher risks. Documentation has been identified as a strategy that is intent on reducing perceived risks (Boshoff 2002). Stafford and Day (1995), too, posit that the provision of greater information reduces perceived risk in the purchase of services due to their intangibility, heterogeneity and variability.

5. Limitations and areas for future research

Since this is a content analysis, the study at hand constitutes a descriptive portrayal of the relative incidence of advertising types/styles, rather than an effectiveness one. Taylor et al. (1997) and Taylor and Stern (1997) point out that content analysis presents what is available and not what the customer prefers (Cho et al. 1999). As poignantly avowed by Stafford and Day (1995: 59), "content analyses are valuable for understanding current advertising strategies, but such investigations are predicated on the assumption that current strategies are effective." Further studies to examine whether what is found is also effective would be helpful in providing further explanations and implications for service providers. This could be achieved by examining variables such as purchase intention, attitude towards advertising, perceived quality, attitude towards the service provider and the likes as dependent variables, in the context of different executional styles across different service types. Furthermore, with advertising styles found to vary by service sector, further studies may be conducted with larger samples to examine this finding in a more representative context. Additionally, more developing countries which currently lack scholarly management attention have a high potential for research (Menon 2016) in this respect.

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