

## AIRAVATA MEETS DRUK: SYMPHONY A CASE STUDY PAPER ON CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND DRUK BRAND IDENTITY

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**Abstract:** Cross cultural communication generates guidelines with which people from different cultures can communicate better with each other. Organizational stories, symbols and rituals reveal an organizational belief which brings forth culture.

Firstly, direct experience is essential for gaining a better understanding of culture the author with his family stayed for two years in Paro valley, Bhutan. where he underwent a cultural shock upon his arrival in Bhutan and also a reverse culture shock on his return to the Indian sub-continent.

Second, to better understand culture we resort to a metaphor, an analogy from the sound of music- the seven notes of music, which when orchestrated create a virtual symphony. These seven musical notes- A, B, C, D, E, F and G are metaphors and are symbolically the constituents of culture.

The paper seeks to explore the business communication in the cross cultural context for the DRUK brand. DRUK is one of the very few brands marketed in India with origin from Bhutan. We can establish a logical link between brand and culture by adopting the Brand identity prism model, by Kapferer. The model has been used to understand the essence of DRUK brand.

**Key words:** Brand Prism, Communication, Cross culture, DRUK.

**Introduction:** Bhutan, the land of the thunder dragon, popularly referred to as the lost Shangri la, neighbouring India is a veritable Eden on earth. Consider the following facts and reflect for a moment, Paro, Bhutan is a steep valley, at an altitude of 2,250 meters or 7,382ft. It has the distinction of having the only international airport in Bhutan and therefore has strategic economic importance in linking Bhutan to the outside world. It is also in close proximity to Thimpu, the country's capital.

Bhutan is India's neighbouring, Himalayan kingdom has been known only to a few in the western world, till recently, but, still Bhutan retains much of its mystic charm, which takes the breath away quite literally (high altitude!). Buddhist traditions of meditation, solitude and self-denial attracted followers to remote mountains.

Tourism is an example of a sacred experience. People occupy sacred time and space when they travel on vacation. The desire of travelers to

capture these sacred experiences in objects the basis for the souvenir industry. "Reference [1] shows in addition to personal mementos, there are several common types of sacred souvenir icons".

- ❖ **Local products** (e.g., regional wine), Golden apples, plums, river fish- rainbow trout, asparagus, mushrooms
  - ❖ **Pictorial images** (e.g., postcards, photos of museums, monasteries), Kings Coronation
  - ❖ **Furniture**, Exquisite hand crafted paints made from natural dyes and yak butter
  - ❖ **Local cuisine** : Ima tashi, chillies in cheese with red rice
  - ❖ **Literal representations** coins of copper
  - ❖ **Music**-Stamps playable on record disc
- Source: Author compilation, Reference: Solomon 10e, Consumer Behavior

In many ways Bhutan still remains a land of contradictions, a country in transition from the old to the new.

**Mythology:** Our journey began from India to

the land of the thunder dragon, Bhutan, symbolically with Airavata, the white elephant of Lord Indira meeting DRUK, the Dragon; there was symphony in the air!

“Reference [2] shows mythology involves studying these stories, symbols and rituals (the codes) and decoding the underlying patterns of thought. It reveals that different communities think differently and so approach life differently”.

Airavata is the majestic white elephant of Indian mythology which is believed to control rains as it has the king of Gods, Lord Indra on its back. DRUK is the Thunder Dragon of Bhutanese mythology and the Bhutanese national symbol. It has its distinctive place on the Bhutanese national flag, DRUK is shown holding jewels to represent wealth. Both are ancient symbols denoting close linkages of Indian and Bhutanese culture with nature. References to rain and thunder are associated with the prime survival instinct of man sustain by the prime commodity, i.e. water which made agriculture possible during our long journey towards wealthier civilizations.

“When an Indian elephant rendezvous the Bhutanese Dragon, trumpets are greeted with thunder!”

That was the initiation of cross culture communication.

**Personal Experience:** We (my family) experienced culture shock for over two years, the reasons were pretty obvious: Bhutan’s national language is *Dzongkha*, the country is sparsely populated, national dress for the men is called *Kho* is like harris tweed, robe with long open sleeves up to the knees and the women is like a kimono or robe with upto the ankles called *kira*, with colourful patterns, religion is Buddhism, most people eat red rice, potatoes, green chillies, pork, fish and beef, the geographical terrain is hilly, the national sport archery, in the late 70’s and early 80’s travelling was mostly on mules. The country has long being marked with the

absence of television, and a political system supporting a long standing monarchy, one of the very few which have still exists in this modern era, but with a difference!

It is quite recent that his former majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck handed over considerable powers and this was Bhutan trust with democracy began. This transition towards democracy has been followed that Bhutan is unique (blessed?) due to the much flouted (Gross National Happiness, GNH) by the Bhutanese Govt. (yes, not the conventional Gross Domestic product as an indicator of the nation’s prosperity).

“Reference [3] shows that the happiness quotient is a farce as Bhutan stares at rising unemployment levels and low purchasing power as this traditionally agricultural country which now enters the new millennium.” Many Bhutanese, local population, are disillusioned by the Gross National Happiness, a popular misconception harboured by the outside world.

It matches with the Bhutan’s four pillar definition of Gross National Happiness.

We would attempt to include the Music symphony metaphor model with Richard *Barrett had developed the seven level of consciousness (synthesis) model involving a hierarchy of values for cultural transformation in organizations and nations.*

We endeavour to look at how people from differing cultural background endeavour to communicate.

Classically, to understand culture better we resort to a metaphor, “Reference [4] shows *images and metaphors are not only interpretive constructs or ways of seeing; they also provide frameworks for action. They create insights that often allow us to act in ways that we may not have thought possible before*”.

However, Morgan clarifies by ascertaining that metaphors are simply a way of discussing experience, they are not experiences themselves. Hence, their value is bound to be limited.

Mythology maybe perceived as a map of the mind, whereas management is looked upon as the manifestation of the mind.

“Culture is passed on via communication and communication reflects one’s culture”

Hall 2000

**Cultural Model-Music Metaphor:** We may take a lesson from the sound of music it is the seven notes of music, which when orchestrated

create a virtual symphony. Each note has its distinctive identity but it is the melody which creates memories and emotions. The seven major

notes A,B,C,D,E,F and the eighth note is the double of the first note. This is then matched with the Buddha’s Eight fold path as a “Synthesis model with Music Symphony metaphor”.

**Synthesis Model (Adapted with Music Symphony Metaphor)**

RELIGION	MOTIVATION	METAPHOR
<b>Buddha’s Eight fold path</b>	<b>Maslow Hierarchy of Needs</b>	<b>Music Symphony Model</b>
8. Right Meditation	Transcendence/Freedom	*A-Ascetic existence
7.Right Mindfulness	Identity	E-Ethics and morals
6.Right View	Creation	B-Beliefs, Behaviour
5.Right Effort	Idleness	F-Feelings
4.Right Concentration	Participation	C-Conduct
3.Right Speaking	Affection/Understanding	D-Dharma,Drama,Dance
2.Right Action	Protection	G-Group norms
1.Right Livelihood	Subsistence	#A-Agriculture-farming, fishing

www.corptools.com/Author concepts and Adaptation

“Reference [3] shows Hoesfede Culture Dimensions with respect to Bhutan,

1. Power distance score=94, signifies the degree people in societies are ready to accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification and rationale.
2. Individuality=52, as opposed to collectivism, a society's position on this dimension is reflected in whether people’s self-image is defined in terms of “I” or “we.”
3. Masculinity=32, Masculinity vs. femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Society at large is more consensus-oriented.
4. Uncertainty Avoidance =28, this expresses the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. Weak UA societies maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice

counts more than principles.”

**Significance:** Buddhism denied society, denied the body. It spoke of rebirth which did not make any pragmatic sense. It is when all thoughts are realized, or nirvana when all forms dissolve, the one to achieve this state was the Buddha.

It is in this geo-physical, socio-cultural and spiritual context that we need to explore the business cross culture communication for the FMCG brand, DRUK. Understanding the dynamics of ppsychic distance which refers to differences in language, culture and political system and disturb the flow between the firm and the market is critical for success in foreign countries.

1. **The Pasarol (Dug):**The authority of Buddha
2. **The Weave:**Eternity, No beginning, no end  
**The Golden fish:** Resurrection of eternal life, rebirth etc., the ability to swim with ease without obstruction in the ocean of this world.

3. **The Wheel:** dharma, eight spokes which stand for the eight fold path.
4. **The Treasure Pot ((Bhumpa):** Limitless material wealth, good health and long life
5. **The White Lotus:** Enlightenment, lotus comes out of dirt but does not carry any dirt.
6. **The Conch:** Right turning, reverberating sound of Dharma and signifies the awakening of sentiment begins from the sleeping state of their ignorance.
7. **The Banner of victory:** The fortune of having victory of good over the evil forces.

[www.bhutanfoundation.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=60&Itemid=67](http://www.bhutanfoundation.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=60&Itemid=67)

The Bhutanese eight auspicious symbols have special meaning which also form part of the DRUK logo.

The name 'DRUK' resonate an essence of purity. The brand of fruit products was launched in 1986 and opened up to the world market a huge reservoir of nature, packaged and presented to perfection. Manufactured by 'Bhutan Fruit Products Private Limited', a group company each single produce of DRUK has been acquired from the mountain slopes of Bhutan, nurtured by traditional eco-friendly agro management techniques.

We can establish a logical bind between the brand and culture is adopting the Brand identity prism model. Brands are thoughts embodied in things.

"Reference [4] shows-The Brand identity Prism takes multiple dimensions of brand into account (Kapferer 2000). It is comprehensive and acts as a strategic tool in brand communications, brand extensions and even while introducing the brand to new geographical areas".

This widely accepted model can be therefore be applied to understand the essence for the DRUK brand. DRUK is one of the more visible brands in India of Bhutan origin. It offers nature's bounty at value for money prices.

**Sales Performance:** DRUK in the past enjoyed 50% market share in juices and squashes before

the entry of the big MNC's like Hindustan Unilever, Nestle in India. But no longer! Even though, it is the brand which speaks for itself due to superior quality, the advertising expenditure is limited and the advent of strong competitors has eroded its market share. DRUK has been a prominent brand, particularly in the Eastern and North Eastern parts of India.

**The Indian Fruit Juices Market:** The per capita consumption of fruit juice-based beverage is 45 litre in Germany, 42.5 litre in Switzerland and 39 litre in the US. In India, the per capita consumption is just 20ml, which is negligible compared to other countries. Hence, there exists huge untapped potential in this segment.

Within the beverages market, the fruit-based beverages category is one of the fastest growing categories, and has grown at a CAGR of over 30% over the past decade. The fruit-based beverage market stands at Rs 5,000 corer and isFruit/vegetable juice segment is expected to grow at a CAGR of 30 per cent in value terms.

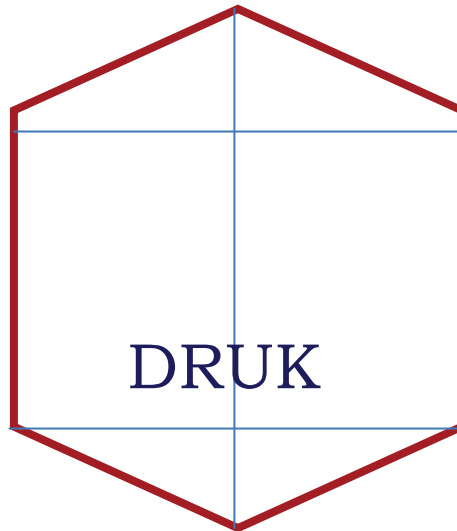
**Competition:** Dabur is the market leader in the Indian packaged juices market with its brands Real and Real Activ. It accounts for ~55% of the total packaged juices market, and is followed by PepsiCo with a ~30% share. Dabur Real, house of Dabur had launched in 2012 a comprehensive 360 degree campaign for which the brand for the first time using digital media in an extensive way by launching a dedicated website as well as activating its presence across social platforms- facebook and youtube. The value proposition is "Healthy is Happy" wherein the brand talks about providing health in a tastier format. Sonali Bendre, a former Bollywood actress is the Official Brand Ambassador.

Kissan is a leading brand from Hindustan Unilever and is DRUK's major competitor especially in ready to drink-squashes and jams. Using innovative marketing techniques Unilever has garnered significant share from DRUK.

**Physique:** Two dragons either side of 4 black and white alternating concentric circles having nine Bhutanese auspicious symbols, symmetric, colourful, relevant visual imagery on packaging.

**Relationship:** Heritage, Adventurous Inspiring, Caring

**Reflection:** Family, Taste and Health conscious, Experimental;



**Personality:** Mythical, A taste of Purity, Healthy, Nature's bounty, Inviting, Value for money

**Culture:** Bhutanese, Buddhist influence, Traditional

**Self-Image:** Packed /processed vegetables, fruits for the entire family, Price and Quality conscious, Value seeker

**DRUK Brand Identity Prism Elements:**

Author/s concepts, Source: 'Brand Identity Prism' by Jean-Noel Kapferer, The New Strategic Brand

**DRUK(food) family--Product Width**

Breakfast	Fruits and Veg	Kitchen foods	Beverages	Food Accompaniments
Cornflakes	ASPARAGUS	Sauces/Ketchup	Juices	Pickles
Marmalade	Sweet Corn	TAI sauces	Crushes	Speciality Pickles
Fruit Jams	Mushroom	Vinegar	Mango Panna	
		Table Sauces		

**Author constructs; Source: DRUK website**

**Marketing Strategy: Critical success factors:** In marketing of ready to drink beverages include: brand strength, distribution network, Bottling plants owned/efficient bottling, advertising expenditure, positioning, perceived value of product and visibility at retail locations. "Reference [5]-shows market characteristics for juices in particular is one of the fastest growing segments, seen as a replacement for carbonated soft drinks, CSD's Orange and Mango flavours liked the most, Health consciousness increasing, prefer no preservatives, sugar free versions, customers prefer to store them at home, over CSDs and

Milk based drinks, MBD's". **Handling competition via Trade Fairs** Sharland and Balogh (1996), "suggest that Trade Fairs, TF are not only a personal selling tool but an excellent environment for information exchange, IE. IE is quick, easy and cheap. TF thus offers time, place, transaction, cost utility to the international firm and its customers". **Conclusion:** The differences between cultures appear to be striking in the beginning and it is only with the passage of time that a gradual adaptation and acceptance happens! Experiencing and managing change in foreign countries has not been the easiest of tasks in

many organizations. Well, a lot can depend upon your perceptions of reality and your personality; you can call it cultural competence. Direct experience is essential for gaining a better understanding of culture.

The author was in a unique position to appreciate the emic-understanding or explanation of culture from within and etic-understanding or explanation of culture from outside, i.e. as a foreigner.

When people buy a brand, they are buying a thought or philosophy. Unless people are able to decode what the brand stands for, it will not have any value.

DRUK needs to further address that using the Brand Prism Identity model analysis provided along with Brand positioning.

#### **Recommendations and Suggestions:**

The following integrated marketing solutions are expected to increase market share in the short run while strengthening DRUK brand equity in the long run:

1. Emphasising and strengthening Country of Origin for positive effects.
2. Enhancing culture appreciation, exploring Bhutan for spiritual, romantic, getaway, and activity based tourism.
3. Brand personality enhancement measures using Celebrity endorsements.
4. Developing creative packaging designs and labelling initiatives, showcasing Bhutan, Nature, focusing on pristine beauty appeals.

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5. Getting Media attention by Public Relation activities- sponsoring a motor sports rally's in the Himalayan kingdom.
6. Building on Business to Business relationships by participating in International Trade fairs in Metros and Class A cities in India.
7. Organizing and managing cultural events- Dance, Drama, Movies initiated by the Bhutanese consulate/embassy.
8. Sales promotions strategies and tactics can include- write a slogan, "Why is DRUK different/special-----", organizing best mocktail contests, potential consumers using DRUK squashes and juices in strategic locations with grand prizes visit to Bhutan! (Tagline - a divine adventure awaits you)
9. Cobranding strategies, service of only DRUK juices (natural beverages category) in DRUK air, Bhutanese national airlines.
10. Star dessert chef competitions using DRUK products as key ingredients communicated using social media and uploading videos on youtube.com
11. DRUK adventure online games where stress on interaction, thrill and accumulation of points be exchanged for DRUK products.
12. New juice bottles made with packaging material that can be recycled, reused, regenerated and advertising campaign focusing with slogan-the drink that refreshes and revitalizes your health!

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