Receding Cultural Products: Expressing the Natives' Perspective

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Abstract:

Man is change oriented in nature and cultural change is all-time happening phenomenon as culture is not something static. Whereas every society has defined an extent to which other cultural patterns can affect and modify its patterns. Similarly this paper attempts to study the consumption change in cultural products by presenting an ethnographic case study of village Chakkaral District Gujrat, Pakistan. The objectives of the study include: to register the core cultural products of research area; to investigate the core factors that are playing important role in the receding cultural products in the research locale. Matching the objectives a sample of thirty female residents of the village with minimum age 30 from lower, middle and upper social class, was selected by using the stratified random sampling technique. Thirty in-depth interviews along three case-studies facilitated to collect the relevant qualitative data for the study. According to the results no product can be declared as totally receded from the locale as all the selected products were prevailing there with modifications in colors, designs, shapes and alternatives. Income level, role of media, education and technical advancement could be listed as core push factors towards replacement.

Key words: Cultural products, Replacement, Change, Alternatives

Introduction

Culture is not a static entity, it is dynamic in nature while every culture has defined an extent on which other cultural patterns can affect and modify its patterns. It can be said that the values attached to a behavior or practice determine the extent of change that can be adopted. The practices or behaviors that are highly valuable take more time to accept change and modification. Roxanne (2009) stated that Jamaicans were influenced by globalization and adopted the idea of fast food. Like KFC and other big chain restaurants available in almost all the cities of the world Jamaicans launched their own franchises serving indigenous food in them. Briefly, it can be concluded that changes were adopted by the residents of the area but keeping in view their cultural boundaries and patterns.

The level of adoption differs from individual to individual. The process of adaptation shows a person's level of value attachment associated with the product. As much as the individual is attached to the product, he is less likely to adopt the alternatives soon (Daghfous et al, 1999). While a contrast view on personal choice was observed in the a research by Power and Mont (2010) according to them people are not always rational in the selection of cultural goods as some time they give priority to the alternatives or other most prevailing goods on their personal interests.

The choice of an individual, his spouse, children and peer group play a vital role in the process of adopting the new things and replacing the older ones. In many case people prefer their spouses and children choice and modify their living style according to them (Upright, 2004). The utility of things is less associated with the economic position while personal choice can also be a factor involved in the stability and replacement of the food items (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2010). Similarly the people

from educated background keep an eye on the nutrition of the food item which differ them from the other (Ibid, 2010).

Change in cultural tastes can be traced back to the development in technology and advertisement. The increase in advance alternatives declines the old cultural products. Talking about the idea of replacement Berger & Mens (2009) argued that the velocity of adaptation in an area may contributes to the process of replacement and abandonment when there is no restriction on the adaptors. The cultural goods that experience great changes through adaptation die out faster. Regarding the role of media they added that the process of advertisement can increase the level of adaptation (ibid, 2009).

A diversification in consuming food is highly associated with the variation in income level, urbanization and other related factors. According to the Agriculture and Trade Report US (2001) the food patterns and budged for food consumption vary classes wise. The increase in the income automatically brings an increase in the food expenditures. The people who are less likely to afford expensive food they prefer to use alternatives having almost the same nutrition comparatively cheaper. Lopez & Alvarez (2002) found that those who are from lower social classes and less educated use traditional and cultural good more while those who are from high social classes and more educated consume modern high culture goods to show their superiority.

The effect of globalization cannot be denied as it has made the world like a global village by decreasing cultural uniqueness, circulating the intercontinental ideas and supporting the cultural diversity at the same time. This uniformity is not only in the utilization of products and services rather it has surrounded the ideas, language and culture as well. The same idea was presented by Cleveland et al (2011) and argued that globalization supports greater uniformity between consumers around the globe however, the results

suggest that globalization at the same time defends the differences among people within national borders.

Keeping in view the background present study is aiming to bring into focus, the cultural norms, traditional values, diffusion, religious values and respondents' perceptions related to the cultural products and its change in the village *Chakkaral* situated in District Gujrat.

Research Objectives

In the light of literature review this anthropological study intends to:

I. Register the core cultural products of locale

At first the purpose of this objective was to register the cultural products of the locale with the assistance of predefined criteria that was established with the help of African Union (2006) and UNCTAD (1979). Later on a sample from these products was selected for the in-depth study.

II. Explore the factors involved in the replacement of the cultural products

The objective intended to dig out the underlying factors that lead people to the replacement of the cultural products and make the alternatives more charming for them. These factors direct people to the process of change and adoption. These variables and their impact will be identified and studied.

Research Methodology

This anthropological research was conducted in village *Chakkaral,* District Gujrat in province Punjab, Pakistan. This town grew up around a fort established by the emperor Akbar in A.D. 1580 with the help of *Gujar* inhabitants of the neighboring areas (UNIDO, 2006). Gujrat is situated between the two famous and important cities Lahore and Islamabad in the north of province Punjab. The research started with several

days of interaction with the residents informing them about the purpose of stay as well as helping the researcher get familiarized with the locale environment to have productive outcome. In order to study the phenomenon of 'Receding cultural products' a sample of thirty women aged between 30-50 was selected through stratified random sampling, further this sample was equally divided in lower, middle and upper social classes. Thirty in-depth interviews along three case-studies facilitated to collect the relevant qualitative data for the study by using the interview guide. Just as all the locale cultural products were identified and enlisted under the following criteria based on the definitions of African Union (2006) and UNCTAD (1979): **a)** The products manufactured by the local people or by the surrounding area **b)** Attachment of feelings and emotions to them **c)** Traditional and less technological ways used for their preparation **d)** A large number of people's familiarity to the product. Forty-nine cultural products were enlisted keeping in view the aforesaid selection criteria while a sample of 14 cultural products was selected for the detailed study. Following are the cultural products shortlisted for the research with brief description:

Table 1: Cultural products and their description

S#	Cultural products	Description of the product	S#	Cultural products	Description of the product
1	*Paiti & baksa*	A large trunk to store personal possessions	8	*Toopa*	Iron pot used as a grain measuring scale
2	*Chaaj*	A tool to clean impurities from grains	9	*Darri*	Type of lighter blanket
3	*Pannda*	Traditional seasonal sweet-dish	10	*Mati ki handi*	Clay pot use for cooking curry
4	*Naalla*	Woolen belt used for tying the trouser around waist	11	*Gothli*	Handmade fabric purse to keep money
5	*Pranda*	Hair accessory used to tie hair in a braid	12	*Satoo*	Powdered barley grains
6	*Mati ka chulha*	A handmade clay stove	13	*Warri*	Clay ewer used for cleaning purposes
7	*Kaanali*	Clay plate used to knead flour	14	*Chath wala*	A traditional manual ceiling fan

				pankha	

Source: field data

Empirical Findings and Discussion

Man is change oriented and changes further bring development. People always love to be considered as developed and cultured. These factors provide a leading track towards replacement of traditional items. Current research was designed to register the core cultural products of the village C*hakkaral* and to explore the fundamental factors involve in the replacement of the cultural products. The data was analyzed by applying critical analysis techniques.

No product from the sample can be declared as totally replaced from the locale as all the products are prevailing in the locale at different level regarding its use. People are using these products with changes in their colors, designs and shapes along with their alternatives but none of them had lost its use except *warri and chath wala pankha.* These products have lost their utility in the locale as the alternatives are more attractive and easy to adopt. One of the main reasons in the usage of *chath wala pankha* was the no availability of electricity in the locale as after the arrival of electricity people moved to the more easy ways. However, there is mixture of factors that affect the extant of cultural products that will be discussed in the coming paragraphs.

Factors involved in the replacement of the cultural products

Following table will deal with the key factors that are pushing the respondents to replace the older one with the new products. These factors are arranged according to their percentages those are having more numbers are placed on the top of the table. Cultures keep on changing and the things related to them also change with the passage of time and this is a sign of alive culture.

Table 2: Factors involved in the process of replacement

Factors involved in the replacement of the products	Explanation of the factor
Income	29% of viewed that as the increase in income happens, changes in life style also occur.
Role of media	According to 20% media is effecting the people perceptions about the consumptions of goods and introducing the latest ones.
Education	16% think as level of education increases the people become relatively more adoptive and open to change.
Technical advancement	10% is of the view that technical advancement leads to the change in the structure of society as it happened in the locale.
Multipurpose substitutes	The alternatives are comparatively more comfortable and multipurpose so is used was a view of 9%
Mobility of the respondents	9% said that the change in the mobility of the respondents further leads to the change in the living patterns.
Affordability of alternatives	Those people were replacing the old products that have the ability to afford the new ones 7% respondents viewed

Source: field data

Gathered data from the locale suggests that people were change oriented and prone towards it. Money is vital in replacement of cultural products (Waheed et al, 2014). Similarly 29% of respondents viewed that the people who are using more new things that are economically strong and can bear the change based expenses. They are using their livelihood to get ease and comfort. The respondents considered income as a main source towards modification and adoption of new items. Those who get more money they automatically wish to spend their life with ease. Media as a motivator towards change cannot be ignored in the process of transformation and adoption. Twenty percent of respondents were adding new products in their life style being influenced by the advancement presented by the media.

Everyone within the locale was having TV in his home while a large proportion of people were having the cable connections as well. These cable connections do not inform respondents about the happenings of Pakistan only but update them about the fashion and trends of other countries. Moreover it is difficult to save the uniqueness of a culture from the impacts of globalization and modernization that is accelerated by media. Therefore, it is a major agent of change in the people's life.

Education can also be seen as a determining factor behind the process of adoption in the locale keeping in concern the views of respondents. The level education in the village was increasing comparatively According to respondents it introduces the people with the alternatives. With the arrival and better extent of education 16% of people's perception, taste and aesthetic had changed. Education had modified the nature of gatherings and by engaging in such activities people had replaced the things that do not match to the physical environment and this led people towards change. Because of all this, people have adopted the new and modern ways and accessories to match the requirements while replacement of *nalla*, *paranda* and *gothli* can be the suitable example.

Ten percent of the people were of the view that the technical advancement is also a key element that is urging people towards the new trends and making their life comfortable. As the technical advancement stimulate people automatically to move from traditional use of products to the latest one. Nine percent respondents stated that multiple alternatives are available in the markets that are easily affordable for all social classes. Therefore, this is a supporting factor in the process of replacement and change.

The current studies also examined the impact of social mobility of respondents and change in their social capital as how it affects their utility patterns and urge them to adopt change. The results show that the 9% of people who were more frequent in attending parties and other social gatherings were

more likely to adopt the new arrivals to match the requirements of their social circle. They had more knowledge on upcoming products, alternatives and their use. They were open to adopt substitute, as they had to move in wider range of people and social gatherings. In the same way the respondent of the locale adopted the variations according to their capability to afford the thing 7% stated this. People added that those who can afford the new arrivals they adopt them regardless of attachment and social pressure while the people who could not adopt and afford the new items make such kind of claims.

Prevailing alternatives of the cultural products in locale

The underneath table will give a look of the available alternatives in the locale that are being used by the people who are not using the cultural products as frequently as in past. These possible alternatives of the cultural product are being used by the respondents who are not using these products at present. It can be concluded that only one product *paiti* and *baksa* was being used by every respondent no matter how much variations regarding its usage still exist. In the case of *chaaj* people claimed that it's very good and proper tool to separate impurities but less durable and expensive as well so they use the alterative as *parte* which is not equal to *chaaj* in performance. Many of the respondents added that the use of that product is an art and they do not know how to use this tool properly.

Table 3: Alternatives of cultural products

S#	Original Cultural products	Prevailing alternative in locale	Reasons led to use alternatives
1	*Paiti & baksa*	Cupboard is used long with them too	All the respondents used this with variations
2	*Chaaj*	Use *prate*	Expensive, don't know to use And less durable
3	*Pannda*	Different nuts and eggs	Expensive, doesn't suit to health and time consuming
4	*Naalla*	Elastic	Outdated, difficult to use

			time consuming, personally don't like and have alternatives now
5	*Pranda*	Catchers, variety of rubber bands	Difficult to carry, time consuming not regularly in fashion and personally do not like
6	*Mati ka chulha*	Stove made of cement, steel and gas stoves	Less durable, difficult to use fuel is expensive and children do not like
7	*Kaanali*	*Kaanali* with steel material	Heavy ,less durable And children do not like
8	*Toopa*	Use alternative scales to do small measure	Don't have the larger measurement to do and costumer do not get satisfied
9	*Darri*	Lighter blankets and cotton bed- sheets	Heavy ,difficult to wash and have alternatives now
10	*Mati ki handi*	Cookers, *handis* with steel along with non-stick pots	More heat consuming, less durable time consuming and children do not like
11	*Gothli*	Clutches and purses	Difficult to use, outdated, used mostly along *nalla* and it was mostly used for keeping coins
12	*Satoo*	Variety of soft and instant drinks	Less available , personally do not like, does not suit to health and less available
13	*Warri*	Use *warri* in plastic material and do *wazoo* on wash-basin	Not available in the locale at present
14	*Chath wala pankha*	Hand and electric fans most commonly	Not needed now at electricity is available now

Source: field data

Regarding *satoo* and *pannda* personal choices were most important. Many respondents had left their use as the products do not suit their health. Proceeding towards *nalla, pranda* and *gothli* people of the locale added that these products are durable but difficult to use moreover the resent fashion trends do not match to these cultural goods. Majority of respondents argued that *mati ki handi, kannali* and *mati ka chulha* are less durable, heavy and time consuming so they preferred to change these products with suitable and affordable alternatives. Moreover, their children do not like to use these products, as they are heavy in weight hence they adopted the products,

which are liked by their children and other family members. These substitutes are easy to use and wrap-up daily work in a lesser time as compare to the cultural products.

Viewing about *toopa* respondents argued that it is a tool for a larger measurement and many of them haven't to do this so they have taken-up the other equal tools. A perspective was also noticed that many customers raise questions on the accuracy of the measurements done by this product as this is done manually so many of them consider other scales. About *darri* respondents said that this product is heavy in weight and difficult to wash as this is mostly in white color and so they had replaced this with lighter weight blankets and other alternatives.

Residents of the research locale were not using *warri* and *chath wala pankha. Warri* was a product of past when the potters were the local residents and people never thought about any other possible alternative, as they were used to feel easy with its usage. *Chath wala pankha* has been replaced as people got a better way in form of electricity in the local. Moreover these products are not being made in the locale or surrounding areas at present as people had adopted the substitutes a long time ago.

Conclusion

This anthropological research was aiming to understand the linkages between the different socio-cultural and economic factors that are affecting the status of cultural products of an area along the drivers that motivate towards change and adoption. Respondents were using almost all the cultural products in the village that was the sample of the study except *warri* and *chath wala pankha*. Moreover the cultural products with changes in their colors, designs and shapes along their alternatives were also recorded. From the obtained data it becomes clear that no product from the sample can be declared

as totally replaced from the locale as all the products were prevailing in the locale, except the two foresaid product, at different level regarding its use. According to the results income level could be listed as the main factor in the process of change.

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