CULTURAL CRINGE: STUDY ON BIAS TOWARDS WESTERN CULTURE

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Abstract

Cultural cringe is an inherent inferiority complex in which people perceive their own culture as inferior. Cultural cringe is intricately linked with "cultural alienation," wherein a person devalues his or her own culture but is drawn towards the culture of the colonising nation. For Indians, it is the by-product of years of colonisation, popularly referred to as the Colonial Mentality. This is an exploratory research to study North Indians' bias towards western culture. It seeks to determine a) whether North Indians have a bias towards products of western origin. b) Whether North Indians have a predisposition to associate achievement with names of English Origin. c) Whether demographics play a role in bias towards the products of western origin. The study was conducted in parts of Uttar Pradesh and New Delhi, with 135 participants who were all above the age of 18. Findings indicated that a substantial percentage of the population has a bias towards products of western origin. There was no discernible bias in associating achievement/success with names of any origin.

Keywords: Cultural Cringe, Cultural Bias, Colonial Mentality, Indian Colonial Mentality, Cultural Inferiority in India, Colonisation

1. INTRODUCTION

Colonial mentality is a well-known phenomenon in India. It has not affected just one or two aspect of modern India but rather how modern India is shaped today. Be it India's current political discourse, how Hindu religion is followed today, Indian law or Indian's consumer habits (Bayly, 2010; Kinra, 2006; Singh, 2015). Colonisation breeds a sense of internalised inferiority in the minds of colonised population, resulting in a belief that coloniser's cultural values are superior (David & Okazaki, 2010; Nuenning & Nuenning, 2015).

Inferiority complex in the sense of definition is the lack of self-esteem, a doubt about one's own self and a need to measure up to high set of standards. Drawing parallels to the colonised nations, colonised nations have inherent belief that their cultural values are inferior and they constantly try to imitate the coloniser (Phillips, 2006).

The aim of the following study is not to find if Indians prefer western culture over Indian, as that can be considered fair given that people may find western culture more meritorious than Indian culture. Here the aim is to find if Indian have an inherent bias towards western culture, where they unknowingly find Indian culture more meritorious than western culture but prefer western culture due an inherent cringe towards their own culture, which is unfair. India is a big consumer society and due to its tumultuous past there are not sufficient number of big indigenous companies that it should have for the amount of consumers India have. Though the scenario is rapidly improving but the growth of Indian companies might be hampered due to cultural cringe. For example two products used in this study are Cadbury Oreo and Britannia Treat, both offering similar kinds of biscuit and India has been a market with biggest growth for Cadbury Oreo recently (Yu, 2018). Taking this scenario into account, if there is cultural cringe

and we are biased towards English culture, how much an Indian company would be losing to a western company just because we might like English things and prefer western products over the merit.

Though Colonial Mentality is a well-known topic in India but the researches are scant. This research is aimed at finding if there is any cultural cringe that exists here in India and if so, what are the precursors to it. Two aspects of culture are taken into account to see if there is any bias towards western culture i.e. Consumer Behaviour and English Language.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Cultural Cringe: Cultural cringe is referred to as an inherent inferiority complex through which people view their culture as inferior compared to other cultures (Phillips, 2006). "Cultural Cringe" was first coined after the Second World War by a social commentator and an ordinary schoolmaster Arthur Angell Phillips, in Australia. Phillips (2006) discussed the inescapable tendency of Australians to draw comparisons between their culture and that of British/European countries, and the propensity to undergo feelings of inferiority when their artists, writers, or their culture were compared.

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (1989) and Bhabha (2004) cultural cringe is also intricately entwined with "cultural alienation", in which a person devalues his/her own culture and instead feels attracted towards the culture of the colonising nation. They also stated that alienated cultures place little value on themselves and, their sense of self-identity is weak. The most common example of this alienation is love for all things American.

Cultural cringe has been very visible in most colonised nations. Mattar (2009) identified that local English music in Singapore was perceived inferior to western English music and their artists were considered inauthentic. Willoughby, Starks, & Taylor-Leech (2013) through their research found out that Australians considered Australian English as rustic and informal. Harada (2009) after studying the effect of imperialism and colonialism on Japan and Australia concluded that both countries have an ambiguous identity; they both float between being superior to regional countries and inferior towards western countries in terms of modernity. Parallels can be drawn between this effect of colonialism in Japan and Australia and how a person with inferiority complex swings between feelings of inferiority and superiority (Ansbacher, 1956).

Cultural Cringe in India: Cultural cringe is a barely used word in the Indian context as colonial mentality is more commonly used. According to Nuenning & Nuenning (2015) Colonial mentality is an "internalised attitude of ethnic or cultural inferiority felt by people as a result of colonisation" and corresponds to values of coloniser culture being superior to one's own (David & Okazaki, 2010). The evident inferiority complex that Indians go through is not just the outcome of its past rather systematic induction of inferiority in the general psyche. During the British Raj, British imperialists regarded India's culture with disdain and contempt and saw colonisation as a "Civilising Mission" (Falser, 2015). Roland (1988) stated that Anglicist viewed Indian culture as depraved and degenerate, and the only way to reform them was by Anglicizing them. British rationalised the colonisation by imposing their concepts of psychoanalysis and declared Indians with no temperament of leadership (Hartnack, 1987). Colonisation was mostly framed as something which uplifts the "uncivilised Indians", but not an act of abuse, explanation, power, and loot (Fischer–Tiné, 2005).

British for their hate towards the Hindu faith discouraged idolatry (Ganguly, 2017), which certain scholars ascertain to have a role in modern-day Hinduism (Pennington, 2005) and its outward focus on monotheistic Vedanta (Hatcher, 2008; Pennington, 2005). These aspects are read as the outcome of colonial prejudices toward Indian religion which deferred greatly from Christianity (Yelle, 2005). It's also observed that due to Bhagwat Gita's commonality with Bible and Krishna's role as a Messiah type figure, they were more emphasised in denouncing a more overtly Idol worshiping Hindu culture (Bayle, 2010).

Another instance of forcefully injecting the British culture is through language. Thomas Mcauley who viewed Indian culture as inferior to that of British culture was a staunch propagator of replacing indigenous languages/dialects with English as a mode of communication and in educational institutions (Evans, 2002). Prasad (2006) has pointed out how the use of English as a language carries a sense of superiority when compared to Hindi. On the other side, Chand (2011) in her study stated how Hindi is being propagated in institutions and education through policy changes by nationalistic political parties and how its institutionalisation gives India a shared unified identity, and how an elite, liberal group shows disagreement towards these movements.

The colonial mentality not only affects education, language, and religion but many other aspects of day to day life. Verma (1999) in his study on corruption that infests the Indian police system found its root in the organisational structure and practices that have been continued for hundreds of years. There are obvious and empirical pieces of evidence on how colour bias and the want for fair skin in Indian have their roots in the colonial past (Dipankar, 2017).

Effect of Cultural Cringe: This research is being conducted to examine whether cultural cringe still exists in the Indian mind-set and its relation with ethnocentrism. To conduct the concerned study two types of experiments had been devised, one to assess the bias towards country-of-origin concerning consumer behaviour and two, to assess how Indians relate achievements with Names of the different country of origin. Literature suggests various findings when it comes to consumer behaviour, Hu (2014) in his research studied the impact that Cultural Cringe produce on consumer behaviour in China. The study was conducted by using Nike (American sports brand) and Li-Ming (Chinese sports brand) as a product. A questionnaire survey was used as the method for data collection which consisted of 36 questions and was conducted in a comprehensive college in China. There were 314 students as participants from different majors. Results showed a positive correlation between cultural cringe and preference of buying Nike's product. Batra et al., (2000) conducted a study that dwelled into the brand preference of consumers in emerging economies as to whether they prefer western brands over local brands not just because of their quality but also because of their social value. The results indicated that the country of origin of the brand influences the perceived quality and emotion related to high social status is attached with brands of western origin. Kinra (2006) researched to study the inclination of Indians towards Indian and western brands concerning the pervasiveness of brand names that sound western. A questionnaire was used for the study on 112 subjects from Lucknow. Despite factors such as nationalism, all factors indicate a clear bias towards western brands. Bhardwaj, Kumar, & Kim (2010) study about the attitude of Indian nationals towards U.S and Indian local apparel brand. A study conducted on 411 university students resulted in findings that the perception about both types of brands varies about brand equity.

On the different side of the spectrum, Halkias et al., (2016) studied the literature to investigate the effect of branding and country-of-origin on a consumers' preference towards a product. It was found that competence of a product gets a higher place than its origin and other factors also decided the preference i.e Warmth. Rosenbloom & Haefner (2009) in their research assessed the correlation between trust in a brand and its country-of-origin. Findings indicated a strong correlation between global outreach with positive trust, with other factors also affecting the trust factor, such as the product's value. Also, low-value products are not affected by global factors. Studies have also indicated a diminishing effect of country-of-origin on consumer's preference, compared to 10 to 15 years ago with customers choosing no preference as an option due to difficulty in differentiating different products of the same category (Schultz, Block, & Viswanathan, 2014). Harris et al., (2015) researched to check if an article's country-of-origin affects how people perceive its authenticity and found that a High-income country-of-origin does affect the perception.

Studies conducted by Feather (1993) in Australia had confirmed a positive correlation between ethnocentrism and in-group bias with respect to consumer preference. Wang & Wang, (2007) also tried to assess the effect of nationalism on the preference of Global brands. A positive correlation was established between nationalism and preference towards local brands.

Colonial mentality and cringe for one's own culture as we have seen not only infest consumerism, institutions and education but is also a reason for collective depression, anxiety various other issues related to mental health and it would certainly affect the colonised country's decision making as well (Paranjpe, 2002; Williams et al., 2015). Thus, there exists a need to assess if cultural cringe still exists in the Indian mind-set and if so, then to what extent.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aim

An exploratory research to study the bias of North Indians towards western culture.

3.2 Objectives

To identify whether North Indians have bias towards products of western origin.

To identify whether there is a bias in North Indians, in relating achievements with English names.

To identify how various demographics influence the bias towards western products.

3.3 Participants

The study was conducted in the parts of Uttar Pradesh and New Delhi. 135 participants participated in the study on a voluntary basis. Only participants above the age of 18 years and hailing from the states of Uttar Pradesh (UP), New Delhi and Uttarakhand were selected for the study. There was no other exclusion criterion. Below is the segregation of participants on the basis of demographics.

Table 1		
Categorisation of Participants		
Category	**Sub-groups**	**Count**
Age Group	18-27	91
	28-37	22
	38-47	11
	>48	11
Gender	Female	54
	Male	81
Marital Status	Married	44
	Unmarried	91
Area of Residence	Village	2
	Town	51
	City	24
	Metropolitan	58
State	Delhi	31
	NCR	26
	UP (East)	16
	UP (West)	57
	Uttarakhand	5
Annual Income	No Income	37
	<2 Lakhs	37
	2-4 Lakhs	33
	4-6 Lakhs	14
	6-8 Lakhs	6
	>8 Lakhs	8
Education Level	Uneducated	4
	Till 10th Class	4
	Till 12th Class	34
	Graduate	60
	Post Graduate	32
	Doctorate	1
Note. NCR here refer to the people living in National Capital Region and not only in New Delhi		

3.4 Tools

For collecting the data, two sets of experiment were conducted and a questionnaire consisting of five questions were provided to participants.

The first experiment consisted of two trails, where participants were asked to taste similar products from two different brands and tell which one tasted better. There were three such product categories each consisting of products from two brands. In blind trial the participants were not aware of the brands of the products and in the second, informed trial they were made aware about the same. In, second experiment, participants were asked five made up questions presented as general awareness questions out of which two questions were dummy and three questions tried to check whether participants relate achievement with names of Indian origin or western origin.

3.4.1 Selection of product

Products were selected after carefully testing a wide variety of products. The criteria of any two products selected in the same category were such that both the products should taste almost similar and they should look identical. If the product brand could be differentiated in a particular product category the product was either eliminated or the cause of differentiation was eliminated itself. Through this it was made sure that

the choice of product in first trial is based on taste and taste only, and when the second trial of the experiment was carried out, the participant could not assess which product he/she choose earlier. To eliminate the differentiation, following products were tried and removed from the lot, Hershey's Milk shake, Soda, Maza, Frooti and Real Mango Juice. To eliminate visual differentiation between chocolates from two brands, chocolates were given in the form of chips. In case of biscuits, participants were asked to close their eyes. The brand of any product was not displayed at any point of time but verbally told, so that visual presentation does not become a factor while choosing a product. Below are different products that were finalised:

	Table 2 _List of finalised products_					
	Category					
	Biscuit		**Chocolate**		**Curd**	
Brands	Cadbury's Oreo	Britannia's Treat	Cadbury's Bournville Rich Cocoa Dark Chocolate Bar	Amul's Dark Chocolate- 55% Rich in Cocoa	Nestle's Curd	Paras' Curd

3.5 Procedure

Selected participants were asked to take a seat in front of a table in a well-lit and silent room. Experiments were carried out individually. Participants were first made to read the instructions on the demographic sheet, which clearly stated that the purpose of the study is to be kept confidential until the end of survey. The participants were then asked to fill the demographic sheet. The process was carried out in three phases.

3.5.1 Phase 1/Trial 1: Blind food tasting

In the first trial the participants were served eatable products from three different categories, each containing two similar tasting products from different brands, one being western brand and one being Indian, here participants were only made aware about the product category i.e. curd, chocolate and not its brand name. Participants were first served Cadbury's Bournville Rich Cocoa Dark Chocolate Bar and Amul's Dark Chocolate- 55 per cent Rich in Cocoa in form of shredded chips and a spoonful of Nestle and Paras curd together. They were then asked to indicate the product that they liked more between two products from same category. After this they were asked to close their eyes and were given two biscuits of different brands, one in each hand, one being Cadbury's Oreo and other being Britannia's Treat, both of chocolate flavour. They were then asked to indicate the biscuit that they liked more. Their responses were duly noted. Participants were asked to close their eyes so as to conceal the brand of the biscuits, as the texture of both the biscuits was different from each other.

3.5.2 Phase 2/Trial 2: Informed food tasting

Participants were given water to rinse their mouth before starting the new trial. In this trial the food items were served in same manner as in the first phase and same procedure was followed, but the participants in this phase were informed about the brands beforehand and were asked to tell which brand's product tasted better rather than indicating the preference.

3.5.3 Filling questionnaire

In this section participants were asked to fill the second section of the questionnaire which contained three questions assessing whether participants relate achievement with names of Indian origin or western origin. These questions were veiled as

questions on general awareness, Participants were asked to read the instructions carefully, which clearly stated that participants have to attempt all the questions even if they do not know the answer. No participant was allowed to cheat or search through web for the answer, as that would have indicated that the main purpose of the study is not to check the general awareness but something else.

3.6 Statistical Analysis

Descriptive Analysis of the data is used in this study to assess the percentage of people having a bias towards the western culture and how the demographics play a role towards the same.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Results from 1st Experiment

The very first results showed that, 50 per cent of the participants showed bias towards western brands with 67 participants changing their opinion in favour of western brands once they were informed about the brand name. Comparatively only 23 per cent changed their opinion towards Indian brands and 33 per cent did not change their opinion. Here Net Bias refers to the net outcome of responses from all three product categories, i.e. if the participant changes the brand preference twice towards western brand and once towards Indian brand, there would be Net bias towards western brand.
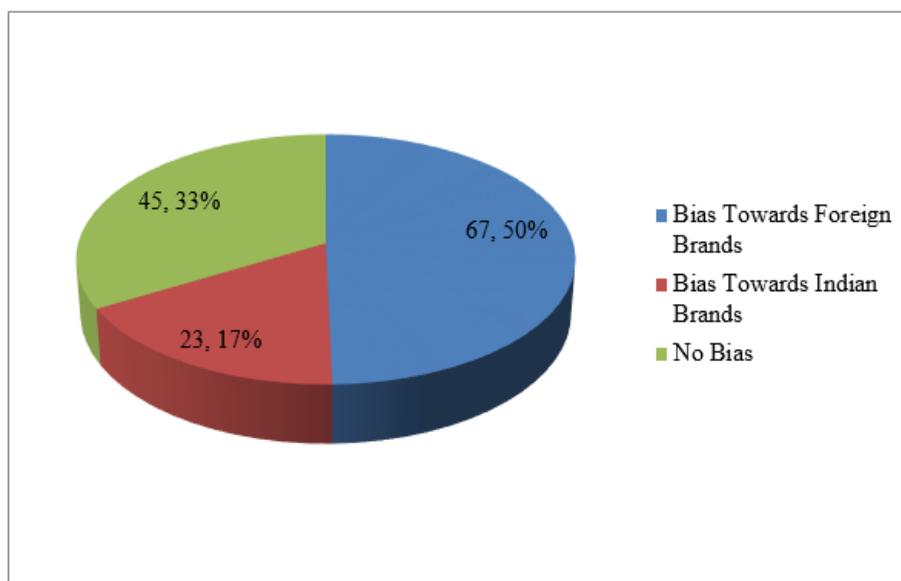

Figure 1: Net bias in terms of percentage.

Every participant made two responses in each of three product categories. One response in each of the trials for each product category, with second response indicating whether participants stayed with the same response as he/she made in the first trial or not.

Figure 2 indicates the total percentage of responses that point to bias towards Indian or western brands.
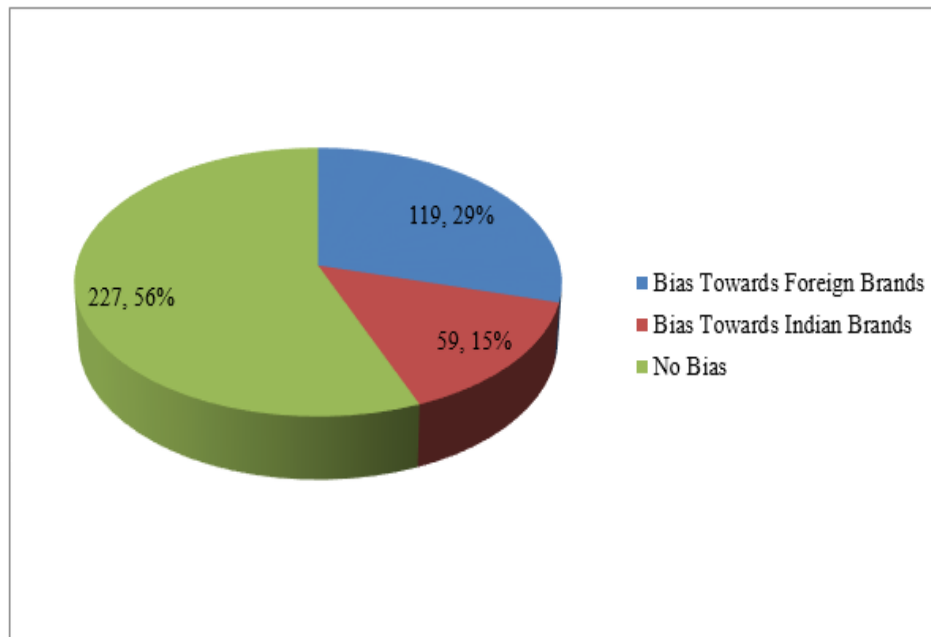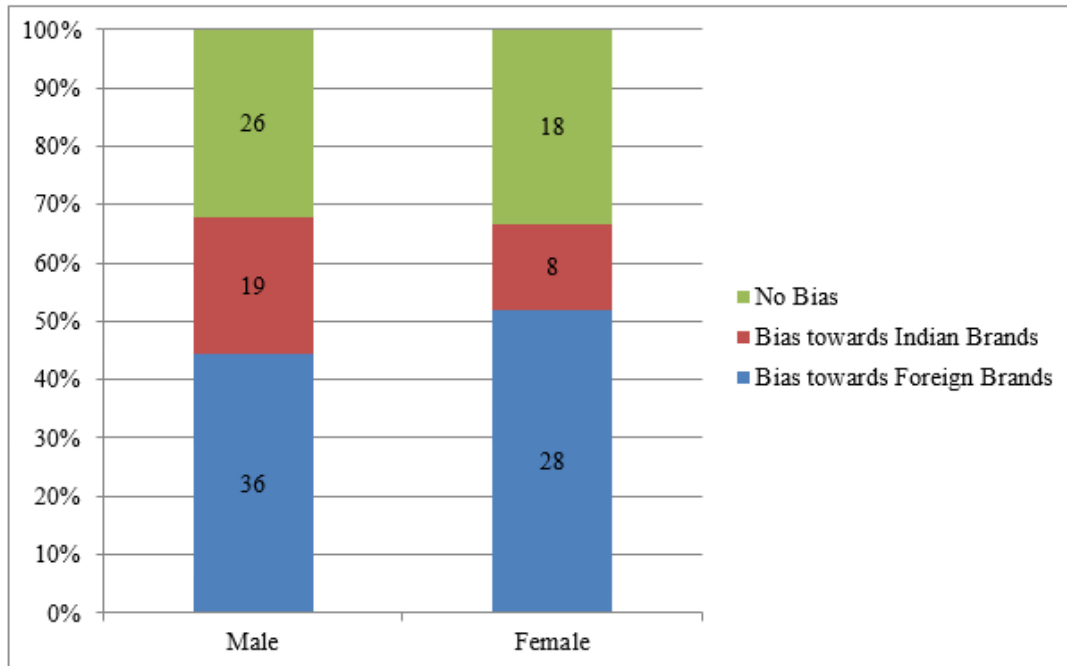
Figure 2: Display in terms of percentage for each of the participants' response throughout categories

Figure 3 indicates the change in preference with respect to each product category, meaning if the participant choose Oreo in first trial and Treat in the second trial, it indicates bias towards Indian brand
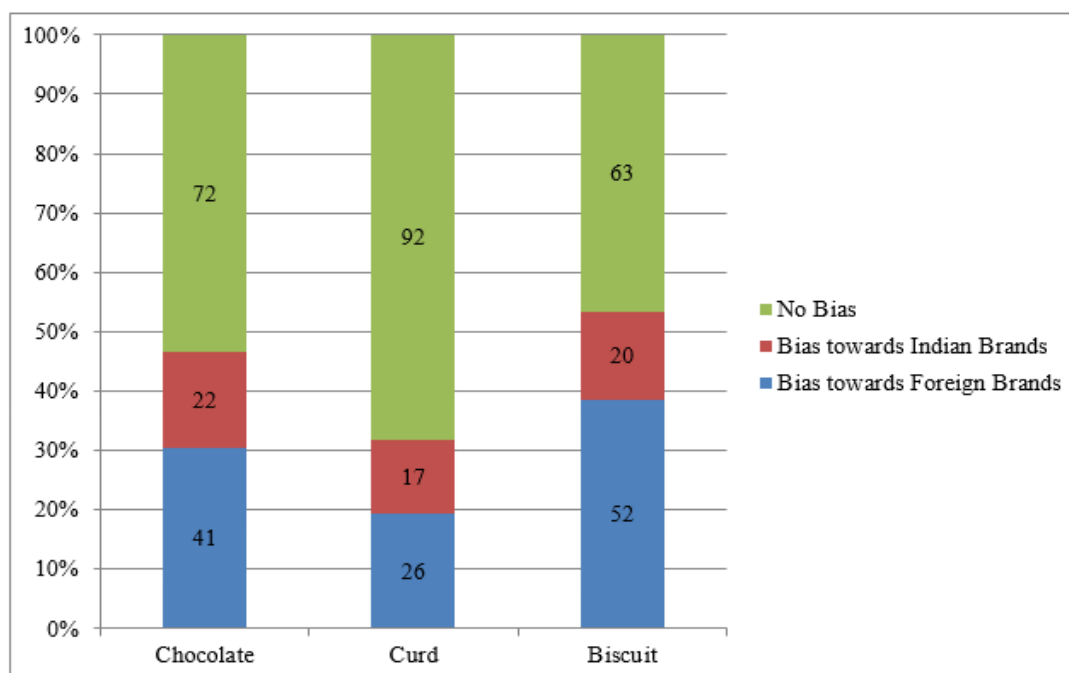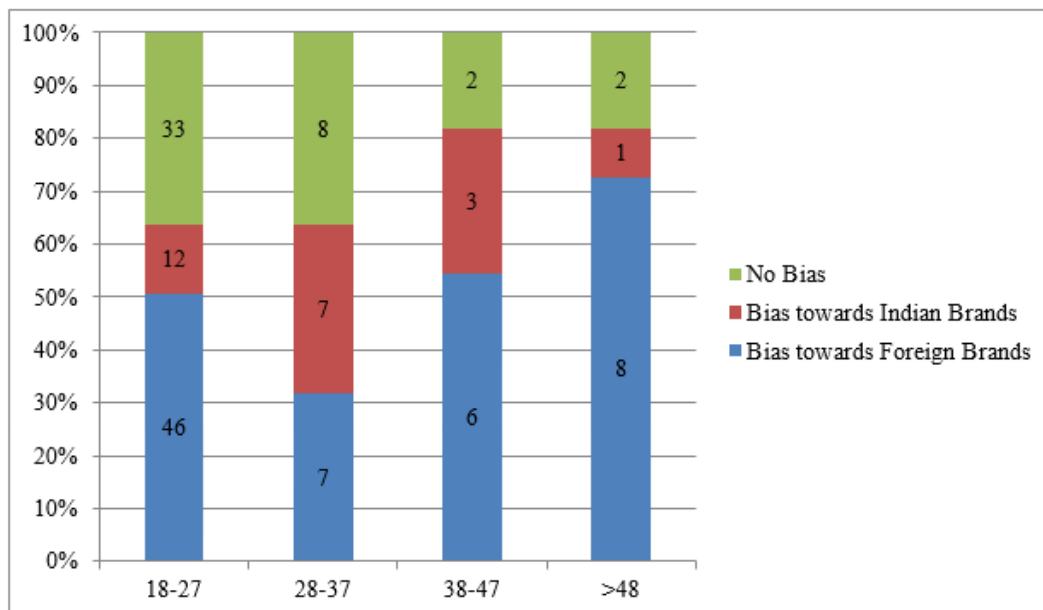

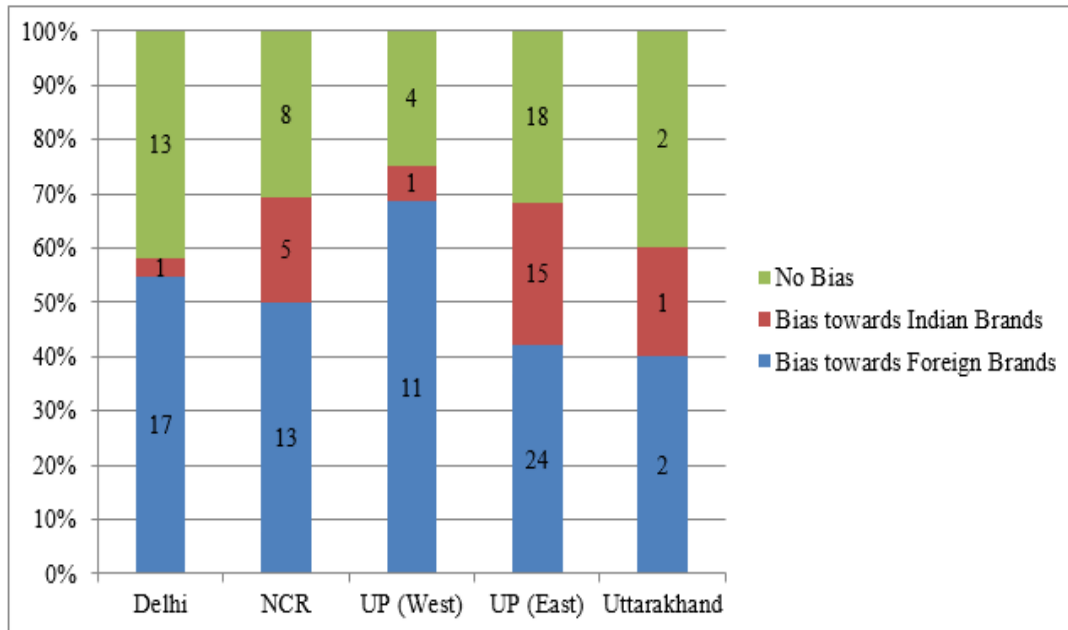**Figure 3: Bias with respect to each product category**

Figure 4: Net Bias towards Indian or Western brand for Female and Male participants

**Figure 5: Net Bias towards Indian or Western brand according to Age Group**

Figure 6: Net Bias towards Indian or Western brand according to geographical location

4.2 Results from 2nd Experiment

The next experiment was to check how participants relate names from different country-of-origin to achievements, checking bias in the process. The overall result showed that almost equal number of people choose English and Hindi options, With 66 choosing the English name as an option and 69 choosing the Hindi name.

Figure 7 indicates the options selected by participants for each question. If the name chosen by the participant for question 2 is an English name, then it will be counted as 1 in "English Option"
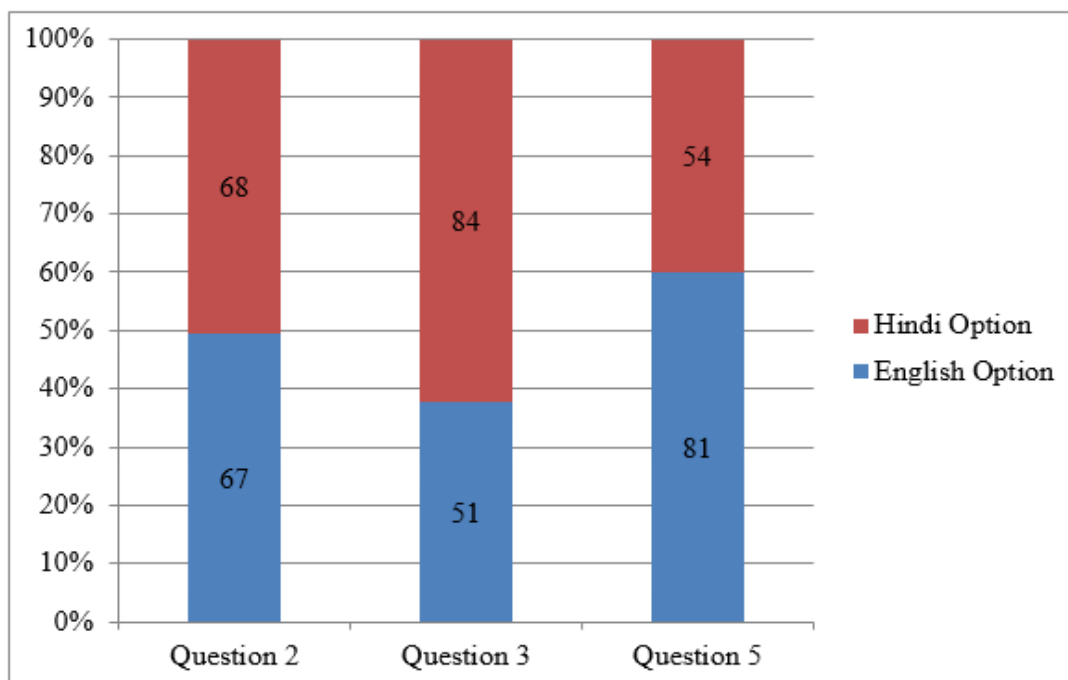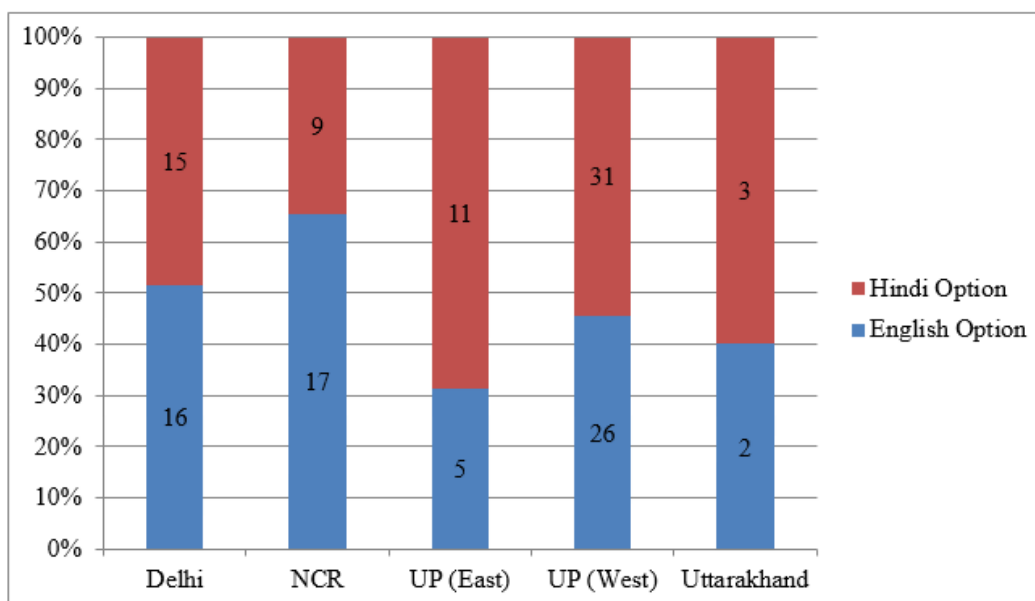

Figure 7: Bias towards Indian or English Names in each question

Net bias in the Figure 8 again refers to the net outcome of all three questions.
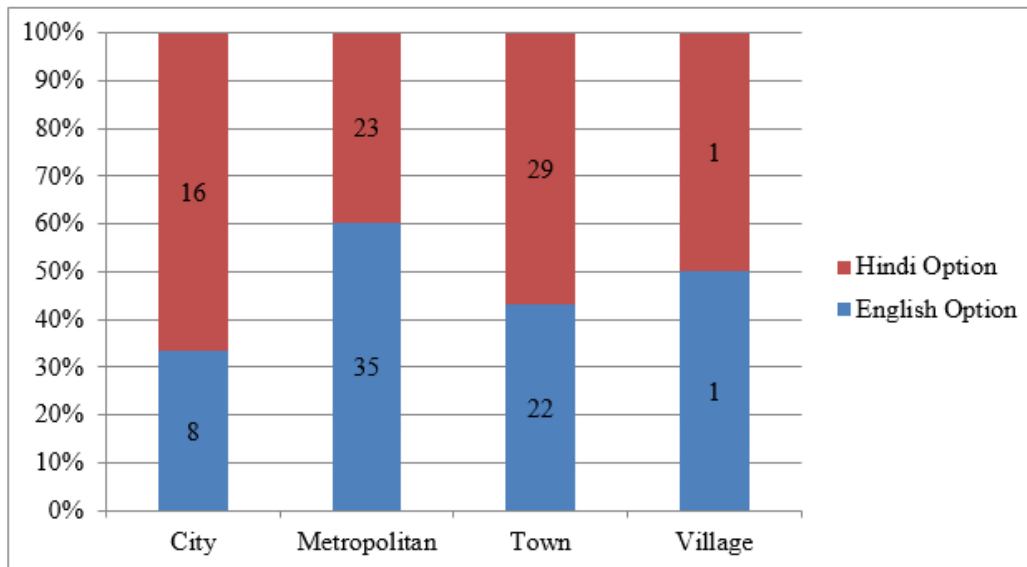
Figure 8: Net bias towards Indian or English Names according to Area of Residence

Figure 9: Net bias towards Indian or English Names according to geographical location

5. DISCUSSION

In the first experiment it was clearly observed that a large population has bias towards products of western brands. With 50 per cent percent participants moving away from their choice in first trial and choosing western brand once they were informed about the brand names.

If we take into account the separate trials and not the net outcome, neutral outcome in the Trial 1 was much higher comparatively to western bias. But bias for western brands was always higher than the bias towards Indian brands.

The highest amount of bias towards western brand was observed in biscuit category, which could be due to the brand awareness of Oreo and the lowest bias towards western brand was observed in the category of curd, the low bias here could be explained by the fact that both the dairy products tasted a little different as the participants reported the same while the experiment was being conducted.

Bias in-between both the genders were almost similar with males being a little less biased than the females in case of western brands. This might be due to the fact that most of the female participants were from Metropolitan or cities and most of the male participants were from town and in the results it was observed that the percentage of people biased towards western brands were lower in town.

As we moved towards the area from town to Metropolitan, the bias towards western brands increased and bias towards Indian brands decreased.

The results from second experiment indicated that almost equal number of people related English and Hindi names with achievements. Categories such as marital status and gender showed a little difference in the outcome. Whereas, there was a significant difference in how people from different area of residence choose their options. With 60 per cent of the people from metropolitan choosing English option and 33 per cent of city residents choosing English option which was lowest. When it comes to state wise comparison there is a visible difference in how participants choose their options. Highest English options were selected by participants hailing from National Capital Region and after that came participants hailing from Delhi. Highest Hindi options were selected by people hailing from UP (East).

6. CONCLUSION

The study has clearly shown that bias and cultural cringe do exist in Indian mind-set. Though the results for second experiment overall were almost equal for both English and Hindi, the results in City and Metropolitan areas were inclined towards English just as in the first experiment.

Some of the limitation that were faced while performing the experiment was the lack of resources which made the researcher to focus on small population in two to three states and while performing the second experiment some participants got the hint that main objective of the experiment was not to check the awareness but to check the inclination of the participants.

Cultural cringe is something which affects our daily life and us as a society overall. And any society or individual which goes through inferiority complex may develop self-defeating patterns and self-defeating decision making. Thus there exist a need to explore this area of research deeper and its data to be analysed quantitatively.

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