

Impact of Commercialization on Our Culture: with Special Reference to Popular Indian Festivals

Vivek Nema, Manisha Sharma



Abstract: *The intertwining of commercialization and culture is a complex process that shapes how society functions and evolves. Culture, with its multifaceted elements such as language, customs, values, and art, is a dynamic force that constantly interacts with the economic forces of commercialization. This paper deals with the study of "Impact of Commercialization on Our Culture: With Special Reference to Popular Indian Festivals," as commercialization has reshaped how we celebrate our festivals. One of the most noticeable impacts of commercialization is the commodification of festivals. Many festivals have become lucrative business opportunities to promote and sell their products. This is evident in the extensive marketing campaigns, sponsored events, and influx of consumer goods during festive seasons. While this has injected economic vitality into local markets and industries, it has also led to concerns about diluting the festivals' original cultural and spiritual essence.*

Keywords: *Culture, Commercialization, Indian Festivals, Commodification*

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of commercialization has profoundly influenced various aspects of culture worldwide. This phenomenon is particularly evident in India, where traditional festivals have long been significant in the cultural landscape. Indian festivals, rich in history and tradition, are now increasingly intertwined with commercial interests, altering their essence and how they are celebrated. (Agarwal, F, Kanungo, S. 2016) [1]. For example, Diwali, the festival of lights, has transformed from a religious and familial observance into a period marked by heavy consumer spending on decorations, sweets, and gifts, significantly driven by marketing campaigns and sales promotions. Similarly, Holi, known for its vibrant colors and community participation, has seen increased commercial events and merchandise, often overshadowing its traditional significance. These changes raise questions about the balance between maintaining cultural authenticity and adapting to modern economic contexts. Also, changes were seen in the context of the commodification of festivals (Kursataite L, 2004) [9].

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This research explores the multifaceted impact of commercialization on popular Indian festivals, examining how this shift affects cultural practices, social interactions, and economic activities. Focusing on festivals such as Diwali, Holi, and Durga Puja, this study highlights the changing dynamics and the implications for cultural preservation in contemporary India. Through this analysis, we seek to understand the broader consequences of commercialization on cultural identity and heritage, providing insights into how traditional values can be preserved amid economic growth and globalization pressures.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Suman Joshi, in his research paper "Agriculture: The True Culture of India and the Impact of Westernization," says that it is miserable that today's generation is bending more towards the West and moving away from its cultural values, traditions, and roots. This is not their mistake but the mistake of those who do not enlighten their children about their roots and rich cultural heritage.
2. Amitav Chatterjee, in his research work titled "Commercialization of Festivals," says that commercialization and consumerism have penetrated so deeply into our psyche that we hardly take time to think beyond ourselves. Festivals were always a time for family reunions and social visits. We now send emails and cards and hardly have the time to celebrate festivals with our near and dear ones. Religious rites and customs have taken a back seat to show purchasing power. People spend more on decorative lights than on 'diyas'. Commercially sponsored Christmas Ball is gradually replacing Carol singing, and the 'dhunochi' dance of the Durga Puja is yielding to local ramp walking. The 'dandiya' of Navratri was meant to please Goddess Durga, but sadly, the dandiya is now fueled by film songs and hip-hop. The spirit of each festival and the cultural ethos are gradually but certainly being hijacked by Mega Corps and their overdose of consumerism.
3. Jeremy Rifkin, in *The Commercialization of Culture*, says that for the wealthier members of society, just about any experience can now be purchased in the cultural market. He also quotes the words of futurist James Ogilvy, who says, "Today's consumers do not ask themselves as often, 'What do I want to have that I do not have already?' They ask, 'What do I want to experience that I have not experienced yet?'"
4. Sachin B. S. and Ramesh Bhadrageiriah, in their work "Globalization Impact on the Festival Economy of India," talk about the overwhelming impact of globalization on Indian festivals.



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Globalization denotes more earnings and more spending. Corporations lure people through the media; hence, inevitably, people spend more, especially during festivals. Earlier, indigenous people used to sell their products with specific bargaining, but the present scenario shifts from roadside sellers to corporate markets.

5. Jessica Kosasih asks in her article, Is the commercialization of culture necessarily bad? He says that culture is something that binds and represents a community. Although some parts of its identity have been simplified or diluted due to commercialization as it becomes more like a transaction or a staged performance, it still maintains the main features symbolic to a specific community. Commercialization of culture also generates income for the country, increases its global influence, and allows the international community to acknowledge a culture and its community's significance. Thus, while ethically unappealing, commercialization is pivotal in a pragmatic world. More value would be generated if cultures could be commercialized without offending or disregarding the communities they represent. Hence, commercialization of culture is not necessarily bad but could be if one is not careful.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the Impact of Commercialization on Culture
2. To know about the Impact of Commercialization on Indian Festivals
3. To explore various dimensions of celebrating festivals Today

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study is descriptive and based on secondary data. Qualitative research involves exploring issues, understanding phenomena, and finding answers to questions by analyzing and understanding available literature. Qualitative research is most suitable for answering the how and the why of issues, processes, and behavior. Previous research work and various articles have been studied to understand the Impact of Commercialization on our Culture and Festivals. This paper mainly aims to explore a conceptual understanding of the various dimensions related to commercialization and our culture and festivals.

V. IMPACT OF COMMERCIALIZATION ON CULTURE

India, a land rich in history, diversity, and traditions, has witnessed significant transformations in recent decades, particularly with the rise of commercialization. As the wheels of progress turn, the collision between tradition and modernity has sparked a complex interplay that shapes the nation's cultural landscape. The impact of commercialization on Indian culture is a complex tapestry woven with threads of progress and challenges. (Difference Between, 2016) [3]. As India navigates the path of economic growth, it faces the imperative to strike a harmonious balance between modernization and cultural preservation. Recognizing the diverse cultural landscape and fostering a conscious and respectful approach to commercial activities are essential to ensuring that the rich tapestry of Indian culture continues to

thrive amidst the winds of change. In this delicate dance between tradition and modernity, India stands at the crossroads, poised to shape its cultural destiny in the unfolding narrative of the 21st century. (Photius, 2003) [11]. Futurist James Ogilvy observes that "growth of the experience industry represents a satiation with the stuff that the industrial revolution produced." Ogilvy says, "Today's consumers do not ask themselves as often, 'What do I want to have that I do not have already?' They ask, 'What do I want to experience that I have not experienced yet?'" In the meantime, malls are becoming destination entertainment hubs where patrons can enjoy the newest video games, Imax shows, virtual reality simulators, and theme clubs like Rainforest Cafe for socializing. Concurrently, the number of individuals accessing the internet and joining the new cyberculture is in the millions, and cable and satellite television are proliferating, offering hundreds of channels for viewing. (Kosasih J, 2020) [8]. Meanwhile, "content" companies are racing to capitalize on the numerous new opportunities in the cultural commerce area. Financial ones are gradually replacing traditional social relationships in a world where culture is being sold for an increasing amount of money through paid human activity. Imagine a society where almost all activities outside family relationships are compensated for. In this society, contractual relationships in the form of dues-paying memberships, subscriptions, admission fees, retainers, and fees have replaced the customary reciprocal obligations and expectations mediated by feelings of faith, empathy, and solidarity. We increasingly purchase other people's time, respect, affection, sympathy, and attention. Enlightenment and play, grooming and grace, and all in between are things we purchase; these were once exclusive to the wealthy. Personal trainers maintain our bodies, assistants shop for us, and lifestyle designers like Martha Stewart and Ralph Lauren help us style our homes and closets to make the right cultural impression and ambiance. In the meantime, our kids are involved in every kind of commercially supported extracurricular activity and program aimed at enhancing their intellectual, artistic, and athletic abilities. Playing with the other kids on the block is becoming an outdated concept. (RIFKIN J, 2009) [12][13][14]. Here are some critical aspects of the impact of commercialization on Indian culture:

Economic Growth and Cultural Transformation: The economic liberalization of the 1990s marked a turning point for India, ushering in an era of rapid commercialization. While the economy flourished, the impact on Indian culture became increasingly evident. Traditional agrarian societies gave way to urbanization, leading to shifts in lifestyle and values.

Cultural Commodification: The commodification of Indian culture has been both a boon and a challenge. On one hand, it has provided economic opportunities for local artisans and entrepreneurs. Traditional arts, crafts, and clothing have found global markets, contributing to the livelihoods of many. However, concerns linger about commercializing cultural symbols and practices, raising questions about authenticity and respect for heritage.



(Kursataite L, 2004) Cultural artifacts, traditional clothing, and handicrafts have become commodities catering to tourists. This can contribute to economic opportunities but raises cultural authenticity and preservation concerns. Traditional festivals and events are sometimes commercialized for tourism or entertainment, altering their original cultural significance. (Klinen E) [7].

Consumerism and Changing Values: Commercialization has fueled a consumer-driven culture in India. With increased disposable income, the middle class embraces a lifestyle centered around material possessions. The allure of brand-driven consumerism is challenging traditional values of simplicity and community. This shift prompts a reevaluation of societal priorities and poses a delicate balance between progress and cultural preservation. The rise of consumerism has led to changes in consumption patterns, with increased demand for branded goods, luxury items, and Western-style products.

Influence of Media: The proliferation of commercial media has played a pivotal role in shaping perceptions and influencing cultural norms. Bollywood, India's iconic film industry, has globalized, reaching audiences far beyond the country's borders. Commercialization has contributed to the global reach and influence of Indian cinema (Bollywood) and television. It has also led to the proliferation of Western media, impacting local entertainment preferences and content. While this has enhanced cultural exchange, it has also contributed to stereotypical representations of Indian culture, reinforcing certain clichés for mass consumption. (Encyclopedia.com) [4].

Globalization and Homogenization: The rise of global markets and the expansion of multinational corporations have facilitated the spread of products and ideas across borders. As cultures become more interconnected, there is a risk of cultural homogenization, where a global, standardized culture overshadows diverse traditions. Commercialization can contribute to this phenomenon by promoting a universal consumer culture that dilutes local customs and practices. (Kim, Young Y, 1988) [6][15][16][17].

Impact on Traditional Industries: India's traditional industries, such as handloom and handicrafts, have faced the dual-edged sword of commercialization. While these sectors have gained exposure and access to broader markets, the pressure to meet commercial demands has sometimes compromised the authenticity and uniqueness of traditional products. Balancing economic viability with cultural preservation remains a critical challenge.

Cultural Adaptation and Resistance: Amidst commercial influences, Indian culture exhibits resilience through adaptation and resistance. Hybrid art forms, music, and fashion emerge, blending traditional elements with modern aesthetics. Simultaneously, cultural resistance movements strive to protect indigenous practices, languages, and rituals, emphasizing the importance of preserving the roots of Indian heritage.

Urbanization and Lifestyle Changes: Urbanization, driven partly by commercial and economic activities, has led to significant lifestyle changes. This includes shifts in housing, dietary habits, and modes of transportation. Commercialization has fueled the rise of fast fashion,

influencing clothing choices and contributing to a more trend-driven culture.

VI. IMPACT OF COMMERCIALIZATION ON INDIAN FESTIVALS

India is a land of festivals. As it is a diverse country, including various religions and cultures, there are also several festivals. Every community celebrates its festivals in its unique way. These activities include dancing, singing, drama, folk art, rituals, worship patterns, dressing, decoration, eating, gathering, and much more. Being the land of festivals, our country is rich in culture, tradition, and rituals. When we talk of festivals, we all enjoy their festivities and celebrations. Every festival has a historical and/or religious origin. At the same time, some are related to seasonal changes. However, one thing common is that it brings together people from all walks of life and provides a sense of belonging for religious, societal, or geographical groups. It is this particular aspect of festivals that makes the celebrations genuinely grand. All of us might remember how, back in our school days, festivals meant a break from school, time to feast, get new clothes, gifts, and toys, and catch up with your near and dear ones. I even remember the festival of lights; the festival of Diwali would be the fourth dimension for which our parents would save up to buy some new things for the house and observe it wonderfully. The old ways of festivals and celebrations were far merrier than the ugly display of wealth our celebrations are becoming translated into. Change is said to be the only constant, but some things are better left unchanged. Festivals were majorly celebrated to respect the gods and goddesses. (Agarwal, F, Kanungo, S, 2016) Merely at that point, there are many festivals to keep up with seasonal activities like rain or crop harvesting. These festivals are perhaps the genuine individuality of our nation. As with everything else, the passage of time, the advent of globalization, and a roaring economy have caused an impingement on the direction of our festival celebrations today. Today, people have better pay and can afford to enjoy the luxury of buying new apparel, gadgets, etc., throughout the year rather than wait for festivals to make such purchases. Today, festivals have become a time to show off wealth. Festival celebrations have become more self-focused and are moving away from their tradition. It is more about instant gratification now. The traditional means of festivals and celebrations are slowly taking a back seat today. (India Celebrating, 2016) [5]. The elementary things that would have given us pleasure in celebrating festivals back then no longer enthuse us now. It is not only commercialization and modernization that should be blamed for losing the charm of festivals. There are numerous reasons for festivals losing their allure. In the past, people used to live in joint families, and the charm of celebrating festivals in joint families was entirely different compared to the nuclear type of family, as the members had more chances of cutting consumption. Moreover, the chief occupation of the citizenry in those days was farming and cultivating. The festivals are thus celebrated mainly after the harvest, when people have little work to manage. So, they can take part in the festival and enjoy it with a free mind.



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Traditionally, festivals like Diwali, Holi, Eid, Navratri, and others were celebrated with a strong focus on religious and cultural rituals. These festivals allowed communities to unite, share joy, and reinforce cultural values. However, the landscape has evolved significantly, and the influence of commercial forces has seeped into these age-old traditions. However, by the time people had new ideas, innovations, and changes to celebrate their festivals, these changes were a result of the few factors discussed below:

Changing Rituals and Traditions: Commercialization has shifted the way festivals are celebrated, with an increased emphasis on materialism and consumer goods. Extravagant displays of wealth and status often overshadow the essence of traditional rituals. This shift raises questions about the preservation of cultural identity and the potential dilution of ancient customs.

Festivals as Marketing Platforms: Major festivals have become lucrative business marketing opportunities. Brands leverage emotional and festive sentiments to promote their products, leading to the commodification of cultural symbols. The omnipresence of advertisements during festivals raises concerns about the commercial takeover of sacred spaces. It is something that has developed over time. Looking deeper into this factor, people used to wait for any festival to buy new products to meet the needs of their families. Generally, it was considered an auspicious day full of positivity. It was never mandatory to buy any item at the festival. However, when this has evolved into a buying trend, the market generates demand in people's minds while providing some offers, discounts, and prizes. This makes the audience more willing to buy at the festivals. This is something that the market has generated through solid communication. On the Diwali festival, we can easily see sales of clothes, mobile phones, jewelry, gold, utensils, furniture, cars, and bikes. One crucial factor added here is an online shopping platform like Amazon or Flipkart, which offers good deals during festivals and attracts a broad audience.

Festive Food in the Market: People are shifting from homemade items to packaged products. Products on the market are packed in such an impressive way that they attract the viewer with a good message. They try new tactics to raise their market. For example, Jubilant Food Works Ltd., which runs the pizza chain Domino's, launched a Navratri pizza made of water chestnut flour (singhada atta) and white millet flour (samak ke chawal ka atta) and other ingredients used during fasts. The pizza is topped with mozzarella cheese, cottage cheese, tomatoes, crunchy sabudana (tapioca), with a layer of tomato sauce and rock salt, and without onions or garlic. Also, women are trying new things by watching food programs on television and now on YouTube. Today, many YouTube channels make special videos dedicated to food items for various festivals.

Boost to Local Economies: On the flip side, commercialization injects significant economic stimuli into local economies. The surge in demand for goods and services during festival seasons creates job opportunities and stimulates various sectors, such as retail, hospitality, and transportation. (Straubhaar J, 2007) [10].

Energy Consumption and Pollution: The extravagant lighting, decorations, and fireworks associated with festivals contribute to increased energy consumption and air pollution.

Balancing the joy of celebration with sustainable practices becomes crucial for the long-term well-being of the environment.

Social Pressure and Socialization: The commercialization of festivals often translates into social pressure to conform to specific celebration standards. Families may feel compelled to engage in conspicuous consumption to meet societal expectations, leading to stress and financial burdens.

Over Commercialization and Extravagance: In some cases, festivals have become synonymous with extravagant displays of wealth and opulence. Lavish decorations, high-profile events, and excessive spending can contribute to an unhealthy emphasis on materialism, diverting attention from the community and spiritual aspects that are the foundation of many festivals.

Role of Advertisements: Growing competition in the market has made advertisers use different tactics to sell their products. Many products are now advertised in conjunction with our festivals. Advertisers create emotional appeal before the beginning of any festival. They market their product as something that would fit in at one of your festivals. Existing traditional items are being replaced by packaged products available on the market. They are sold in such a way that the audience understands their significance and worth.

VII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the impact of commercialization on Indian festivals is a double-edged sword. While it has undeniably brought economic benefits and global recognition, there are valid concerns about the potential erosion of cultural and spiritual values. Striking a balance between economic interests and cultural preservation is crucial to ensuring that future generations can celebrate festivals authentically and reverently. Efforts should be made to promote responsible and sustainable forms of commercialization that enhance, rather than diminish, the cultural significance of festivals. Public awareness campaigns, regulatory measures, and community initiatives can play a role in mitigating the negative impacts of excessive commercialization. Everything is shown so attractive that it makes us believe that this product or service is needed and valuable. We follow the market's lead. We follow fashion and trends. For example, across India, the most significant holiday for Hindus is Diwali, the festival of lights, which ushers in a new year and is seen as a celebration of good triumphing over evil. As a result, people view it as a happy and fortunate occasion. India has been celebrating Diwali for ages. However, just as times have evolved, so too have celebration customs. We do not celebrate Diwali like our parents and their parents did. Diwali was limited to lighting lamps (diya) but has now extended to fancy lights and burning crackers. Even flowers are replaced with a garland of artificial flowers. Holi was limited to using natural colors and gently smearing them on the faces of others. It has extended to wearing water balloons, wigs, and masks. Many hotels have a complete package for enjoying this in party mode. The modern way of celebrating this festival is on its way.



Occasions like Teej and Karva Chauth are widely celebrated, and with the trend, many beauty parlors offer a complete package for makeup and other beautification. Ultimately, the goal should be to foster a harmonious coexistence between economic interests and cultural heritage, ensuring that Indian festivals continue to be a source of joy, unity, and spiritual fulfillment for future generations. Society must balance embracing the positive aspects of commercialization, such as economic growth and exposure to diverse cultures, while safeguarding the intrinsic spiritual and cultural values associated with Indian festivals. Efforts can be made to promote sustainable and eco-friendly celebrations, fostering a sense of responsibility towards the environment.

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After aggregating input from all authors, I must verify the accuracy of the following information as the article's author.

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