

## **Pukhtunwali and its Depiction in Pakistani Advertising**

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The aim of the paper is to analyze and discuss how cultural elements have been used in advertising, targeting a specific cultural group. Eight exhibits from a purposively selected television ad of the cellular services provider Mobilink have been analyzed using visual and cultural analysis. The exhibits have been utilized as a tool of visual rhetoric. The findings of the study reveal that many elements of Pukhtun culture like Pukhtunwali, *Hujra*, dance, respect, authority of elders and music etc. are depicted in the selected TV ad. The portrayal of Pukhtun women and their role, however, was found to be problematic.

*Keywords:* Pukhtunwali, Pukhtun culture, visual analysis, cultural analysis, cultural portrayals,

### **Pashtuns and their culture**

In the subcontinent, they are called *Pathans*. They love to call themselves Pakhtun/Pukhtun/Pashtun or Afghan. Historically, their land was given different names like Pakteeka, Rohistan, Kohistan, Pukhtoonkhwa or Afghanistan and Afghanistan (Naseem, 2008). Most ancient historical manuscripts reveal that Afghanistan was once called 'Bakhtar' and the language of its inhabitants was 'Bakhto' which later became 'Pakhto' and then 'Pashto'

The aim of the paper is to explore the representation of their culture through advertising. Pashtuns are a distinct ethnic entity living in the North West of Pakistan and South East of Afghanistan. They are distinct from other ethnicities of Pakistan because of their skin color and facial features. They speak *Pukhto* (also called *Pakhto*, *Pashto* or *Pashto*) and they practice *Pukhto*. *Pukhto* language is a Central-Asian language and is very different from other languages of Pakistan. *Pukhto* (or *Pukhtuwali*) as a set of cultural practices, has much broader meaning than just a language of Pashtuns. Pashto or Pukhto means the valor, sense of honor of the Pashtuns; it can be termed as the *lex non scripta* or the unwritten law of the Pashtuns (Khan, 1963). Among Pukhtuns, it is said that Pukhtunwali takes precedence over their religion.

### **Pukhtunwali**

Like Pashtuns themselves, their culture is distinct from other cultures of Pakistan. Their pre-Islamic cultural code of Pukhto or Pukhtunwali (Pashtunwali) is still in practice. Pukhtunwali consists

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of Pashtun codes of life like, *Melmastya* (extending hospitality to all), *Hujra* (the Pashtun community center), *Nang* (personal or national honor and independence), *Badal* (settling the score or revenge at any cost), *Jalab/ Badragah* (escort; a formal escort or guarantee of safe conduct to a stranger, emissary, or even enemy), *Jirgah* (consultative assembly representing collective decision making), *Panah* (giving of asylum when it is asked for), *Tigah* (truce) etc. (Spain, 1985; Sultan-I-Rome, 2001). However, Pashtun culture and Pukhtunwali is a much broader concept, which is hardly amenable to any operational definition. Sultan-i-Rome (2001) has stressed only the habits and traditions which guide the interrelations of individuals and society. These are not that easy to spot for an outsider unless he/she has lived among Pashtuns. Some other signifiers like Pashtun dress or the *Rabab* they play may be easier to spot.

### **Pashto Music and Musical Instruments**

Pashtuns love music. It is evident from the presence of musical instruments like *Rabab*, *Mangay* (water pitcher), and *Chitrali Sitar* in every *Hujra*. Although Pashtuns love music but they have contempt for musicians (Khan, 1995). They call the singers and musicians, *dam* (plural *daman*), which is a bad social name. This shows a clear contradiction in Pashtun culture. This phenomenon is called “the value paradox” and it is not unique to Pashtun culture, but is present in all the cultures of the world. Although such opposing views seems contradictory, they are true, nonetheless. This is because of the opposing natures of the desirable and the desired in a culture (Mooij, 2013).

### **Pashtun Dances**

All the sub-tribes of Pashtuns have their tribal dances with little differences, commonly known as *Attan* which is a dance performed in circles to the beats of *Dhol*. These include *Khattak Attan*, *Mahsood Attan*, *Shah Dola*, *Taleban Attan*, *Wazir Attan*, *Logari Attan*, *Marwat Attan*, *Bhittani Attan*, *Chitrali Attan*, *Balbala*, *Spin Tikray*, *Khanawai*, *Tarai*, *Logarai*, *Thaka*, *Sakrai*, *Kochi Attan*, *Yak Gudialay*, *Nangarhari Attanrh*, *Kakari Attan*, *Dremakheez*, *Laarah* etc (Tanha, 2008). There are, however, no *Attans* indigenous to the Pashtuns of Peshawar valley or Malakand division and Swat.

### **Pashtun Cultural Songs**

Pashtun cultural songs include *Tapa*, *Badala*, *Bagatai*, *Nemakai*, *Loba* and *Charbaita* (Katozai, 2005).

### **Musical Instruments**

Pashto music is old as Pashtuns themselves. Pashtuns are, by nature, resistant to change and nostalgic. Their traditional instruments still persist in their culture. The commonly used musical instruments are: *Tabla/Naghara*, *Daff/Tambal*, *Been*, *Sitar*, *Surbahar*, *Rabab*, *Sarood*, *Tanpoora*, *Sarangi*, *Dilruba*, *Sarenda*, *Ektara*, *Shpelai*, *Shehnai*, *Alghoza*, *Poongi*, *Pakhwaj*, *Tabla*, *Dholkay*, *Khol*, *Daira*, *Khanjr*, *Mangay*.

### **Rabab**

*Rabab* and *Mangay* are considered to be the main instruments of Pashto folk music. *Rabab* is made up of *Toot or Shahtoot* (Mulberry). It has different strings with the thickest one in the middle called *Shahtaar*. A Few strings of *Rabab* are made up of thin metal wire, however, they are rarely used.

Playing *Rabab* is considered a hobby by Pashtun celebrities, not as a profession. Many of the great poets and scholars like Ameer Hamza Khan Shinwari (Hamza Baba) and Ghani Khan could play *Rabab*. It takes years of practice to learn *Rabab*.

These days the professional *Rabab* players are Bakhtiar Ustad, Bagh Aram, Ameer Hamza (not the poet Hamza Baba), Habbe Noor Ustaz of Takht Abad, Muhabbat, Bardaray, Sahib Gul, Sada Khel, Gulzar of Swabi, Shaukat Sarhadi, Ameer Khan Kabali, Zareef Kabali, Humayoun Afghan, Taj Muhammad Chagharmatti, Mukhtiar Chagharmatti. These masters have hundreds of pupils. They are local experts of *Rabab* who can play it well. They are invited to play at the village functions to entertain people with the melodious music of *Rabab*. They are paid well for their skills. For beautiful rhythms *Rabab* and *Mangay* are played together. *Rabab* is mentioned in the poetry of many Pashto poets. Khushal Khan Khattak says about *Rabab*:

*Da khushhal da khushhalai wakht hum da day*

*Che Rabab sarendra Jorrh Sara Ghagegi*

[It's a moment of great joy for Khushhal----when *Rabab* and *Sarendra* are played in Harmony]

*Rabab* is also a topic of Pashto *Tappa*, like:

*Sta da Rabab Tang me tar ghwag sho*

*Kondol pa laas mangi ta tagay odredam*

[When I heard the sound of your *Rabab*---I kept on standing thirsty in front of water pitcher]

### **Chitrali Sitar**

*Chitrali Sitar* is believed to be invented by Khwaja Ameer Khusro. It has been a famous musical instrument of Pashtuns. Sitar is also played along with *Mangay* (water pitcher) chiefly in *Hujras*. It can be thought of as a substitute of *Rabab*. It is smaller in size than a common *Sitar*, so it can be handled with ease. It can also be played by non-professionals. Its famous professional artists are Wahab Gul, Zain and Shireen (Khattak, 2007; Shaheen, 2008)

### **Pashtun Dresses**

The common dresses worn by Pashtun men these days are *Shalwar Qameez* (*Khat-Partoog*, a long wide shirt with wide pants) with a cap called *Topai* on the head. Many among them also wear *Pakol* (*Chitrali Cap*) and people in tribal areas especially the elders wear *Shamla* (Turban). Women wear *Khat-Partoog* or *Khaalkai/Gagrai* (skirt) along with *Loopata* or *Tsadar* (shawl). Pashtun women also wear *Burqa* (veil) when going out of home. These dresses vary in sub-tribes of Pashtuns. The urbanized women normally don't wear *Burqa* or *Gagrai*.

### **Role of Women in Pashtun Society: From Malalai to Malala Yousafzai**

Contrary to what some may believe, Pashtun women have always played a great role in the society. Like their male counterparts, the females love their freedom and honor. From Malalai of Miawand (also known as Malala) who rallied Pashtun forces in the battle of Miawand against the invading British forces, thus leading to the Afghan victory, to the current day Malala Yousafzai who bravely stood against the Taliban, Pashtun women have always been active members of the society. The first ever Pakistani female politician to be elected in 1977 to parliament was a Pashtun, Begum Naseem Wali Khan. Pashtun women have braved all the enemies of Pashtuns from the colonial powers to the religious bigots imposing their will on Pashtun (Qazi, 2009)

### **Pukhtunwali in Movies and Literature**

Pukhtunwali has lately, inspired many Western movies and literature. An example of which is *Lone Survivor*, a movie based on a non-fiction book of the same name in which a Pashtun is shown giving *Panah* (asylum) to a wounded US soldier despite all the risk to his family (Luttrell, 2007; Lone Survivor, 2013). It has been advised to the American Army to train the soldiers in tactical Pukhtunwali so that they can engage the tribal society in Afghanistan (Ross, 2010).

### Pukhtunwali in Advertising

The theme of Pashtunwali (or Pukhtunwali) in advertising can be seen only in the regions which Pashtun inhabit or where people have some contact with Pashtuns. Pashtuns and their culture has been depicted in many corporate ads in Pakistan, the most common examples are Mobilink, Telenor, Nestle and Olper's ads.

As an example, eight exhibits from an ad of Pakistan's largest communication network Mobilink are analyzed. The images are taken using Microsoft Windows PrtScr function. The analysis and interpretation of ads to use them as visual rhetoric is not new. In his popular book, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of industrial man*, Marshal McLuhan (1951) has analyzed different ads from twentieth century. The choice of TV ads for analysis is justified on the grounds that as compared to other media sources like movies or dramas, an ad is of shorter duration and contains all the elements that are present in movies or dramas. Moreover, TV ads are, to use the expression of Richard Wagner, the "total work of art" (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), in that they incorporate the many different forms of arts like music, dance, architecture, paintings, poetry, expressions and feelings (Stanford's dictionary of Philosophy, 2009). The ad has beautifully portrayed Pashtun culture. Some interesting and representative screenshots from the ad are taken and presented as visual rhetoric. The analysis approach is adapted from the method used by Stern & Schroeder (1994) in which the authors used interpretative approach from Art to analyze an ad from a perfume brand *Paco Rabanne pour Homme*. The target audience of the Mobilink ad are Pashtuns especially those who have relations in the bordering Afghanistan.

### Commercial: Jazz Afghanistan Offer

*Jazz Afghanistan offer* (IAL Saatchi & Saatchi, 2012) source:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeuepiPHVPU>

### Creative Agency IAL Saatchi and Saatchi

#### Text

#### MOBILINK JAZZ

##### SCENE 1: BACKGROUND (PUSHTO MUSIC, *RABAB*)

- 1) A car approaching
- 2) Traditional Pashtun dance

##### SCENE 2:

- 1<sup>st</sup> person welcoming and hugging the guests

##### SCENE 3:

- 1) 1<sup>st</sup> person *offering a thousand rupee note to the child*
- 2) 1<sup>st</sup> person: "nam kya rakha hai"  
 [What name did you chose for him?]
- 3) 2<sup>nd</sup> person (Pashto accent): "*naam to barray lala rakhain gay jab Kabul say wapas ayngay*"  
 [The name will be chosen by *Barry Lala* (our elder brother) when he returns from Kabul]
- 4) 1<sup>st</sup> person: "*abhi phone milatay hain*"  
 [Let's call him now].
- 5) Phone ringing
- 6) 2<sup>nd</sup> person: "*hello lala*"  
 [Hello *Lala*]

**SCENE 4**

2<sup>nd</sup> person informs *lala* (elder brother) about child-birth and happiness is evident from *lala's* expressions.

3<sup>rd</sup> person (*lala*): “*ye bhe crickter banay ga is ka naam bhe Younus hoga*”

[This baby will also become a cricketer and his name will be Younus]

3) Upon hearing this all express jublations. All start dancing

(Voice Over): *apnon say rabta kabhi na tootay ,ab Afghanistan ke liye intehai kam call rates ,sirf mobilink jazz se q keh mobilink jazz apna hai .(logo)* [ your contact never breaks with your loved ones....only with Mobilink Jazz because Mobilink Jazz is our very own]

**Discussions**

This is a beautiful and aesthetically appealing ad by Mobilink Jazz. The music is pleasing and the event (the birth of a child) is a happy one. The colors are vivid. Overall, the ad has a good effect on the beholders. The ad stands out with its beautiful scenic imagery and sweet music. The Pashtun culture is shown as *Dionysian* with beautiful lively dances and a feeling of jubilation because of the birth of a child in the family. The scene shows a *Hujra* and the new born baby is male. Famous Pashtun cricketer and former captain of Pakistan cricket team, Younus Khan is featured in the ad. The society shown in the ad is traditional and communal, where the authority of the elder is respected by the brother even after the birth of a child which is shown by the fact that the father concedes his right of naming the baby to the elder brother (translated in Urdu as: *bare lala* and in English subtitled as *Great Uncle* (see exhibit 6). Women are shown looking from the inside of the home, enjoying passively. They have no say in naming a baby. The ad is available on YouTube both in Urdu and Pashto versions.

**Exhibit 1:****Hilly areas shown in Jazz Afghanistan Offer Ad.**

Source: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeuepiPHVPU>). Image taken using VLC media player's Take Snapshot function.

**Exhibit 2: Pashtun Musical instrument *Rabab* shown in *Jazz Afghanistan Offer* ad. Note the *Pakol* and *Khat-Partoog* (or *Kamees-Partoog*) and rural background.**



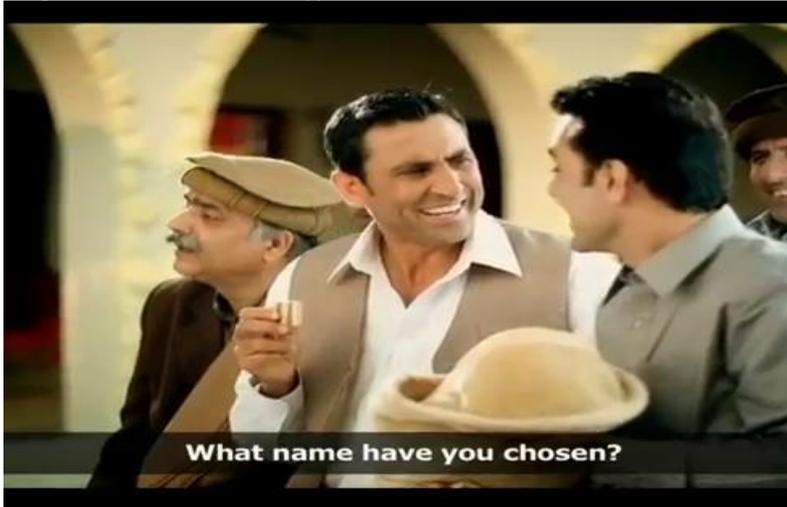
Source: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeuepiPHVPU>). Image taken using VLC media player's Take Snapshot function

**Exhibit 3: *Jazz Afghanistan Offer* Ad .Pashtuns dancing and celebrating with *Dionysian* spirit. Note the *Khat-Partoog*, *Pakols*, traditional Pashtun dance and the rural background. One person is wearing a *Tsadar*(traditional shawl worn by both males and females).**



Source:(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeuepiPHVPU>). Image taken using VLC media player's Take Snapshot function.

**Exhibit4:** Famous Pukhtun cricketer of Pakistan cricket team Younas Khan featuring in the Jazz ad. Note *Khat-Partoog*, *Pakol* and waistcoat, typical rural Pashtun dresses.



Source: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeuepiPHVPU>). Image taken using VLC media player's Take Snapshot function.

**Exhibit 5:** A child swaddled in traditional Pashtun style in *Jazz Afghanistan Offer*. Note the guest offering a thousand rupee note to the child. The tradition is that a guest will offer money when a newborn baby is presented to him/her for the first time. Also significant is the observation that the birth is that of a male child; Pashtuns commonly prefer male child, and celebrate the birth of a male child only.



Source: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeuepiPHVPU>). Image taken using VLC media player's Take Snapshot function.

**Exhibit 6:** *Status of elders*. *Jazz Afghanistan Offer* ad. Upon asking what name is chosen for the newborn the father replies that the name will be chosen by the Elder Uncle (wrongly translated in the subtitles as Great Uncle as a result of literal translation. Translated in the Urdu version of the ad as "*Bare Lala*" or elder/big brother), also showing the status of the elder brother in Pashtun society.



Source: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeuepiPHVPU>). Image taken using VLC media player's Take Snapshot function.

**Exhibit 7: Lala in Afghanistan.** *Jazz Afghanistan Offer.* A Pashtun elder is sitting in a traditional setting, with rosary/prayer beads in one hand and cell phone in the other. Prayer beads signify religiosity of Pashtuns. Note the lack of furniture except a small stool, the presence of a ceramic kettle and the presence of traditional Afghan rugs.



Source: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeuepiPHVPU>). Image taken using VLC media player's Take Snapshot function.

**Exhibit 8: Status of Women.** Afghan/Pashtun women peering through the curtains (Upper right pane of the picture below) and spying on the party. In the ad, Pukhtun women are shown behind curtains and separate from men as they are believed to belong to homes and are not expected to take part in the activities of menfolk (Amjid & Rasool, 2017). This depiction is in stark contrast to their role models like Malalai and Malala.



Source: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeuepiPHVPU>). Image taken using VLC media player's Take Snapshot function.

### Conclusion

The aim of the study was to identify and analyze how different cultural elements are used in TV ads. It also demonstrates what goes into the making of an ad, and can be used as an aid for teaching how to make an ad. Based on the findings of this study we can conclude that almost all the elements of Pashtun culture like Pukhtunwali, Hujra, dance, respect, authority of elders, and music etc. are shown in the selected TV ad with varying correspondences with the real Pashtun culture. The only exception is that the role of women here is shown as more passive than it actually is. It is true Pashtun women do not mingle with males the way women do in other cultures but still they play a major role in leading and decision-making. These role depictions can have an adverse impact on the minds of audience as with repeated exposure to such messages, people internalize the roles and behaviors and it becomes a part of their culture (Martin, 2008). Hogan (1999) has asserted that representations of national identities, created through advertising, are gendered and are linked to globalization. Multinational corporations are instrumental in creating and perpetuating such identities through their advertising.

### Future research

Here we have supported our cultural analysis with one video ad from Mobilink which can raise questions about the generalizability of the study. These objections can be countered by the fact that the analysis has generated some deep insights. In the future studies, ads of other companies as well as dramas, movies and other media can be included to make the study more generalizable. Though generalizability is not a concern for qualitative studies, a bigger sample and quantitative approach will lend more generalizability to the study.

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