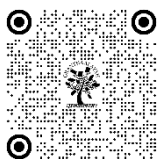


# COMMUNICATING ANCIENT INDIAN CULTURE THROUGH MUSEUMS: WEBSITE ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL MUSEUM, NEW DELHI

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## ABSTRACT

India is one of the eight ancient civilizations of the world. Harappa Civilisation was an epitome of rich cultural confluence. The National Museum, New Delhi is an autonomous organization of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India boasts of diverse cultural objects from India and abroad. NM plays a pivotal role in the promotion of India culture both inside and outside of the country by collaborating with national and international cultural organizations. Collection, Conservation and Communication (3Cs) are the cornerstone of its mission to promote the Indian culture. The focus of this paper is the last 'C' that is "Communication". The present study is limited to the study of only ten artifacts belonging to the Indus Valley Civilisation which were judged on five cultural value indicators such as aesthetics, symbolic, spiritual, social, and educational. The mainstay of the study is the website content of the National Museum. The study reveals that these artifacts are well preserved. The images uploaded on the website are of good quality. But the scroll speed is slightly high and also the description does not accompany the images. Future studies may indulge on the website of analysis of other national/international museums to have wide perspective.

**Keywords:** Cultural Communication, Museology, Heritage, Communication Strategy

## 1. INTRODUCTION

India is one of the eight ancient civilizations of the world. The Hindu holy city of Banaras is the oldest continuously surviving city in the world which was part of the Kashi Kingdom during the ancient times (San Chirico, 2012). Ancient India history can be divided into three major epochs namely Pre-historic, Early Historic and Golden Age. Pre-Historic Era consists of Stone Age (500000 – 200000 years) and Bronze Age (3300 BC). The Stone Age marks a very rich "South Asian Neolithic Culture" which is the hallmark of the Indus Valley Civilisation – one of the oldest urban civilisations of the world. Mohenjodoro-Harappa Culture (2600 BC – 1900

BC) is the characteristic feature of Bronze Age. Early Historic culture comprises four distinct phases namely Vedic culture (1500 BC – 500 BC), *Mahajanapadas* (Great Kingdoms), Greeco-Persian culture and the Mauryan Rule. The *Mahajanapadas* consisted of sixteen small republics and monarchies spanned across to the present-day Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Ashoka – The Great merged them into four large Kingdoms namely Avanti, Magadha, Kosala and Vatsa. The Greeco – Persian conquests cast a long-lasting effect on the indigenous Ancient Indian culture which is remarkably reflected in the cultural items recovered from the excavations carried out various archaeological sites in India and Pakistan. The Mauryan Empire reached its peak during the reign of Ashoka (268 BC – 232 BC). Ashoka’s rule features extensive promotion of arts and culture. The Satavahan Empire (50 BC – 250 BC), Kushan Empire (185 BC – 300 BC) and Gupta Dynasty (319 CE – 467 CE) are the highlights of Golden Age.

Harappa Civilisation was an epitome of rich cultural confluence that is influenced by Greek and Persian customs yet maintains its unique local identity. Some of the cultural symbols of Ancient India that can be discerned from the artifacts discovered at Mohonjo – Daro archaeological site and are still in practice include, but not limited to *tilak*, bangles, waist-chain, anklets, *swastika*, *yogic asanas* and so on.

The National Museum (NM) – an autonomous organization of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India – is located in the National Capital of New Delhi. Initially, it started in the President House and later shifted to its present building on December 18, 1960. At the moment the NM “holds approximately 2, 00,000 objects of diverse nature, both Indian as well as foreign, and its holdings cover a time span of more than five thousand years of Indian cultural heritage” National Museum. (2019). NM plays a pivotal role in the promotion of India culture both inside and outside of the country. The three floors of the NM building contain twenty permanent galleries which showcase the immense diversity of our rich cultural heritage. One of the important departments of National Museum is Outreach Department. The Vision of this Department, “is to make the National Museum one of the best cultural experiences in India and the world” [National Museum. \(2019\)](#). In order to promote Indian culture, the National Museum regularly collaborates with national and international cultural organizations to hold exhibitions and engages with them in a variety of outreach programmes including seminars, conferences and workshops and other events. “Collection”, “Conservation” and “Communication” (3Cs) are the cornerstone of its mission to promote the Indian culture. The focus of this paper is the last ‘C’ that is “Communication”.

## 2. MUSEUMS AS AGENTS OF CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

One of the most important and systematically organized places to showcase culture is museum which “display much more than artifacts” [Sherman & Irit \(2017\)](#). Recognizing the importance of museums as agents of cultural communication the Paris-based International Council of Museums (ICOM) dedicated the themes of two recent International Museums Day (IMD) to culture communication. The theme of 2016 IMD was “Museums and Cultural Landscapes” and of 2019 was “Museums as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Tradition”. The Siena Charter (2014) proposed by ICOM defines the cultural landscape as, “a multifaceted concept which adds anthropological, social, economic, and cultural dimensions to its physical, natural, and geographic significance. Landscapes are part of the cultural and natural heritage to be preserved, interpreted, and looked after, in their tangible and intangible aspects” [ICOM \(2014\)](#). This, in itself, speaks volumes of the significance of museums

as cultural “institutions that are dedicated to preserving and interpreting the primary tangible evidence of humankind and the environment” [Lewis \(2021\)](#). In the current scenario museums cannot and should not be imagined as static entities rather, to remain relevant, they are ever-evolving institutions who keep pace with the changing times. Looked from cultural communication framework, the modern museums have turned into, “cultural hubs functioning as platforms where creativity combines with knowledge and where visitors can also co-create, share and interact” [ICOM. \(n.d.\)](#). Museums are treasure-trove of our culture – both past and present. The cultural value of a museum is intrinsically embedded into two important “facets” namely “the building of audiences and the advancement of artistic practice”. An artifact exhibited in a museum is judged on five “cultural value indicators” such as “aesthetics, symbolic, spiritual, social and educational” [Bakhshi & Throsby \(2010\)](#).

Museums Perform a Variety of Functions: Documenting, Educating, Preserving History, Connecting People of Diverse Backgrounds, Communicating Culture and so on [Workman \(2016\)](#). This Paper Deals with the Last Function of the Museums that is Cultural Communication. “Museums play a crucial role in preserving local culture. With careful documentation and artifact preservation, a culture can be recorded and remembered regardless of its future” [Workman \(2016\)](#). The importance of museums as an agent of cultural communication lay in the fact that they, “tell powerful stories of tragedy and overcoming adversity; they drive people to evoke change at home or across borders” [Exhibit Concepts \(2019\)](#). “Modern museums” are specialized professional organizations that are primarily conceived with “the purpose to collect, preserve, interpret, and display objects of artistic, cultural, or scientific significance for the study and education of the public” [Museum \(2022\)](#) and this plays a crucial role in broadening the cultural horizons of the general public. Modern museums do not shy away from adopting ever new technologies to offer rich cultural experience to the visitors – both at the physical place and in the virtual space. Their cultural communication strategy is increasingly relying on the digital technologies because they have generated a plethora of cultural outreach opportunities for the museums “overcoming the traditional constraints imposed by physical sites; expanding their audience reach; opening new avenues for developing areas of activity; creating new sources of economic and cultural value, and prompting new business models” ([Selwood 2010, 6](#)). Not only do the digital technologies help in increasing the museum footfall but also “they are creating new sources of cultural and economic value, and even taking the art form itself in new directions” ([Selwood 2010, 6](#)).

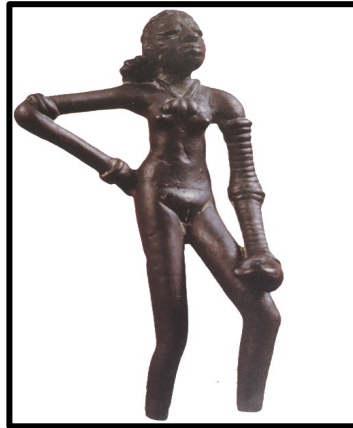
Museums as cultural organizations adopt the multipronged communication strategy of “study, education, and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment” [Perera \(2013\)](#) to disseminate information about the cultural heritage. “The museums that are maintaining websites interact more time with their audiences and with the whole world” [Perera \(2013\)](#). “In the physical museum”, the cultural communication strategy incorporates, “multimedia tours; interactive kiosks; simulation and virtual reality experiences; wireless connectivity enabling live feeds of information and tools; sound, laser, and light shows; IMAX presentations and ‘theme park-like’ attractions” [Bakhshi & Throsby \(2010\)](#). Whereas in the virtual space the cultural communication strategy of the museum comprises:

“online access to collections and databases; online exhibitions (text, image, audiovisual); virtual exhibitions (including 360-degree room views); virtual museums (including on Second Life), the use of real and imaginary exhibition and gallery spaces; downloadable and streamed multimedia content (audio,

video, podcasts); interactive gallery maps; dedicated sites, games and play spaces for children and young people; personalised spaces – creating own favourites and tagging objects; use of social media networks (blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube); and shopping online (exhibition tickets, merchandise) [Bakhshi & Throsby \(2010\)](#).

### 3. PRE-HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

Figure 1



**Figure 1** The Dancing Girl

**Source** National Museum. (n.d.). *Dancing Girl*. Retrieved September 22, 2022, from [http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906\\_Dancing%20girl.jpg](http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906_Dancing%20girl.jpg).

[Figure 1](#) depicts the Dancing Girl (Item/Exhibit No.: 5721/195). The Dancing Girl is a bronze sculpture (2300 BC – 1750 BC) that belongs to the Mohenjo-daro Civilisation. The height of this Statue is 10.5 centimeters (4.1 inches). The Sculpture showcases a completely naked woman in standing posture wearing ornaments such as necklace with a heavy pendant, four bangles in the right hand and twenty-four bangles in the left arm till the shoulder. The anatomical features of the confidently looking woman are clearly visible. Both of the feet are missing.

Figure 2



**Figure 2** Dish on Stand

**Source** National Museum. (n.d.). *Dish on Stand*. Retrieved September 22, 2022, from [www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in:http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906\\_Dish%20on%20Stand-min.JPG](http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in:http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906_Dish%20on%20Stand-min.JPG).

Figure 2 displays terracotta dish on stand (item/exhibit no.: h795/a (c) 1450 h) that belongs to late harappan era (2500 bc). there is a hole in the centre of dish which rests on triple ridged pedestal. the total height of the two-piece artifact is about 20.5 centimeters. the dish and the stand were separately moulded and then joined together (dish over the stand) by using fine clay.

Figure 3

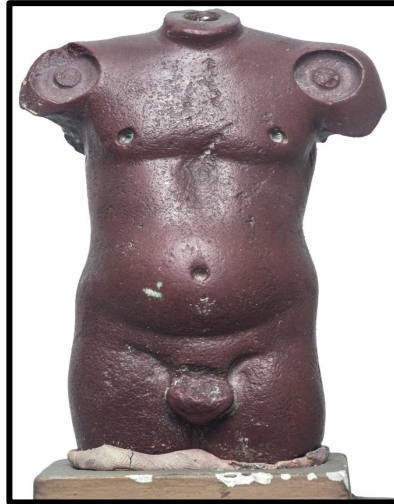


Figure 3 Male Torso

Source National Museum. (n.d.). *Male Torso*. Retrieved September 22, 2022, from [http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906\\_DSC\\_3653jpg](http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906_DSC_3653jpg)

Figure 3 shows a headless and armless male torso (item/exhibit no.: 187/9042) carved out from red jasper – stone. the dimensions of the sculpture measure 9.2 centimeters x 5.5 centimeters x 3 centimeters and it belongs to late harrappan era (2500 bc). the male anatomical features are clearly visible. there is one hole on each breast one on shoulder socket on each shoulder.



Figure 4 The Climbing Monkey

Source National Museum. (n.d.). *Climbing Monkey*. Retrieved September 22, 2022, from [http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906\\_climbing%20monkey.JPG](http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906_climbing%20monkey.JPG).

Figure 4 displays almost square shaped (6-centimeter x 4-centimeter x 4 centimeter) terracotta climbing monkey (item/exhibit no.: 11625/216) sculpture that belongs to late harappa era (2500 bc). the monkey firmly holds a nearly perpendicular wooden pole in his hands which passes through the holes in both the hands. the body and facial hairs are evidently visible. the tail of the monkey is turned down. stylistically the sculpture confirms to the indus art style.

Figure 5



Figure 5 The Standing Figure of Mother Goddess

Source National Museum. (n.d.). *Standing Mother Goddess*. Retrieved September 22, 2022, from [http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906\\_Mother%20goddess.jpg](http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906_Mother%20goddess.jpg)

Figure 5 portrays a hand-made terracotta sculpture of mother goddess (item/exhibit no. dk 3506/260) that belongs to mohonjo - daro civilisation (2700 bc - 2100 bc). it is 23 centimeters high and 8.5 centimeters wide. the upper body of sculpture is completely naked while in the lower body only genitals are covered with a garment. there are two large cup-like structures on either side of head. the mother goddess is wearing a large necklace which touches the bare conical chests. the right arm is completely missing while the hand is missing in the left arm. stylistically the sculpture represents the indus art style.

**Figure 6**



**Figure 6** Pashupati Seal

**Source** National Museum. (n.d.). *Pashupati Seal*. Retrieved September 22, 2022, from [http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906\\_Pashupati%20Seal.jpg](http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906_Pashupati%20Seal.jpg).

**Figure 6** exhibits a steatite *pashupati* seal (item/exhibit no. dk 5175/143) that belongs to mohonjo – daro civilization (2500 – 2400 bc). it measures 3.4 centimeter in height, 1.4 centimeter in length and 1.4 centimeter in width. lord shiva or *pashupati* is shown seated in cross-legged in padmasana posture. the ling of lord shiva is clearly visible. there are two buffalo horns above the head of *pashupati*. something is written above the buffalo horns which is unrecognisable. different wild animals such as elephant, rhinoceros, and tiger surround the head of *pashupati*. the seal is damaged from bottom left. stylistically the sculpture represents the indus art style.

**Figure 7**



**Figure 7** Seated Male in *Namaskara* Pose

Figure 7 demonstrates a cream coloured and hand moulded terracotta seated male in *namaskara* pose (item/exhibit no.: 3072/388) that belongs to harappa civilisation (2700 – 2100 bc). its height is 5-centimeter, length is 4 centimeter and width are 2 centimeter. the legs of the sculpture are outstretched while the knees are raised upwards, and the hands are folded in *namaskara* posture. the figurine has its head, nose and ears pinched. the hands and toe fingers are not carved out. interestingly enough, the trademark harappan ornaments such as bangles, necklace, armbands are missing in the sculpture. stylistically the sculpture confirms to the indus art style.

Figure 8



Figure 8 The Bull

Source National Museum. (n.d.). *Bull*. Retrieved September 22, 2022, from [HTTP://WWW.NATIONALMUSEUMINDIA.GOV.IN/UPLOADS/COLLECTIONS/1598872906\\_BULL.JPG](http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906_BULL.JPG)

Figure 8 shows cream coloured, handmade terracotta bull (item/exhibit no. 1539/534) moulded in baked clay that belongs to mohonjo – daro period (2500 bc). its height is 16-centimeter, length is 6 centimeter and width are 8 centimeter. the face, eyes and other anatomical features are clearly visible. all of the four legs of the sculpture are damaged. decorative patterns surround the neck. the tail is turned downwards. stylistically the sculpture belongs to the indus art style.

Figure 9



Figure 9 Toy Cart

Source National Museum. (n.d.). *Pashupati Seal*. Retrieved September 22, 2022, from [HTTP://WWW.NATIONALMUSEUMINDIA.GOV.IN/UPLOADS/COLLECTIONS/1618479795\\_TOY%20CART.JPG](http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1618479795_TOY%20CART.JPG)



**Figure 9** presents a clay toy cart (item/exhibit no.: hr 13974/222) that belongs to harappa period. its total length including the cart and the wooden shaft is 11 centimeters. the long shaft is fitted with a small horizontal shaft at its top. the two wheels and the rectangular bowl-shaped trolley are made up of clay. both of the wheels have holes in the centre through which wooden shaft passes. stylistically the sculpture confirms to the indus art style.

**Figure 10**



**Figure 10** Animal Faced Pregnant Female

**Source** National Museum. (n.d.). *Animal Faced Pregnant Girl*. Retrieved September 22, 2022, [HTTP://WWW.NATIONALMUSEUMINDIA.GOV.IN/UPLOADS/COLLECTIONS/1598872906\\_ANIMAL%20FACED%20PREGNANT%20FEMALE.JPG](http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/uploads/collections/1598872906_ANIMAL%20FACED%20PREGNANT%20FEMALE.JPG)

**Figure 10** illustrates the animal faced pregnant female (item/exhibit no.: vs 33/256) terracotta statute that belongs to the mohonjo – daro civilisation (2700 bc – 2100 bc). it is 9.4 centimeters long and 4.0 centimeters wide. stylistically it falls under the broad category of indus art. the figurine is well preserved except for a few holes – one on each shoulder, one between the hip joints and one below the abdomen. the legs are thick and short but are conjoined. the eyes and holes of the nostrils are clearly visible.

**Figure 11**



**Figure 11** Ancient India Map

**Source** (2013). *Media Studie101*, 8. (E. Pearson, B. Nicholls, M. Wengenmeir, K.-W. Chen, H. Philips, C. Snowden, et al., Compilers) Victoria: BCcampus.

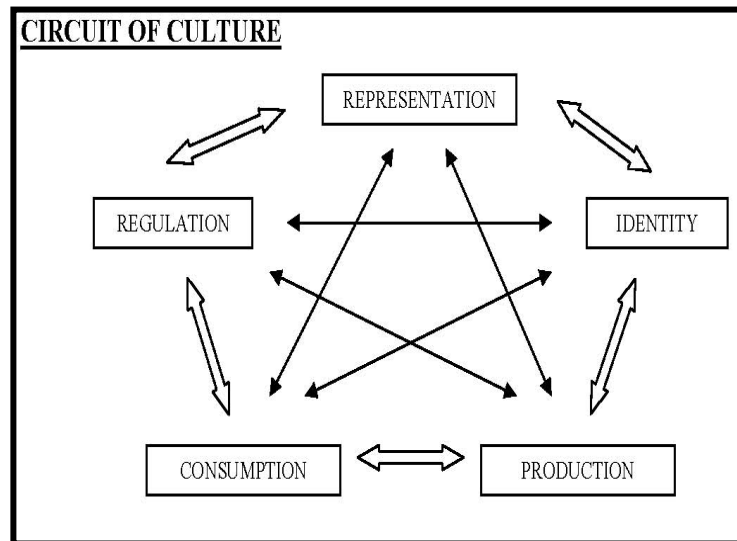
#### 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The culture of a particular geographical region immensely influences one's behaviour and communication pattern in multiple ways. also, the unique communication patterns of the individuals of a particular place are the result of the culture that prevails there. culture means a particular set of common belief systems, values, and traditions that a closely knit group of people share. cultural communication refers to the study of the manner in which people interact with each other – both verbally and non-verbally – in a given social context. thus, it can be asserted here that culture and communication are intrinsically intertwined together – both of them complement each other and it is impossible to imagine one without the other. in fact, culture is a multidimensional concept that can be understood from a variety of angles such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, media, and communication. from sociological perspective culture may be defined as, “a large and diverse set of mostly intangible aspects of social life” [Cole \(2019\)](#). Sociologists divide the culture into abstract ideas, for example, “values and beliefs, language, communication, and practices that are shared in common by a group of people” and physical objects such as buildings, technological gadgets, and clothing” [Cole \(2019\)](#) and other cultural products. From Anthropological viewpoint culture may be conceived as, “the shared set of (implicit and explicit) values, ideas, concepts, and

rules of behaviour that allow a social group to function and perpetuate itself” Hudelson (2004). In the views of American anthropologists Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952), “human behaviour” and “artifacts” form the core of “culture” that “consists of patterns of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts” Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952). From psychological point of view culture is taken as an independent variable that is capable of powerfully influencing the communication patterns of the individuals in a given society Miller (2002) while the American Psychological Association (APA) defines culture as, “the distinctive customs, values, beliefs, knowledge, art, and language of a society or a community” American Psychological Association. (2022). In the realms of media and communication studies culture is perceived as “a set of learned behaviours shared by a group of people through interaction” Pearson et al. (2013). It is a folly to assume that culture is a rigid and fixed entity rather it is a dynamic and ever evolving process that continually tries to adapt itself to the changing times and “acquires new meanings with the progress of society” Bâlc (2018).

Cultural communication is composed of a range of interconnected “processes”. du gay, hall, janes, mackay, & negus (1997) “identify” at least five such processes namely (a) representation; (b) identity; (c) regulation; (d) consumption and (e) production which when “taken together complete the ‘circuit of culture’ – through which any analysis of a cultural text or artifact must pass if it is to be adequately studied” Du Gay et al. (1997). “The circuit of culture is a way of exploring a product of a culture as a complex object that is affected by and has an impact on a number of different aspects of that culture” Du Gay et al. (1997). Figure 12 illustrates the interrelationship between the different processes of cultural communication.

**Figure 12**



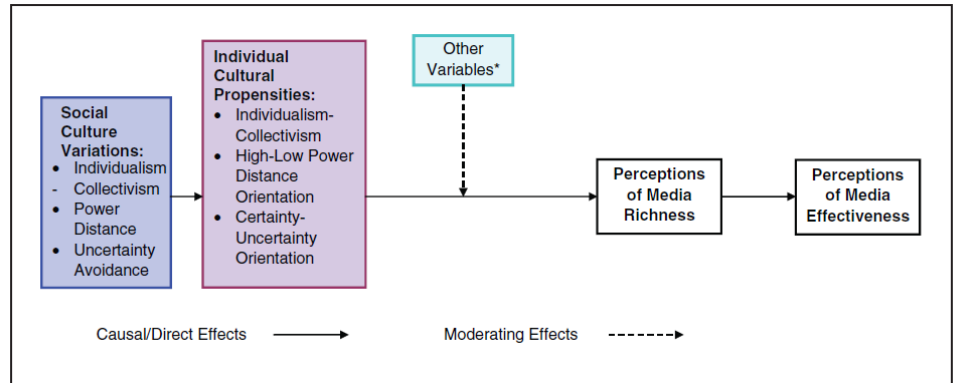
**Figure 12** Circuit of Culture

**Source** du Gay, P., Hall, S., Janes, L., Mackay, H., & Negus, K. (1997). *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications in association with The Open University. p.3.

Culture affects the communication patterns in a variety of ways as the “Communication processes occur in specific cultural contexts, with unique normative beliefs, assumptions, and shared symbols” Leonard et al. (2009) and in the process invariably “influences what people communicate, to whom they

communicate, and how they communicate” Leonard et al. (2009). Rice (1998) rightly points out that cultural values play a decisive role in acceptance or rejection of particular media messages. According to Covarrubias (2018), “Cultural communication treats culture and people as unique sets of social actors whose lives are composed of intricate webs of nuanced expressions and attendant meanings, wherein each enactor plays a part in animating the symbolic resources that comprise their richly diverse schemes of life” Covarrubias (2018). Figure 13 illustrates, “the posited direct effect of social culture (particularly individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance) on individual cultural propensities” Covarrubias (2018).

**Figure 13**



**Figure 13** Relationship Between Culture and Communication

**Source** Leonard, K. M., Van Scotter, J. R., & Pakdil, F. (2009). Culture and Communication: Cultural Variations and Media Effectiveness. *Administration and Society*, 41 (7), 850-877.

This study is situated within the context of museum communication and more specifically it explores how museums act as agents of cultural communication. museums are premium examples of cultural communication. they convey the cultural messages with help of artifacts by means of in-house exhibitions and outreach programmes. “Museum communication is interdisciplinary, cross-medial and participatory” ZKM Center for Art and Media. (n.d.). Since the advent of internet and the World Wide Web (www) museums – as cultural organizations – have pounced upon the digital wagon and digitized their contents and uploaded them on their websites for the benefit of virtual visitors. “Museums increasingly use” websites “to communicate with existing and potential visitors, calling attention to their collections, exhibitions, and events” Gonzalez (2017). Museum websites provide a virtual tour of the museum, hence, serve an important tool of outreach activities. the museum website facilitates multimedia convergence of text, images, and audio/visual content at the same place. the convergent media content of the museum website offers rich and joyful experience to the visitor who can read the text, glance over the images, watch the video and listen to the audio clipping – all at one spot. The museum website help expand its access to unimaginable proportions. “Museum departments that are often perceived as elusive can now be revealed, enabling the museum to demonstrate its core values” Gonzalez (2017) also Museum websites, “allows the general public to see behind closed doors” Gonzalez (2017). Given all the advantages, however, the museum website should be treated as an extension of the physical galleries and exhibits and not the sole museum itself – “a complement rather than a replacement” ZKM Center for Art and Media. (n.d.). The

differently abled persons, who, for their disability, cannot visit the museum in person, are now in position to virtually explore the museum through its website.

## 5. HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses of the study are:

- 1) The National Museum situated in the National Capital New Delhi boasts of a rich collection of artifacts belonging to Ancient India.
- 2) The artifacts displayed in the Ancient India Gallery of the National Museum help us decipher the cultural values of Indus Valley Civilisation.
- 3) The National Museum website acts as an outreach tool to communicate the culture of Ancient India.

## 6. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to:

- 1) Identify the artifacts belonging to the ancient india exhibited at national museum, new delhi.
- 2) Examine the cultural importance of the artifacts belonging to the ancient india exhibited at national museum, new delhi.
- 3) Study the pre-historic archaeology section of the national museum website.

## 7. METHODOLOGY

For the Qualitative Analysis ten artifacts belonging to the Indus Valley Civilisation and available on the National Museum website were carefully selected from the Pre-Historic Archaeological Section of the National Museum website so as to represent the whole gamut of the Civilisation. The qualitative analysis includes the quality and dimensions of the image. Next the images of the selected artifacts were downloaded and saved in the computer. The saved images were inserted in file and resized and suitably captioned. When each of the images was clicked the accompanying description popped up. Since the description could not be copied, therefore, it had to be manually typed. In case the description was deemed insufficient other internet resources and websites too were consulted. These include, but not limited to [www.indianculture.gov.in](http://www.indianculture.gov.in), <https://artsandculture.google.com> and so on. Next section "Discussion" sheds light on the cultural significance of each of these artifacts.

## 8. DISCUSSION

The ornamented Dancing Girl ([Figure 1](#)) represents the highly developed culture of Indus Valley Civilisation. The large number of bangles probably suggests that women during that period were fond of jewellery. The structure of Dish on Stand ([Figure 2](#)) signifies that it might have been used for some religious rituals. The Climbing Monkey ([Figure 4](#)) is one of the finest examples of the art of pottery that flourished during the Harappan Period. It is conspicuous that the artisans used simple tools to produce this magnificent piece. The Climbing Monkey represents the art of mechanical movable toys of Ancient India more than five thousand years ago. Standing Figure of Mother Goddess ([Figure 5](#)) indicates that a culture of fertility and sexuality existed during the Harappan Period. The carvings, inscription and animal

and human drawings and symbols on Pashupati Seal (Figure 6) add to the cultural value of the Seal as well as provide a glimpse of the religious belief system of the Indus Valley Civilisation. Seated male in namaskara pose (Figure 7) confirms that yoga is an important cultural practice that continues to exist right from harappan period till date. The Bull (Figure 8) showcases the culture of domestication of animals for agro-related and transportation activities. The fineness and intricate drawings attest to the artistic beauty of the sculpture. Toy Cart (Figure 9) symbolizes a culture of using bullock carts for ferrying passengers and carrying loads during the Harappan Period. It certainly implies that the Harappan Civilisation boasted of a well-developed market system and road network connecting villages to the markets and urban centers.

The National Museum maintains an engaging website which provides detailed information about the National Museum including its history, organizational structure, collections, galleries and so on. The National Museum website contains seven main sections namely (from left to right) Home, About the Museum, Visit Museum, Art and Research, Gallery, Exhibitions and Learning and Outreach (in that order). Each of these virtual sections corresponds to the physical department/section of the National Museum. The Art and Research Section is further divided into four major sections: (a) Jatan (b) Collections (c) Collection Beyond Galleries and (d) Curatorial Corner. The Collections Section further contains eleven sub-sections viz Pre-Historic Archaeology, Archaeology, Anthropology, Arms and Armour, Decorative Arts, Manuscripts, Numismatics and Epigraphy, Painting, Jewellery, Central Asian Antiquities and Pre-Columbian and Western Art. This research limits itself to the first sub-section that is the Pre-Historic Archaeology Collection only. The National Museum website also includes Sections such as NM Virtual, Museum at Home and Indian Culture. The website contains high quality images of the artifacts available in the National Museum that are downloadable. The Pre-Historic Archeological Section of the website carries images of ten artifacts which scroll left to right at a fairly high speed. One of the major drawbacks of these images is that their description does not accompany them. One has to click on the selected image which then pops up with the description. And unfortunately, this description cannot be copied and pasted. So, one has to repeatedly return to the description remember it and then type it. This makes the whole exercise pretty cumbersome and is obviously not helpful to researchers. Another area of concern of the National Museum website especially with reference to the images in the Pre-Historic Archaeology Section is the scroll speed which is a little fast which makes it difficult to concentrate on a particular image.

## 9. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

It is both ways – the culture shapes communication and the communication reflect the culture “because culture affects communication, understanding perceptions of media effectiveness and resulting media preferences requires the inclusion of cultural context at the societal and individual levels” Leonard et al. (2009). Museums serve as an interface between past and present cultures. They literally transport us to that particular time in history and we tend to relive that era in our minds. In this Information and Technology age the websites of the museums serve as an excellent outreach tool for cultural communication. Almost all of the museums of the world – across the board – maintain their own exclusive websites whereof the virtual museum factually corresponds to the physical museum. The present study is limited to the critical examination of just ten artifacts available on the website of the national museum belonging to just one epoch that is indus valley

civilisation of the pre-historic period. for better understanding and wider perspective future studies may undertake a larger sample size spanning across all of the epochs of ancient indian history namely Early Historic and Golden Age. Also, this research is restricted to the critical content analysis of the National Museum website only. Future studies may undertake to evaluate the effectiveness of the websites of other national/international museums as cultural communication outreach tool. For the benefit of the website visitors as well as of the researchers the National Museum administration is better advised to put the description of the artifact images alongside them in a copyable format, so the precious time of the researchers is saved. Also, the scroll speed of the images may slightly be reduced so it becomes easier to muse on a particular image and appreciate it.

### **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

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