



**COI Communications Common
Good Research**

Ethnic Minority Communities

Executive Summary

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1 Executive overview

Ethnic minority communities shared many interests and media habits with the general population and this was particularly true of the younger generation. Thus, campaigns targeting ethnic minority communities do not always need to use specialist media, as mainstream channels will reach large sections of the communities. Soaps, police shows, talk shows, home decoration, “reality TV”, science fiction, action movies and thrillers were all enjoyed by minority and white audiences alike, and this should be remembered when planning media and advertising.

Specialist media are, however, essential to access key sub-groups in these communities, such as women, older people and those who speak little or no English. These people are often highly engaged in specialist media whilst they often appear uninterested in mainstream media and advertising. Specialist media also offer opportunities to communicate with the whole family in the Asian and Chinese communities, which is rarely achieved through mainstream channels. They can also communicate with an additional “cultural closeness”.

In the mainstream media, there are ample opportunities to enhance the impact of advertising and marketing. People from ethnic minority communities want to see a wider range of realistic, credible characters playing “normal”, mainstream roles. They want to see appealing images that they and their families can relate to, and they do not want to be continually “exploited” for their ethnic identity. Using characters in this way can help cut through the media noise as black and Asian people do pay attention when they see interesting characters from their own ethnic backgrounds. Among the Chinese and African communities, there are real opportunities to gain “first mover advantage” by representing these communities in appealing

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mainstream roles from which currently they perceive themselves as absent.

In targeted campaigns using specialist media, ethnic and religious identity can be used to enhance the relevance and closeness of the message to the communities. This might include using a credible spokesperson from the community, making reference to key religious festivals or cultural symbols, or including an identifiable and likeable portrait of family life.

There are also many opportunities for creative niche marketing through specialist media. Marketers could hook into the specific ethnic and cultural interests of particular groups or sub-groups, and these can be tied into specific media channels. Government communicators could also develop relationships with local organisations and individuals to enhance the effectiveness of distribution and generate word of mouth publicity through existing community networks.

Finally, community groups need to be seen as a target audience in their own right and not just as a channel for distribution. Materials need to be developed to meet their specific needs, and these should be properly publicised both externally and internally within the government department that produces them.

2 Summary

2.1 Introduction

This research was commissioned by COI Communications as part of its Common Good Research programme, so-called because the research is of interest to all government departments and their agencies. This research programme focused on ethnic minority communities and comprised two elements:

- Desk research reviewing recent studies conducted by COI Communications;
- A large scale original qualitative research project.

The objectives of the research programme were:

- To explore the social, cultural and attitudinal factors which impact on the communications needs of ethnic minority communities;
- To provide strategic and creative guidance on communicating with ethnic minority communities.

In this section we summarise the results of the qualitative research.

2.2 Research methods

The research used entirely qualitative methods, designed to provide insight and understanding, but not statistical or numerical data. In order to maximise the value of the data gained, a range of methods were used including:

- 24 workshops, involving conventional group discussion techniques and also a range of tasks and lasting two hours;
- 14 individual interviews lasting 1 ½ hours;
- 4 paired interviews lasting 1 ½ hours;
- 10 hour family visits, involving two researchers visiting a family in their home and spending the evening observing and videoing their media consumption, lasting 3 - 4 hours;
- 4 group discussions lasting 1 ½ hours;
- 6 site visits to community centres, involving the researcher visiting a centre, interviewing key workers, meeting any centre users where possible and observing the use of publicity materials, lasting around 2 hours.

The total sample comprised:

- Indian men and women aged 18 – 80;
- Pakistani men and women aged 25 – 65;
- Bangladeshi men and women aged 25 – 65;
- Chinese men and women aged 18 – 65;
- Black Caribbean men and women aged 18 – 80;

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- Black African men and women aged 18 – 60;
- Mixed race people aged 18 - 24.

The sample covered a range of socio-economic groups and included members of the Asian and Chinese communities who spoke or no English. The fieldwork was conducted between March and June 2003 in a range of locations in England. The sample was designed to fill in the gaps identified in the existing research and not to provide comprehensive coverage of all the UK's ethnic minority communities. Refugee communities were not included in this research.

2.3 The media landscape

Although there were many differences between ethnic groups, there were also several common themes. These included:

- Fragmentation, with family members consuming different media in different places and times;
- Multiple consumption, where people were frequently exposed to several different media at the same time;
- Varying engagement levels, where people were very involved in some media while paying little attention to others;
- The fact of being “always on”, with people tuning their attention in and out of different media rather than turning them on or off;
- A reduced commitment to any individual act of media consumption, where the proliferation of multi-channel options offering regular repeats of popular programmes reduced the need to view them on any particular occasion.

We feel that these trends may result in a devaluation of above-the-line media channels, especially television, in the consumer psyche.

Interestingly, these trends had less impact on specialist ethnic media among the older generation, where high involvement and committed media consumption were still common.

2.4 Mainstream media

Ethnic minority people shared many media habits with the general population. Mainstream media were important, especially for the younger generations and Black and Indian communities. Television dominated the mainstream media and there were a small number of mass market, high involvement programmes – *Eastenders*, *The Simpsons* and *Friends*, for example – which were watched by a wide range of people and commanded considerable loyalty. Added to these are the big, one off media 'events' such as the Michael Jackson - Martin Bashir interview or the Ingrams cheating on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* There were also a number of mass-market programmes which people would happily watch if they were on, but which they did not seem to make a point of watching – *The Bill*, *Casualty* or *Holby City*, for example.

Beyond this mass market, there were differences between the viewing patterns of men and women, and between younger and older people. These mirror patterns found in the general population. Men were more likely to watch sports, news and documentaries, as well as thrillers, science fiction or martial arts and action movies. Women were more interested in soaps, talk shows and home improvement programmes. And younger people liked programmes such as *The Simpsons* and *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, as well as channels such as MTV and Trouble.

Mainstream radio listening did not differ markedly from patterns in the general population, with people attracted by particular music or presenters. National press readership followed predictable patterns, with better-educated respondents reading broadsheets and those with less formal education reading tabloids. The local and regional press had a high profile, possibly as a consequence of a more strongly developed sense of local community among ethnic minority groups.

2.5 Specialist media

In addition to mainstream media, there were also media which specifically targeted ethnic minority communities, for example, Asian TV channels and newspapers targeted at the black community. These specialist media channels tended to be most relevant to elders, non-English speakers and new arrivals into the UK, seeking programmes and news with the 'feel' of their home countries. Younger people mainly consumed the mass media mentioned above. However, they might dip in and out of ethnic media channels, either through choice or through a sense of duty (for example, keeping their mother company while she watched an Asian drama). There were also specific programmes they might like, such as Bollywood movies. Some parents encouraged their children to watch specialist media so that they could keep in touch with the 'home' culture and maintain their mother tongue language skills.

Specialist ethnic media played a number of roles in ethnic minority communities. These channels provided:

- Cultural familiarity - 'a little piece of home' - whereby ethnic minority people could see their culture reflected on screen and in the press;
- Access to news and entertainment in mother tongue languages for non-English speakers;
- Coverage of news from 'home', much of which did not feature in the mainstream media in Britain;
- An 'ethnic' perspective on the UK news;
- Discussion and coverage of issues relevant to particular ethnic minority communities;

- The chance to see presenters, broadcasters and actors from an ethnic minority background.

2.6 Ethnic and cultural Identity

The issue of ethnic and cultural identity was more complex than the rules of nationality would suggest. Many ethnic minority people in Britain were British-born, but the extent to which they felt British varied considerably.

Hybrid identities were common among ethnic minority young people, who often felt 'caught between two stools' in terms of the family culture they are brought up in and the UK culture which they were born into and which surrounds them. Therefore, young people might describe themselves as British Asian, British Chinese, English Jamaican and so on. These definitions acknowledged the dual cultural identities within which young people operated and were also a consequence of being a visible ethnic minority, which marked them out as being 'different' to white British people. In certain cases, young people might reject their British identity altogether if they felt unwelcome and discriminated against in the UK. In this research, young black men and young Muslim men were most likely to feel this way. However, it was interesting to note that some felt more 'English' after visiting their parent's home country, when they realised that their way of life in Britain was very different to life 'back home'.

Young people exhibited varying degrees of closeness to their parents' (or grandparents') home culture. The different generations were brought together by eating traditional food, religion, children in the family learning to speak mother tongue languages and visits to the 'home' country. These also served to cement family relationships across continents.

The older generation did not generally see themselves as British, even if they had lived in the UK for many years. Some Indian and Black Caribbean pensioners were British citizens when they arrived in this country and they emphasised this fact. Older people were often appreciative of the British way of life and the facilities and opportunities which were available, such as the National Health Service and free

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education. However, they tended to retain the traditional values and behaviour of their country of origin and believed it was important to instil these traditional values in their children. Some older people romanticised their homeland and sought to return in retirement – this appeared to be more true of older black people (Black African and Black Caribbean) than of older Asian people.

2.7 Youth Culture

The lifestyles, culture and interests of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds had much in common with those of young people from the general population. As such, ethnic identity was often less important to them in mainstream youth contexts, such as when they were watching *The Simpsons* or supporting Manchester United at football.

Overall, music was a very important part of youth culture and interest in 'urban' music, by which we mean rhythm and blues (R&B), rap, and hip hop, crosses ethnic boundaries.

Common interests for young men included playing and watching sport, going to the gym and cars. They liked surfing the Internet, online gaming and Playstation. Increasingly, they 'talked' to their friends in chat rooms, by email, by MSN Messenger or via text messaging.

Young women also liked music and were interested in fashion, cosmetics, hairstyles, celebrity gossip and soaps. They talked animatedly about which male stars they "fancied" on TV and in the movies. Young women were also keen on using the Internet for communicating with friends.

2.8 The Role of Women

Traditional ethnic minority households tended to run along traditional gender lines, with the mother very much in charge of domestic duties such as cooking, housework and childcare. Daughters were also involved in helping their mothers with cleaning and cooking, particularly in Asian and Black African households.

Perhaps as a reaction to this, many of the younger women spoke about delaying “settling down” in favour of financial independence and career success.

Women in professional careers referred to the difficulties involved in balancing work and domestic lives. This appears to be an increasing concern, particularly among Indian and Black Caribbean women.

2.9 The Chinese population

Among Chinese people there was a strong sense of parental authority and discipline, with younger generations and girls in particular complaining about their parents' strict rules. Hard work and financial independence were important social values, and there was a strong sense of ethnic and cultural identity in which the Chinese language was central. Chinese people from all age groups felt slightly distanced from British society. Although they did not feel a strong sense of racist rejection, they did not feel accepted as British. Chinese young people noted the absence of Chinese characters from almost the whole mainstream media and their relative invisibility in British public life.

Chinese media were central for the older generations, many of whom spoke little or no English. The Chinese Channel and Phoenix TV, Spectrum Radio and Sing Tao newspaper were all important. Chinese dramas and action movies were popular, and there was a strong interest in Hong Kong celebrities among the younger generation. However, there were no radio or TV stations which met the needs of the younger generation, and they therefore tended to be heavy users of videos, DVDs and the Internet to access Chinese culture and media.

2.10 The Indian population

Indian people in our sample spoke about changes in the community, including the increased freedom available to young women and the changes in the attitudes of parents. Those born and brought up in Britain often felt a sense of mixed identity, describing themselves as “British Asian” or “Indian and British”. Indeed, the younger generation increasingly saw themselves as part of mainstream British society, in spite of the persistence of colour-based racism. Religious identity was important for older people but did not over-ride other forms of identification.

Indian people's media consumption was very multi-cultural, consuming both mainstream and specialist media. For those under forty, mainstream media could be more important, although some young women did enjoy watching Asian dramas with their mothers. For the older generations and particularly women, specialist Asian television and radio were very important. Dramas, Bollywood movies, music programmes and news were all consumed through Asian specialist media. Religious radio programmes were particularly important to older people.

2.11 The Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations

The Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations shared many attributes and we therefore discuss them together here. In this research we interviewed only those aged over 25, but we can draw upon previous COI research to reflect the views of younger people as well. For older people, religious identity was of paramount importance, with many saying they were first Moslems, then Pakistani or Bangladeshi, and then British. Younger men felt strongly that Moslems were rejected by British society and that they suffered both racial and religious discrimination. There were strong differences between lifestyles of men (centring around paid work) and women (centring around childcare and housework) and this impacted on their opportunities for media consumption. Some younger (25 – 45) women who had arrived more recently in the UK were keen to learn English and get involved in mainstream society. Older women tended to believe it was “too late for them”, and older men appeared to have more interest in religion and politics “back home.”

For older people and those who spoke little or no English, specialist media were of particular importance. They appeared genuinely unengaged by much mainstream media, with the exception of news and factual programming. Also, they showed little understanding of or interest in mainstream TV advertising. Asian TV channels were most important. Channels such as Bangla TV, Ekushey, Prime TV or Ary Digital provided dramas, films, and news from their home countries, often with an Islamic perspective. Religious videos and radio programmes were also popular.

Younger Bangladeshi and Pakistani people also described hybrid identities such as “British Bangladeshi” or “British Pakistani”, although for them too their religious identity as Moslems was often the most important. As with the Indian young people, they too referred to changes in the community, with young women in London commenting that parents did allow them freedom to go out “within reason”. Their media consumption was a combination of mainstream and specialist media, although mainstream media were clearly more important to them.

2.12 The Black African population

Older Black African people had a strong sense of identity and took great pride in their heritage and culture. They stressed the importance of instilling traditional African family values in their children, but they felt they were struggling to do this in Britain today. Parental discipline and respect for elders were very important to them and parents had high aspirations for their children in terms of educational and career achievement. The older generation worried that the younger generation were rejecting their African identity, partly because they wanted to fit in with their school-friends and partly because negative images of Africa dominated the British media (images of famine, poverty and war) and British-born children wanted to distance themselves from this. We found, however, that younger people were proud to describe themselves as African, but their culture and interests were more reflective of British youth culture than of traditional African culture.

Both generations spontaneously mentioned racism, which they all believed still existed. However, they felt it emerged in more subtle forms of discrimination, compared with the direct racism of the past.

The media habits of African respondents were very mainstream, despite their strong cultural and ethnic identity. Young African people consumed much the same media as other young people. The older generation mainly watched mainstream TV, listened to mainstream radio, particularly speech programmes on the BBC and read the mainstream press. Some watched African dramas and films on video and read African newspapers, either in hard copy or online. Religious (Christian) media channels were very important to some.

2.13 The Black Caribbean population

Black Caribbeans are a diverse group and a well established community in the UK. Younger people tended to have dual identities such as “British Caribbean” or “Black British and Black Caribbean”, while older people typically saw themselves as “West Indian” or “Jamaican’/’Trinidadian”. Local identities were also important e.g. South Londoner, North Londoner, Brummie. Music and religion were important facets of the Black Caribbean culture, as were the usual cultural reference points such as food and language (Caribbean patois, street slang). Parent-child relationships tended to be more relaxed than among other ethnic minority groups, and non-traditional family units were common, such as single parent and step family households. Black Caribbeans felt that theirs was the predominant youth culture in urban Britain, influencing the clothes, tastes and language of other young people, although this was not always recognised. They complained about colour-based racism and that young black men were stereotyped as criminals or always “up to no good”.

As with Black Africans, Black Caribbeans’ media habits were largely mainstream. However, music-related consumption was more ‘ethnic’, with a clear preference for black music TV channels (MTV Base) and urban and black pirate radio. Religious (Christian) channels were also important, particularly for older people. The black press had a wide readership, across all age groups, while some black women read specialist celebrity gossip and hair and beauty magazines. Young people tended to watch black American youth channels such as Trouble TV and Nickelodeon, as they felt that black British culture was not reflected in the mainstream.

2.14 The Mixed Race population

The mixed race community is fast growing within the UK and a small sample of mixed race young people were included in this research. Our aim with these interviews was to gain an insight into what it is like to be a mixed race person in Britain today, rather than to reflect the totality of the mixed race experience. The mixed race respondents in this sample were mixed Asian and white, Chinese and white, and black and white

The mixed race community is a wide and heterogeneous ethnic group, given that people defining themselves in this way can be any combination of two or more racial groups. Some of the factors which appeared to be important in forming mixed race young people's sense of ethnic identity were how they look (whether they look white, mixed, black, Asian), who they grew up with, where they grew up and how they were raised, in terms of the dominant culture and religion which underpinned their upbringing. The majority of those in our sample identified with either their father's or their mother's ethnic group, perhaps because few had equal contact with both sides of their family. It was often the mother who was key in determining the respondent's cultural identity because she set the tone for the household, chose which food to cook and so on. However, some of the respondents' fathers had insisted on their children being brought up with a strong ethnic, cultural or religious identity (i.e. Nigerian, Pakistani Muslim), and their (white) mothers had agreed.

There was little evidence of mixed race respondents consuming specialist ethnic media. The mixed race Asian respondents did not consume Asian TV, mainly because they did not speak Asian mother tongue languages well enough or at all. However, a couple of the mixed race Asian girls read Asian gossip and fashion magazines such as *Snoop* and *Asian Bride*. The mixed race respondents in London who strongly identified with black culture were avid consumers of black media, including pirate radio, music TV and the black press. All the

mixed race respondents said they would like to see the representation of ethnic minorities in the media increase and improve.

2.15 Community Centres

Community workers emphasised that their role required them to do more than just provide information to clients. They needed to resolve their clients' problems and this would usually require face-to-face advice and assistance, not giving out a leaflet. Although there were some positive comments about government leaflets, they were still frequently described as too long and complex for their clients to understand and not always relevant to their community. They frequently adapted information they had received from government sources, making their own summaries or translations.

Community workers valued videos and audio tapes, and also preferred summary and bilingual versions of written materials. They wanted personal contact with public sector organisations and valued outreach work where government officers visited their centres to advise their clients directly. They wanted to be consulted on information and service provision and most were willing to get involved in government programmes as long as the relationship was a genuine partnership.

2.16 Advertising

Although respondents were often loath to admit it, it was clear that people did take notice of advertising as they could often remember specific campaigns and executions very accurately. It was also evident that ethnic minority people took notice of ethnic minority characters in advertising. At worst, these characters were stereotypical and patronising; at best, appropriate cultural references could enhance the relevance of the ad and make the characters believable.

Chinese people felt that they were virtually invisible in mainstream advertising, with Chinese characters confined to martial arts-related storylines and roles. Asian people also complained that Asian characters were limited in number and frequently stereotypical and inaccurate, although they thought the situation was improving. Conversely, the black population have become accustomed to seeing black people in mainstream adverts, so this was no longer a surprise, but they would like the range of black characters to improve (e.g. to include black family men, black professionals etc.). Black Africans would like to see more references made to Black African culture.

Government advertising largely went unrecognised as being from government, except for overt governmental messages such as those from the Inland Revenue. The government was considered to be an appropriate sponsor of compliance, social good and welfare state information. However, government advertising could be rejected if the reality of the viewer's experience conflicted with the message, such as in the incredulous reaction of some of the young black men towards the police recruitment campaign (*"they wouldn't want us in there"*). People did not reject government information *per se* and they approved of the government's attempts to include diverse communities in its advertising.

3 Recommendations

3.1 Mainstream media

1. Mainstream media can access Indian communities, Black communities, and the younger generation within all communities.
2. The youth media market is intrinsically multi-cultural and popular TV stations such as Trouble and MTV Base seem relevant to most young people.
3. Ethnic minority people want to be included in mainstream advertising campaigns on mainstream media, and they notice and approve when this is done well.
4. Ethnic specific messages can be inappropriate in these contexts, as people want to be seen as part of the mainstream.

3.2 Specialist ethnic media

5. Specialist ethnic media are essential to communicate with older generations and those who speak little or no English, especially women. They are more relevant to Asian and Chinese communities than to black communities.
6. They are also valuable to communicate with the whole family for Asian and Chinese communities – something less easily achieved via mainstream media.
7. Specialist media can communicate a feeling of “ethnic closeness” to both younger and older generations and are therefore especially valuable for ethnic or culturally specific messages.

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8. Marketers should present positive images of British Asian, British Black, or British Chinese youth cultures. Young people want to see these images and ethnic specific media may be the place where they seek them.

3.3 Advertising

9. Executions placed on mainstream media can command attention by including high profile ethnic minority characters. However, culturally specific messages are not expected on mainstream television channels.
10. Executions placed on specialist media should include characters from ethnic minority communities and may also have a specific ethnic or cultural message – although white characters should not be excluded.
11. Advertisers should try to develop executions and campaigns that work across mainstream and specialist media to achieve maximum impact, particularly for younger people.
12. Ethnic minority people want to see characters from their communities playing “normal”, positive, mainstream roles in mainstream advertising:
 - Young people prefer multi-cultural executions, reflecting the reality of their lives and their aspirations for the future;
 - People do not want minority characters to be presented exclusively as a source of humorous stereotypes;

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- Characters should be credible and recognisable in terms of their ethnic and cultural identity, but not stereotypically “ethnic”;
- Cultural references can enhance the salience and recall of advertisements if they are executed with accuracy and affection.

13. It is difficult to strike the right balance and executions are likely to be criticised when they do not match the viewer's personal experience. One person's realistic portrayal is another person's stereotype.

3.4 Local and partnership marketing

14. Local and regional media are very important to access ethnic minority communities.
15. This should include local press and radio, working in partnership to generate editorial interest as well as placing advertising.
16. There is ample scope for marketers to develop targeted campaigns around cultural and religious celebrations, hobbies and pastimes specific to ethnic sub-groups.
17. Marketers should make creative use of local shops or services for distribution and publicity. These could include hairdressing salons for black women, record shops for black young men, betting shops for older Caribbean men, and mosques for Bangladeshi and Pakistani men.

3.5 Elders and non-English speakers

18. For elders and non-English speakers, particularly in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations, media alone may have limited impact.
19. Outreach and sustained community development will also be required, including:
 - Face-to-face contact and network marketing;
 - Peer education, especially for women;
 - Training projects to develop community capacity.

3.6 Community centres

20. Community centres should be seen as a target audience as well as a distribution channel.

21. Government communicators should distinguish information targeted at the workers from information targeting the end user.

22. For the end user, government communicators should produce:

- Summary versions of longer leaflets in straightforward language;
- Bilingual leaflets rather than translations;
- Leaflets with a strong visual and pictorial element;
- Audio and video material, in English and Mother Tongue.

23. Advice workers and officers from public sector organisations should form links with community centres and offer advice sessions on site.

24. Community centres need appropriate support and resourcing when assisting with government marketing campaigns.

Marketers should consider developing publicity materials and campaigns in partnership with community organisations.