

Creative Execution of Joke in Indian Print Advertising

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Abstract – The paper analyses the various creative approaches involve in print advertisement which refers to adoption of certain advertising appeals used by the advertisers to attract the attention and interest of the consumers. This paper also encompasses the practices, review and analysis of different elements used in advertising in the form of special or fictitious characters, cartoons and caricatures, brand mascots, trademarks which represents and gratify the visual appeal of the product and communicate about the brand and its offering to the consumers in various occasions. In addition, the study also focuses on the association of cartoons, caricatures and other imaginative characters with children in Indian advertising. The study also focuses on the case study of advertising strategies of Vodafone India and Perfetti Van Melle India for better understanding of the relevance of joke in Indian advertising.

Keywords: Creative, Execution, Joke, Indian Print Advertising, Approaches, Advertisement, Consumers, etc.

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INTRODUCTION

The most basic role of an advertising message is to communicate information about the product, service or an idea. Advertising can create associations with the brands and create brand images to position the brand in consumer's mind. The message is considered as a vital component in advertising communication process. While attempting to accomplish this, advertising does much more. The commercials that people watch on television, on radio, or see and read in newspapers and magazines can be a source of information, entertainment, fantasy, motivation and sometimes a cause of monotony and irritation (Chatterji, 2012).

For print advertisement, this task is done by the headline, as it is the first element of the advertisement to catch attention. The next objective is to create interest in the reader's mind about the product which is retained by about the key features of the product. The advertisement creates a situation for the prospective customer to enjoy benefits of the product. In print advertisements the copywriter stimulates interest by narrating a dramatic situation, citing a story with jokeous appeal. The cartoons, caricatures and other pictorial images generate interest and retain the brand loyalty of the product. Apart from generating interest, advertising also creates desire for the prospective customers to enjoy the benefits of the product in a long run. In print advertisements, the copywriter fuel up the visualisation by using phrases and persuasive contents to appeal the consumers. The visual elements and appeal also differ from each other

irrespective of the different types of advertising (D'Souza, 2009. Desai, 2012. Freedman, 2009).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Every advertisement has the purpose to serve and this brings about the different types of advertisements to serve a particular job in a particular field. This is most important because the advertisement itself, its type and its appeal will have much influence on several other factors - the choice of media, the artwork, the reproduction process etc. Advertisements can broadly classify into two classes - display advertisements and classified advertisements. The different kinds of display advertisements can be classified as Hard sell, Soft sell, Prestige, Reminder, and Joke (Gupta, 2012).

The hard sell advertisement as its name suggests, is defined primarily to sell. This is the advertisement which sets out to achieve immediate results. The message is very direct and straight forward. The hard sell advertisement aims at encouraging an action on the part of the reader and offers a forceful and dynamic appeal. This type of advertisement usually introduces a new product.

A soft sell advertisement on the other hand never tries to sell directly in contrast to the hard sell advertisement, which is usually descriptive and may contain a considerable amount of copy matter, perhaps with several illustrations.

However an well-known product, and however large the share of the market it commands, the advertiser must continue to put his name in front of the consumer so that the latter is constantly reminded of the product. The prestige advertisement is responsible to create and maintain a favourable confidence in the mind of the consumer about the advertiser, his goods and services. A prestige advertisement is designed to build prestige and good will, and so can also be called reputation advertisement. Like the soft sell advertisement, creation of a joke advertisement makes use of creative appeal with witty and funny proposition. The message in this type of advertisements is usually accepted and remembered. But these types of advertisements sometimes make the execution style more appealing and make the product less prominent. The idea is usually inspired, rather than contrived so the message is original, fresh and funny; otherwise it would have detrimental effect on the reputation of the product.

Creativity and its importance in advertising:

Creativity is probably one of the most frequently used terms in advertising. It is the ability to come up with unconventional, fresh and unique ideas, appropriate and effective that can be used as a solution to the advertiser's communication problems. The word 'create' denotes originating, or conceiving an idea or a thing that did not exist before. Though, typically creativity involves combining pre-occupied ideas or objects into new idiom. There is a general view that creativity emerges directly from human intuition, but the reality is that creativity can't be learnt and used to generated original ideas (Gokulsingh, 2009. Halve, 2012. Kaznni and Batra, 2008).

Creativity refers to the "generation and presentation of noble ideas, differently, innovatively across the target audiences". It refers to eye catching illustration that can create good recall value for the product. An advertising to be effective must have a big idea that captures the consumer's attention, elicits a response and makes the advertiser's product or service distinct from that of the competitors. The creative idea is effective when it is relevant to the target audience's need, aspirations and desire. Creating a clear vision about the product to the audiences is an important job of advertising which builds brand awareness (McLain, 2009).

Creativity is a fascinating and challenging area of advertising. The interpretation of an advertisement depends on the perception of the individual. While creating an advertisement, the objectives of advertising need to be evaluated which is just not to sell the product but also to create images in the mind of the prospective consumers. Planning the creative strategy is an important factor in advertising. It is important to note that individual advertising situation is different in each case. Each individual advertisement

or advertising campaign needs a totally different creative approach. Creativity in advertising also associates the visualisation technique, an important aspect of advertising.

Visualisation is a skill to determine which elements an advertisement should contain and also how they should be featured. It is a process of creating ideas about overall construction and contents of the advertisement. It takes place before the copy is thought of and before preparing illustrations. It helps in converting abstract ideas into concrete forms or shape of layout of an advertisement.

Advertising Appeals:

An advertising appeal is a statement designed to motivate a person to act. The appeals which the advertiser makes usually focus the buying motives of the customers. An advertising appeal must successfully tell what it wishes to convey. As far as possible, the message must be conveyed in a simple language. A good theme must be there to communicate with meaning of the advertisement. It should be distinctive and interesting. One of the most critical decisions about creative strategy in advertising involves the choice of an appropriate appeal. Creating advertising appeal for a good or service begins with identifying a reason for people to buy it. Advertisers build an advertising campaign around this appeal using different tricks and types of advertising appeals that influences the mind of people.

Advertising appeals are used to communicate and influence the purchase and consumption behaviour of the consumers. It refers to the approaches used to attract the attention of consumers or to influence their feelings towards the product, service, or idea. Through the use of different kinds of appeals, advertising attempts to create positive image of the product for both the new as well as existing consumers. Some advertisements are designed with the intent of appealing the rational and logic aspects of the consumer's buying process and at the same time others attempt to stimulate consumers feeling, evoking some desired emotional responses. Advertising appeal can broadly be classified into three categories - rational, emotional and moral appeal (Naqvi, 2012).

Rational appeals are usually informative and attempt to convince consumers about the suitability of the advertised product or service to satisfy their needs. They emphasises on the benefits of the product like quality, economy, convenience, comfort, and durability (Kazmi and Batra, 2008). For example, advertisements of consumer durable products such as television, refrigerators, car etc. highlights the quality and features of the product, emphasis on the

brand's popularity and special offers that induces rational reasons to buy the product (Figure 1).

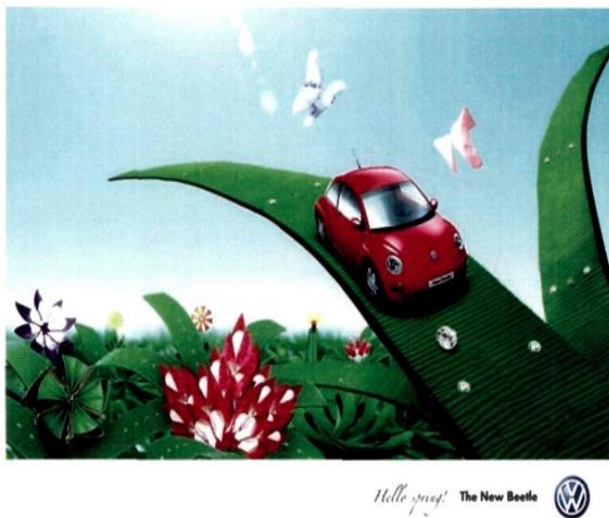


Figure 1: Consumer durable product showing rational appeal

Emotional appeal relates to customer's social and psychological needs and stir up positive or negative emotions, that can motivate purchase of a product or service. The Emotional appeal can also influence the way consumers interpret their products usage experience. They may generate certain images, feelings, beliefs, and meanings about the product or the service. It can help differentiate a brand by making the consumption or use enjoyable. Emotional appeal includes both personal and social aspects. Some personal emotions that drive individuals to purchase products include safety, fear, love, joy, stimulation, pride, self-esteem, comfort, acceptance etc. Social factors cause people to make purchase and include aspects such as recognition, respect, affiliation, status and approval. It can be further studied under two broad categories one is positive emotional appeal and another is negative emotional appeal (Gupta, 2012). Advertisers use positive emotional appeals such as joke, love, pride, and joy to influence the buying pattern of the consumers. For example the advertisement of Johnson's baby products show a mother's love for her baby, and the tender care that a 'Johnson's' baby product brand will provide with, just as a mother does (Figure 2 a). Negative emotional appeal such as fear, guilt, shame etc. is use by the advertisers to get the desired response. Fear appeal for instance is used in those cases or those products that are designed to protect a person from loss of life or property. For example, several print advertisements issued in public interest for the use seat belts, safe driving, prevention of AIDS, anti-smoking etc. have focused on the fear of losing one's life (Figure 2 b).



Figure 2 (a): Baby product brand showing positive emotional appeal

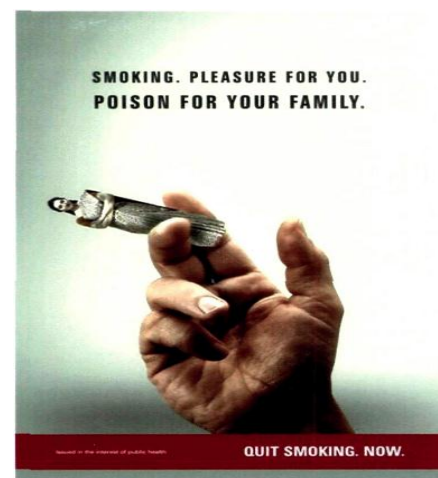


Figure 3.2 (b): Public health poster featuring negative emotional appeal

Moral what is right or wrong, good, proper or correct thing to do? Moral appeals may be used for the purpose of exhorting people to support social causes and issues. For example, advertisements of Help Age India invoke a moral responsibility where we ought to take care of the disadvantaged older people (Figure 3).



Figure 3: A Help Age poster featuring moral appeal

While portraying the product, the target audiences must understand that the product is exclusively meant to satisfy the needs and wants. The message should not be complicated since any complicated message will mislead and confuse the target audiences. Joke has been one of the most accepted and utilised positive emotional appeals in advertising. It helps in putting across the message of the advertisements without frustrating the viewers because of the fun factor present in it. It enhances attention and liking, help diminishing the chances of counter arguments because it distracts the audience from making cognitive responses (Parimoo and Sarkar, 2009). It has the power to have an effect on information processing for making purchase decision by way of attracting attention, generating pleasant mood, improving the brand name. Feelings evoked through the use of joke can also lead brand positive associations, as well as increasing the comprehension levels of the viewers. In advertising, joke is more than just making a bunch of people laugh. Some of the best brands in India have used joke to such an extent that the viewer's look forward for newness in joke each time they see a new commercial from that brand. By making use of joke the message is long remembered. To illustrate, for example brands such as 'Sprite', (Figure 4) in its advertising campaigns have used joke so intelligently and subtly, that it got imprinted in people's minds forever with continuous new innovative ideas and concepts.

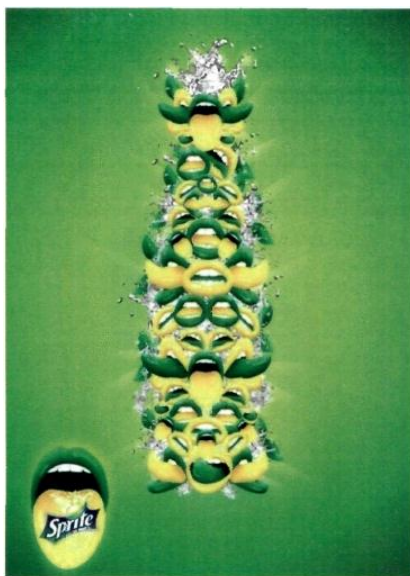


Figure 4: A typical soft drink brand featuring humour appeal

Components of Print Advertisement:

After determining the creative approach, type of appeal to be used, and the style of execution, the next step involves the creation of the actual advertisement. The design and production process involves a number of activities which includes writing copy, developing

illustration, or other visual elements to be included to create an effective advertising message. Advertising in print media constitutes a major part of any advertising campaign. It is usually backed up by television advertisements and serves mainly as a reminder to the customers. While TV advertisements are more unstable and more expensive at the same time, print advertisements are relatively less expensive and have a good reach. They can be designed keeping in mind the type of audience the magazine or newspaper is expected to be read by. The key format elements in print advertising are- headline, body copy, sub heads, slogan and logo, trademark and illustration/visuals.

a) Headline: The first and possibly the most important copy element in the headline. The first function of the headline is to attract the reader's attention to the advertisement and stimulate his or her interest so as to make them read the advertisements. The headline may also put the story of the advertisement in one sentence (Singh, 2009. Sharma, 2009. Sarkar, 2013). The headline contains the words in the leading position of the advertisement. They are invariably set in larger, dark type and generally set apart from body copy to make them prominent in order to attract the reader's attention, to get them interested in the message. In some print advertisements the body copy is totally absent, and headline along with illustrations, communicate the message. The headlines are used with variations depending on the advertising strategy. Headlines can be classified according to the type of information the advertisement convey. The following are the types of headlines- direct headline, news oriented headline, question headline, command headline, joke, benefit, and provocative headline.

b) Body Copy: This is the second major category which constitutes the text of an advertisement. A copy means a written matter in any advertisement which might consist only one word or many words. Advertising copy refers to the text of a print, radio, or television that aims at catching and holding the interest of the consumers to buy the product. Copywriting in print is the activity of putting words to paper, particularly those contained in the main body of the text. The body copy contains the complete sales story and in the logical continuation of the headline and subheads (Sarkar, 2008). It covers the attributes, benefits and the utility of the product or service. The body copy must be long enough to accommodate the complete message and short enough to retain the reader's interest like the headline; body copy also has different styles. The copy supports

the illustration and contains description of the product's merits, demerits, uses, service etc. types of advertising copies are - scientific, straight, narrative, dialogue, explanation, endorsement, jokes, topical, prestige, personality comparative, colloquial, reasoning, questioning, prestige and disruptive copy.

- c) **Sub Heads:** Many advertisements have only one headline, but one or more secondary heads called the sub heads, are also common. A subhead is an additional smaller headline that may appear above or below the headline. Subheads are usually set smaller than the headline but larger than the body copy, and may appear in boldface or italic type. They are often used to enhance the readability by highlighting key sales objectives. Subheads are longer than headline, more likely than a sentence. They are used to support or to complete the meaning of the main headline.
- d) **Slogan/Logo/Symbols/Trademark:** A slogan may refer to the basic theme, or USP (Unique Selling Proposition) of the product, or something with which the target audience would relate the product. Slogans are equally important as the headline. A slogan should not only be catchy but also meaningful because good slogan can last for a long time. Slogan is a clever phrase that serves as a reminder of a brand, company, image or theme. It is a phrase or sentence used repeatedly by an advertiser; company to create certain kind of effect on the minds of the customers. The word 'logo' comes from the Greek word 'logos' meaning simply the world. Logo is the symbolic representation of the company or trademark which is also refers to as signature. It can be a picture, letter, combination of both. Logo and signatures are special designs of the advertiser's company or the product name. It is an important tool in quick recognition and identification of the company and for creating familiarity for the audience. A symbol is materials object, either two or three dimensional, representing something which is immaterial. A trademark is a symbol, figure, word or mark adopted and used by a manufacturer to designate his goods.
- e) **Visual Elements:** One of the most important features of an advertisement is the pictorial representation of the advertising message. Visuals or illustrations are the major component in print advertisements, which captures the reader's attention, demonstrating use, differentiating the look of an advertisement. The visuals or illustrations in a print advertisement is often dominant and

plays a critical role in determining its effectiveness. They capture a mood and evoke a feeling a context for the consumer's perception of the product or service and gain the attention of the viewers and show the product in actual use situation (Article, 2011).

- f) **Layout:** A layout is an orderly physical arrangement of headline, subheads, body copy, slogan, logotype and the visual elements into finished advertisements. It is a sketched plan of a proposed advertisement showing the size, positions and colour weight values of the different elements that makes up the complete advertisement. It shows where each component of the advertisement will be placed. It gives an overall idea of the advertisement irrespective of the copy space, size of the visuals with other elements. While designing an advertisement, the final development undergoes four stages such as thumbnail sketch, rough layout, dummies and comprehensive layout. A good layout comprises of the following features- balance, movement, gaze motion, structural motion, proportion, white space, unity, clarity, simplicity, and emphasis. For example (Figure 5) shows the various elements of a typical print advertisement.



Figure 5: A typical print advertisement with various elements

Creative Approaches in Print Advertisements:

The effect of a message is governed by not only what is said, but also by how it is said. To break through the confusion and make an impression on the target audiences, an advertisement must be unique and entertaining in its approaches. A major determinant of whether a commercial will be successful in changing brand preferences is its likeliness, appeal or the viewer's overall reaction. Print advertisements that are well designed and executed, generates emotional responses and creates positive feelings that are transferred to the product or service being advertised. Creative advertising needs to be imaginative, intelligent, sharp and extremely catchy. It should focus the attention of the people on the product to create positive impact on the consumer through visual appeal (Advertising Effectiveness, 2012). Advertising is said to be creative if it contains some powerful idea, theme, visually impressive on central theme. Advertising creativity is the ability to generate fresh, unique, noble and appropriate ideas that can be used as solution to communication problems. To be appropriate and effective, a creative idea must be relevant to the target audiences that can push the advertising message into the viewer's mind. Effective visualisation is the devices adopted to make advertising more persuasive and interesting to the consumers, to give it distinction and make it memorable. Advertising execution deals with the way the appeal is presented. Straight talk, demonstration, comparison, testimonial, animation, fantasy, dramatization, joke and personality symbol are some of the commonly used advertising execution styles. The study focuses on the various aspects of visual elements and appeal in print advertisements. In addition, some other creative strategy of advertising is also considered to support the objective of the study where jingles, in television and radio commercials also seems to be quite effective in conveying the message that evokes a sense of joke and fun in advertising.

CONCLUSION:

Following the study of different advertising campaigns, Irrespective of the appeal and execution style, the study establishes the fact that humour as an element in advertising makes effective communication for easy recall and attention. It creates a positive image about the product for a longer time and indicates some quality which produces or mediates the amusing, comic, and witty part of our conscience. It is evident from the study that the cartoon characters and humorous elements can ensures high recall value and provides a personal touch to the marketing strategies that goes a long way in enduring public acceptance of a brand in contrast to the celebrity endorsement. Has definitely helped the business and created a special identity for the products in the minds of the consumers. The study has observed that the advertisers had explored the Indian sensibility through the various

humorous advertisements that had accumulated the Indian culture, mythology, tradition, socio- political happenings with new attribute for advertising responses.

But it is also evident that excess use of humour in advertisement makes the product unnoticed by the consumer which makes the product less useful that result in less prospect buyers. It is been observed that certain amount of humorous elements that is perceived from different central characters and comic situations, results in easy recall about the product which associate and stimulate the visual* idea. But again it is also pertinent to the study that such caricatures are sometimes insulting for a particular situation which may took place unintentionally or sometime intentionally when used to make humorous appeal as we have seen in the advertisements of Chloramine. Another important aspect of visualisation is also relevant in the process of rendering the visual elements for humorous appeal. It is observed that hand drawn illustrations sometimes disagree with the realistic approach of real facts about the acceptance and identification of the physical characteristics of the product with the consumers. The bizarre representations of images for humorous appeal sometimes reject the product and confuse the consumers about the product. The personification of an object, no doubt creates brand awareness, but it is been pragmatic that such effort remains noticed within a definite target audience and remain less important in general. Therefore humour can be successful in advertising, if used carefully, otherwise it could be fatal because whatever message is conveyed lightly might be forgotten and would be in vain, when the objective is to sell the product. The parallel execution style of using real photographs with that of humorous illustrations had made a positive realm with the response of the consumers. The study also exemplifies the importance of different fictitious characters used in the advertising campaign to personify the characters as in the case of Amul Girl, Maharaja and Zoo zoos. The two case studies also established the relevance of cartoons and caricatures in advertising with a scope of creative flexibility for humorous proposition in advertising.

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