



An Exploratory Study on Creativity Aspects of Print Advertisement

**Dr. Haridayal
Sharma**

Assistant Professor, P.G. & Research Department of Commerce, D.G.Vaishnav College, Chennai

ABSTRACT

Newer avenues of advertisement is emerging along with an increase in the number of companies and brands, leading to manifold increase in the number of advertisements that hit the public domain. There is in fact a clutter of advertisements with mounting advertisement spending. In this context, one of the ways to stand distinct is creative advertisement. The print advertisement occupies a predominant role in the overall advertising scenario both in terms of market share and in terms of the spend level. Therefore, the paper aims to enquire the dimensions and aspects of creativity in print advertisement. As creativity is a qualitative phenomenon, it was decided to form a panel of selected people drawn from diversified fields in order to explore and enquire into the domain of creativity dimensions. Thus, the study is exploratory in nature. Ten dimensions of creativity in print advertisement are identified as Message, Picture, Simplicity, Combination, Curiosity, Theme and Concept, Emotions & Appeal, Symbol (Metaphor & Analogy), Copy and Exaggeration.

KEYWORDS: Creativity dimensions, Print advertisement, Consumer, Message, Copy.

Preamble

Advertisements serve as a key mode of marketing communication with consumers. This communication must be made the most creative in order to initiate the desired impact. Creative advertisement refers to the effective mix of audio and/or visual inputs in an interesting way to express the brand position and the features of the products or services in order to kindle positive consumer attitude in an advertising format. Behind every good advertisement is a creative concept, a big idea that makes the message distinctive, enchanting, enticing, attention getting, memorable and loveable. Some features of creative advertisement are: distinctive approach, impressive idea, relevant theme, effective layout, magical combination (picture, copy, colour, etc), apt message and so on. In short, creative advertisement conveys the desired message and evokes the desired influence.

Objectives

In spite of emergence of television there is an increase in both the number of newspapers and periodicals published, and their circulation in different languages. The print advertisement sector, occupies a predominant role in the overall advertising scenario both in terms of market share and in terms of the spend level. Hence, the print advertisements are taken as the research area. Many studies are done measuring the impact of advertisement or creative advertisement, but very little emphasis was given to creativity or exploring the various aspects of creativity. Therefore, the present study is carried with an objective to enquire and explore the dimensions of creativity in print advertisements.

Theoretical background

This section provides the theoretical background relating to 'creativity' parse, followed by the popular views of 'creativity in advertisement'. In the words of Gardner (1985), "creativity as best described as the human capacity regularly to solve problems or to fashion products in a domain, in a way that is initially novel but ultimately acceptable in a culture." According to Reid, King and DeLorne (1998), creativity in advertisement is least understood area. As White (1972) also suggested that creativity is the "X" factor, alluding to its seemingly unknown quality. As far as print advertisement is concerned RAM model gives some insight in to the structural model of creative advertisement. It is developed by Ang, (1995) having its roots in Mednick's (1962) theory of creativity. According to RAM, a print ad is perceived to be creative (i.e. clever, imaginative and amusing) when a seemingly unusual, unrelated or remote picture, termed conveyor, can be linked to an attribute or benefit of the advertised product using the headline or copy. By an unusual visual, it means the picture may be unique or rarely seen in advertising, or/and the object depicted in the visual may be unbelievable or unrealistic, or/and the object may be something that is not normally associated with the product category.

Methodology of the study

The study is exploratory in nature. As creativity is a qualitative phenomenon, it was decided to form a panel of selected people drawn from

diversified fields in order to explore and enquire into the domain of creativity (dimensions) in print advertisement. Using the responses and ideas of panel members, certain creativity dimensions were identified.

Geographical Area of study: Chennai the capital of the State of Tamilnadu, is the study area. Chennai being the metropolitan city, providing wide varieties of products and services and a leading business hub having a vast consumer base, is considered suitable for conducting the study. The study is thus confined to Chennai.

Selection of Print advertisements: As the study is confined to the print advertisements, the initial step was to identify the print advertisements. There are different forms of print advertisements but only newspaper and magazine advertisements were considered. Some of the prominent English magazines in wide circulation in India followed were, India Today (English Edition), Business World, Business Today, The Week, Business India, Outlook (English Edition) etc. The different advertisements that appeared over a period of time in the respective media were deliberated with academic colleagues and others in terms of their interesting features and the level of liking. Eighty advertisements that were considered to be more interesting were selected. The advertisements were from the different spheres like services, consumer durables and fast moving consumer goods.

Advertisement booklet: The selected eighty advertisements were formed into a booklet. The advertisements were serially numbered from one to eighty for convenience and ease of reference. All the advertisements relating to services were grouped together followed by consumer goods advertisements and so on. The advertisement booklet consisted of response sheet, having the appropriate space for mentioning the serial number of identified top 10 best advertisements and to state the creativity dimensions of each of the top 10 advertisements selected by each of the individual panel members.

Panel Formation and Response: Selected people were approached to serve as the panel members. They were given a brief of the study. Thus a 20-member panel was formed. The main criterion for a person to be selected as a panel member was that he or she should be a consumer of goods services or concerned with the world of advertisement.

The panel members were required to:

- identify and list out the ten best advertisements from the booklet mentioning the respective serial number for identification in the space provided and
- state the creative aspects of each of the best 10 advertisements in one's judgment.

In total, one hundred and ninety five statements on creativity in print advertisement were received in total from all the panel members. From these unbiased lists of creativity, elements of creativity were drawn.

Limitations and Delimitations of the study

The limitations of the study are:

- i. The study is opinion based and that subjectivity in the expressed opinions cannot be ruled out.
- ii. A greater sample pool of advertisements and panel members could have been involved.

The study has been designed with certain delimitations.

- i. The study is restricted to the print medium of advertisements and hence other media like television advertisement, hoardings etc., are not included.
- ii. The respondents were from the Chennai city only. Therefore, the findings may or may not be applicable to other regions or cities.
- iii. Only the thematic aspects of creativity in print advertisements were considered and the specific physical aspects of the advertisements like layout, size, position, alignment, colour selection and artistic work are not considered.

Creativity Dimensions in Print advertisement

Qualitative data gathered require some conversion known as data reduction to facilitate quantitative analysis. Sometimes in the studies of qualitative nature, it becomes difficult to separate data collection, data reduction and data analysis. This process of building a pool of qualitative descriptions is called 'open coding'. It involves breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing the impressions of the advertisements. The pool of impressions expressed by the panelists was pruned down for repetitiveness and inadvertent obscurity. The specific dimensions of creativity were assorted into groups. A description of these dimensions is attempted below.

- i. Message Orientation: Message refers to the basic idea that the advertiser wants to convey to the viewers. An advertisement might have the creative value based on the message structure and its gravity. The message construction could be in any of the following forms to provide a creative touch in an advertisement.
 - a. Deep and inspiring message
 - b. Very clear in the first line itself – reader instantly knows the nature of advertisement
 - c. Unique selling proposition immediately apparent through message
 - d. Problem dramatizing message
 - e. Surreal, bizarre and thought provoking content
 - f. Message construction using simple language and picture etc.
- ii. Picture dominance: Pictures facilitate understanding more than the words. Picture represents the artistic or illustrative element of an advertisement. Picture supplements / compliments / and even implements the copy aspect of the advertisement. Here, key elements of advertisement preposition are deployed in pictorial form in such a way that they say more about the product than is actually seen. An advertisement could have creative value in terms of picture in any of the following ways having:
 - a. Many ideas in a single / small picture
 - b. Dominated picture telling all about the advertisement concept
 - c. Arresting animation
 - d. Cool, calm, interesting and inspiring visual
 - e. Thoughtful, interesting visual with imaginative copy to compliment
 - f. The use of attractive characters and signs
- iii. Simplicity adding to creative value: The advertisement that provides just enough and relevant information in an apt manner adds to its creative value. Such simplistic approach leads to better understanding, recall and remembrance. Simplicity in advertisements could be in any of the following forms, namely:
 - a. Simple enough in giving all hints that the advertiser wants to give
 - b. Easy to understand and informative in a light manner
 - c. Down to earth (Practical) idea - one could identify with
 - d. Straight forward and trusting
 - e. Simple presentation of the proposition and its execution
- iv. Combining different things: One of the most important creative strategies is to combine different concepts or objects that are seemingly unconnected, to produce something completely new. An advertisement might present the combining aspects by:
 - a. Mixing and matching of different things to create a wholesome impact
 - b. Use of catchy colour combinations

- c. Comparing cost and value for money
- d. Combined presentation of solution problem innovative
- e. Matching caption, copy and the photography
- f. Comparison of the state of affairs before and after the consumption

- v. Curiosity generation value of the advertisements: The contents used in an advertisement could be such that they might create curiosity and thus make the advertisement creative. Curiosity could be created:
 - a. Using elements unrelated to the advertising message
 - b. Use of an attractive material
 - c. Imaginative places, events and characters
 - d. Something different from what people expect
 - e. Projection of benefit in an unusual perspective or context
 - f. Unexpected style or tone of communicating
- vi. Theme and Concepts of the advertisement: Theme refers to the basic premise around which an advertisement is developed and positioned. The core theme of the advertisement also contributes to a great deal in making an advertisement creative. Core themes / concepts of advertisements are:
 - a. Presenting a new possibility in a familiar (service) plan
 - b. Positive, refreshing & soothing plot
 - c. Providing handy solution in Indian context
 - d. Situations that make the service at centre stage
 - e. Theme of economy in a witty manner
 - f. Using time frame, past, present and future (Past or Futuristic images)
- vii. Emotions & Appeals having creative value: Emotions are the feelings that are attempted to be generated by the advertiser in the minds of the viewers. Emotions depicted in the advertisement also add to the creative value. They could be in any manner evoking emotion / appeal such as:
 - a. Family emotions
 - b. Fear appeal
 - c. Inspirational lifestyle
 - d. Comfort & prosperity (relaxing effect)
 - e. Stress on cultural values
 - f. Humorous appeal
 - g. Sensory appeal
- viii. Metaphorical approach: Metaphorical approach deals with comparing and contrasting the similarity of two objects. It involves drawing analogy and symbolical presentation of the things in an advertisement format. This includes:
 - a. Translating phrase used in the advertisement into visual image
 - b. Presentation of proposition using symbols and signs
 - c. Reality presented in an idiomatic way
 - d. One thing being expressed in terms of another - casting new light on the thing described
 - e. Presentation of service features or benefits depicting real life
 - f. Theme that is left to the viewer to complete
- ix. Copy specific creativity: Copy refers to the words or statements forming part of an advertisement. However, Sometimes the entire format of the advertisement is termed as copy. Copy of an advertisement depicts the creativity in any of the given forms, like:
 - a. Catchy caption and tagline
 - b. Use of limited copy, clever usage of space
 - c. Words are rhyming, familiar and easy to remember
 - d. Direct headline combined with photo
 - e. Playing with words (Typography, Rhymes, compound words)
 - f. Convincing copy, suggestive or otherwise
- x. Exaggeration in presentation: Exaggeration in the depiction of features of the product/service, problem situation and solution can grab the viewer's attention and emphasize the benefit. A clear and simple message could avoid any misunderstanding and negative associations. The advertisement sometimes gains creative value by being exhaustive in its approach to:
 - a. Feature or benefit exaggeration
 - b. Numeric presentation of facts
 - c. Repetition of contents Visual, Words – radically large and unexpected

Conclsion

Advertisements fascinate most of the people as these are perceived and felt in the personal domain. Some advertisements impress instantly leaving people with wonderful images and dreams while others could to an extent irritate people as well. The same advertisement might evoke different impacts on different people. The love-hate relationship depends upon the needs of the individuals, context in which the advertisement is viewed and contents of the advertisement. To add creative dimension in advertisement execution, lot more skills and nuances are needed. These are what the advertisement world is doing all out. An advertisement could be just informative; yet it could as well have an element of creative presentation that gives the underlying message or

information a unique identity. Of course, not all encountering persons will have the same/similar impact affected by an advertisement. Some advertisements become an instant hit, while others fail to evoke the intended feel, though every advertiser attempts to effectively present an advertisement with more creative touch. However, the judges are the target audience. In the present study, the response of all the panel members with respect to creativity aspects of print advertisement is compiled using the process of 'open coding'. Thus, have been evolved the dimensions of creativity. Ten dimensions of creativity in print advertisement could be identified as Message, Picture, Simplicity, Combination, Curiosity, Theme and Concept, Emotions & Appeal, Symbol (Metaphor & Analogy), Copy and Exaggeration.

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