



SOCIAL ADVERTISING: AN INSIGHT ON ITS POSITIVE IMPACT

P. Narendar Goud

MA, MCJ (EFL-University) Tarnaka, Hyderabad-7

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to look at the positive impact of social advertising. The marketing environment in India has undergone changes since the early decade of the 1990s ever since the economic reforms were announced. The idea behind the early Indian campaign was the progress of the country and moving towards a better future. However, the campaigns were a huge flop because of its plain and dingy look. There was a need to come out of box to re-invent the social advertising to which could appeal to the masses. Also, there arose a need to reach out to the market over and above the clamour of competition. As a result the advertising industry flourished. The advertising also came under scrutiny, time to time, to suit the necessary cultural and traditional changes in the society.

The present paper, titled "Social Advertising: an Insight on Its positive Impact", attempts to study the positive impact of the social advertising. The paper focuses on defining social advertising, theories of social advertising etc. It also analyses three case studies to show the positive impact of the social advertising.

KEYWORDS : Social Advertising, Liberalisation, Cognitive Level of Explanation, Cultural Level of Explanation, Social Level of Explanation,

INTRODUCTION

The marketing environment in India has undergone changes since the early decade of the 1990s ever since the economic reforms were announced. Liberalization brought in a multitude of new players into a hitherto underexposed market. An uncharted space was birthed in the 21st Century. The option of choice that the buyers were given translated into a challenge for producers, to make their products stand out. There arose a need to reach out to the market over and above the clamour of competition. The communications revolution that followed couldn't have been timed better. Legislation ushered in cable TV and FM radio, opening new avenues.

Free airwaves, rival products and a largely uninitiated public created a unique environment for the development of advertising which was by no means new to the Indian audience. Campaigns by the government of India were already in place, to create awareness about child marriage, female infanticide, the need for literacy and family planning. Such campaigns, however, didn't produce the desired results because of their unappealing implementation which did not take into account popular tastes and concerns. Though the idea behind the campaign was the progress of the country and moving towards a better future, the campaigns were a huge flop because of its plain and dingy look.

As the advertising arena aged, on its heels came a revolution where subtle yet strong messages were replaced by the sheer promotion of product only. Ad agencies now began a fusion of coupling the product with a message or a 'cause'. Be it the Times of India campaign of Lead India and Teach India, or the Idea cellular one promoting literacy, influential agencies made an effort to eke a positive change.

Advertising can be also be looked as 'promotional communication' which permeates and blends with our cultural environment, punctuating our television watching, saturating our magazines and newspapers, and popping up in our Internet surfing, movies and video games. In short, advertising has become an accepted part of everyday life. The symbolic attitudes of goods, as well as characters, situations, imagery, and jokes of advertising discourse, are now fully integrated into our cultural repertoire.

Advertising is not just a business expenditure undertaken in the hope of moving some merchandise off the store shelves. Rather it is an important part of current culture. It is no longer used just a means for making profit for the organizations. Neither is it just a way of educating the consumer about the product and its features. It has gone beyond that. It has become a very important tool in educating

consumers about their responsibilities towards, society, the environment and themselves. It is in this regard that social advertising as tool for creating awareness becomes very important.

DEFINITION of Social Advertising

There are two meanings to the concept 'social advertisement'. A widely accepted definition is: advertising on a social networking site which enables the advertiser to target ads based on users' preferences. It can also be defined as "advertisements that promote a community's health and well being, such as programs that educate people about drugs, diseases and other social issues. Social advertising is thus a tool for educating people about issues in society that organizations believe need immediate attention. According to Bill Smith (1999), social advertising is "a process for influencing human behaviour on a large scale, using marketing principles for the purpose of societal benefit rather than for commercial profit." It is about applying marketing and advertising principles to promote health and social issues and bringing about positive behaviour change.

Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of the social networking site Facebook, defines social advertising as "about applying marketing and advertising principles to promote health and social issues and bringing about positive behaviour change." He believed that the concept of social advertising is on the rise because - "Social actions are powerful because they act as trusted referrals and reinforce the fact that people influence people." Thus, social advertising is a media message designed to educate or motivate members of a public to engage in voluntary social activity such as community services, energy conservation, recycling, others.

THEORIES OF ADVERTISING

Cognitive Level of Explanation – This theory is focuses more on psychological aspects. Advertising works at a cognitive level in that it influences the individual cognitive functions of perception, memory and attitude. Theories that focus on the cognitive levels of explanation also emphasize rational, conscious consumer thinking. The scope of explanation in such theories extends to the internal mental state of the individual and the assumed connection between those internal states and observed (consumed) behaviour. This level of explanation offers succinct and measurable results, but its weakness is that it risks distorting the way consumers engage with and understanding advertising to fit a set of convenient research methods.

Cultural Level of Explanation – Advertising can be regarded as a form of cultural text. It takes the symbolic meanings and practices of

non-consumer culture and recreates them in juxtaposition with marketed brands to suggest contrived brand values and to portray a brand personality. Marketing corporations have the economic and political power to impose contrived meanings upon cultural practices. Brand advertising, cleverly designed can work to normalize particular consumer practices (such as cigarette smoking or alcohol consumption) and invest these practices with symbolic values like personal independence and power.

Social Level of Explanation – The social level of explanation offers an account of advertising that accommodates its social character. Advertising is not encountered in a social vacuum but in a given social context, and it occupies a place in public discourse. As ads become part of social discourse they assume characteristics of social constructions. One's attitude towards an ad is not arrived in isolation but is constructed in a social context. Social constructionism disputes the validity of the internal mental state as a construct and suggests that such states survive in social discourse.

FEATURES OF SOCIAL ADVERTISING

There are certain features of social advertising that distinguishes it from other forms.

1. The main feature of social advertising is that it is mostly non-commercial. It seeks to benefit the society in general rather than make profits for the organization itself.
2. It aims for a particular benefit that is being promoted by the government, NGO's or big corporate institutions. In most cases it is the latter.
3. It is directly related to the attitude, behaviour and cognitive processes of the consumer. It seeks to modify the way of thinking of the consumer and subsequently, affect a change in attitude and behaviour.
4. The main idea behind social advertising is that it has a 'feel-good' factor associated with it. Companies feel good that they are doing something and consumers feel good that they are being associated with products that are doing good. It makes them feel good that they are doing their bit to society.

THE STUDY ON SOCIAL ADVERTISING

Social advertising shouts louder than brand advertising. In terms of impact, it can shout louder by shocking audiences into paying attention, at least for the duration of the first ad. Social campaigns are allowed to push the boundaries of tasteful depiction further than brand advertising because of their 'virtuous' motives.

This study focuses on six advertisements that fall under the category of social advertising. These ads have been divided into three different domains of health issues, social issues and environmental issues. The main objective of this study is to see the responses of the people to these ads. It also aims to see who benefit the most from such advertising – the people in society or the organization. Although there is a wealth of research related to public opinion to advertising, social advertising is still a relatively unexplored arena. There are not many case studies that have been done in this field. A few of the studies done on social advertising are listed below.

STUDY I

This study was done by B.J. Phillips in 1997, and his paper is titled, "In Defense of Advertising: A social perspective." This paper explores what he believes are the "negative social trends" recognized with advertising. He believes that one of the primary factors is the increase in consumption of goods over other social values. Following a close second is the reason that there is an increase in goods, both production and consumption to satisfy social needs. He believes that the reason for such "negative trends" is none other than capitalism. He also offers a list of solutions that deal with the "capitalistic roots of these negative social trends". This study is mostly centered on advertising practices in the United States of America.

STUDY II

This research was completed by Chris Preston in 2005. This paper is titled, "Advertising to children and social responsibility". By means of this paper, Preston discusses the "ethics of marketing towards children and studies the concept of corporate social responsibility". He questions as to what counts to being responsible advertising and in how children are in most cases, socialized into consumers by the marketers. He concludes his paper with saying that in most cases, children are the 'macro audience'. They are not obvious or explicitly targeted but are implied and inevitable customers/consumers.

STUDY III

Alex Wang published this research paper of his in 2008, titling it, "Dimensions of Corporate Social Responsibility and Advertising Practice". According to this paper, he examines the effects of positive and negative news about an organization's advertising practices on consumers. He states that while there might be a minimal effect of the positive news, the "persuasiveness" of negative news can never be overlooked.

As stated earlier, social advertising is still a relatively unknown and unfamiliar territory. However, in recent times it has become of paramount importance to both the producers and consumers.

It has become important to the consumers because a consumer feels at ease with his/her conscience whenever they buy/consume a product that has a 'cause' attached to it. They feel that their civic duty has been thus, in this process, discharged. It also makes them feel good about themselves and leads one to think that they are responsible.

On the other hand, it becomes important to the producers because their bottom line, profit and revenue get a tremendous boost. For any organization, making profit and earning goodwill is imperative. When they advertise and associate themselves promoting a community's well being or educating people about the social and other issues in society that need to be addressed, they automatically earn the name of being 'responsible' and is placed higher than those companies that market/advertise similar products but are not associated or do not promote a cause. Thus, social advertising is much more than advertising on social media.

CITATIONS

- [1] Price from a retail outlet in Hyderabad. Prices may vary from place to place.
- [2] This price is from a small retail outlet in Hyderabad. Prices may vary from place to place.
- [3] Price varies from place to place and depends on the number of pages and whether it is hard bound or not.
- [4] Prices of Idea Sim card only for Pre-paid phone connection.
- [5] Prices as of 30th March, 2011, according to a retail outlet in Hyderabad. Price might vary from shop to shop and place to place.
- [6] Ken Banks, founder of kiwanja.net, devotes himself to the application of mobile technology for positive social and environmental change in the developing world and has spent the last 15 years working on projects in Africa.

REFERENCES

1. <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/social+advertising>
2. <http://www.authorstream.com/Presentation/jas777-175911-social-advertising-aids-education-ppt-powerpoint/>
3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_advertising
4. <http://thinkexist.com/quotations/advertising/>
5. http://www.ingentaconnect.com/search/article?title=social+advertising&title_type=title&year_from=1998&year_to=2009&database=1&pageSize=20&index=28
6. http://www.ingentaconnect.com/search/article?title=social+advertising&title_type=title&year_from=1998&year_to=2009&database=1&pageSize=20&index=8
7. http://www.ingentaconnect.com/search/article?title=social+advertising&title_type=title&year_from=1998&year_to=2009&database=1&pageSize=20&index=13
8. http://www.ec21.com/companies/life_buoy.html
9. <http://www.lifebuoy.com/index.html>
10. <http://www.oppapers.com/essays/Lifebuoy-Soap-India/161332>

11. http://www.marketing-trends-congress.com/2009_cp/Material/Paper/Fr/Vasavada.pdf
12. <http://www.thehindubusinessline.in/catalyst/2006/03/02/stories/2006030200140200.htm>
13. http://wn.com/lifebuoy_ad
14. <http://www.livemint.com/2009/11/12210552/HUL8217s-play-on-swine-flu.html>
15. <https://www.businessgyan.com/node/3707>
16. <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/gsk-consumer-launches-women/s-horlicks/311977/>
17. http://www.horlicksnutritionacademy.com/women_nutrition/index.aspx
18. <http://www.indianwomenshealth.com/Womens-Health-21.aspx>
19. <http://www.andhranews.net/India/2008/February/4-Womens-Healthdrink.asp>
20. <http://pharmaceuticalshealthcare.blogspot.com/2008/01/womens-horlicks-its-launch-creates.html>
21. <http://www.mouthshut.com/review/Tata-Tea-Jaago-Re-commercial-onnupnpqm>
22. <http://www.tataglobalbeverages.com/Pages/index.aspx>
23. <http://realityviews.blogspot.com/2010/01/slogan-is-aaj-se-khilana-bandh-pilana.html>
24. <http://youthonads.com/tata-tea-admission-ad-review-cuppa-tea-for-change/>
25. <http://youthonads.com/tata-tea-jaago-re/>
26. <http://www.tata.com/products/index.aspx?sectid=ghCu6vsg2vU=#Beverages>
27. <http://www.indian-tech-news.com/idea-cellular-launched-use-mobile-save-trees-campaign/78/>
28. <http://gizmodose.com/en/%E2%80%9Csave-tree-to-save-environment-%E2%80%9D-what-an-idea.html>
29. http://www.ideacellular.com/IDEA.portal?nfbp=true&pageLabel=IDEA_PageIdeaInMedia&displayParam=contentpressnewreleasesUseMobileSavePaper.html
30. <http://www.indiaonline.com/Markets/News/Idea-and-Radio-Mirchi-organizes-use-mobile-and-save-paper-campaign/4784068212>
31. <http://www.adgully.com/marketing/idea-mobile-appeals-to-the-nation-to-save-tree-2.html>
32. <http://www.knowyourmobile.in/mobileoperators/idea/394197/idea-introduces-innovative-use-mobile-save-paper-campaign.html>
33. <http://www.pcworld.com/article/155771/mobile-phones-and-the-birds-and-the-bees.html>
34. <http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-01-27/news/284058851/mobile-handsets-nokia-india-chief-marketing-officer>
35. <http://www.nokia.com/environment/strategy-and-reports/environmental-strategy>
36. <http://www.hindu.com/2009/01/01/stories/2009010155691900.htm>
37. <http://www.itexaminer.com/nokia-to-launch-recycling-campaign.aspx>
38. <http://bzupages.com/f15/nokia-introduces-its-old-cell-phone-recycling-programme-4379/>
39. <http://www.inspectagadget.net/?p=1653>
40. <http://www.thump.in/ad-was-ad-review/nokias-we-recycle-mobile-phones-ad>
41. <http://nokiasaga.com/nokia-launched-mobile-recycling-services-in-india>
42. <http://www.slideshare.net/Pavithrag/cause-marketing-1119955>
43. <http://www.itcportal.com/itc-business/fmcg/education-and-stationery-products.aspx>
44. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/19802529/itc-Limited>
45. <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/itc-targetsschoolbag/382928/>
46. <http://www.afaqs.com/news/story.html?sid=26023>
47. <http://www.campaignindia.in/Article/228072,smart-library-chatter-in-itc-classmates-new-tv-campaign.aspx>
48. <http://www.rediff.com/money/2006/apr/12spec.htm>
49. <http://www.rediff.com/money/2007/jul/25itc.htm>
50. <http://adformula.blogspot.com/2010/05/itc-class-mates-big-ideas.html>