

Cartoons And Caricatures In Indian Advertising

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Abstract

A picture is worth a thousand words, but a caricature is worth a thousand pictures, for it has an immense power of communication and mass appeal than any other communication tool. Humour has been one of the most accepted and utilised appeals in advertising that helps in putting across the message of the advertisement 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. Since humour generates feeling of pleasure and amusement, it has the potential for the feelings to become associated with the brand and may influence consumer attitudes towards the brand and probably the image. A minor alteration of a phrase, a single facial expression or even a voice modulation helps to attract attention to a commercial. Despite humour being an effective mechanism for drawing attention, it is crucial for advertisers to find the appropriate type of humour for the appropriate product in order to ensure success.

Introduction

The effectiveness of an advertising message depends to a large extent on its visual contents. The advertiser must locate an appeal, theme, idea or a unique selling proposition. An advertising appeal refers to the approach used by an advertiser to attract the attention or interest of the consumer and influence their feelings towards the product, service or idea. Through the use of different kinds of appeals, advertising attempts to persuade and influence. 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. Humour 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. 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.

Since humour generates feeling of pleasure and amusement, it has the potential for the feelings to become associated with the brand and may influence consumer attitudes towards the brand image. It indicates the quality which produces or mediates the amusing, the comic, and the witty. It is defined as the capability to be laughing at things, the way in which everybody sees that some things are entertaining, or the value of being funny. Advertisers use several tricks to gain the attention of the customers and one such tactic is introducing humour in commercials. The adoption of humour in has long been a popular technique in advertising execution, as it makes the advertisements more interesting. Many advertisers tend to use humour as the basic approach when their major concern is to attract attention to the product or service.

Over a period of time humour has been proved to be one of the best visualisation techniques in advertising to keep the customer laughing and grab his attention with creative ideas, forcing the audience watch, laugh and most importantly is able to recall the brand easily. With innumerable sets of advertisements all around, it becomes difficult for a product to grab the attention of the audiences which does not catch audience's attention, cannot be expected to achieve its result. Humorous advertisements, by attracting the attention of the audiences, make the job of the advertiser much easier. These advertisements can be created by using an interesting and entertaining story line.

In general, the factors that make the advertisements humorous are circumstances, characters, dialog and the backdrop against which the advertisement is presented. A minor alteration of a phrase, a single facial expression or even a voice modulation, helps to attract attention to a commercial. The portrayal of humour in advertisements could acquire any shape, where funny commercials induce optimistic emotions in audiences and can help in positive brand building and can also lead to better brand recall.

Feelings evoked through the use of humour can also lead brand positive associations, as well as increasing the comprehension levels of the viewers. In advertising, humour is more than just making a bunch of people laugh. Some of the best brands in India have used humour to such an extent that the viewers look forward for newness in humour each time they see a new commercial from that brand. By making use of humour the message is long remembered. To illustrate, for example products such as Chormint, Alpenliebe, Mentos etc. in their advertising campaigns have used humour so intelligently and subtly, that it got imprinted in people's minds forever with continuous new innovative ideas and concepts.

The visual elements in advertising play a dominant role in attracting the consumers. A good number of advertisements uses very little written information, mainly focus on the visual elements to convey the message. The visual elements used in the advertisements not only convey the information, but also reinforce the advertising claims. Since the advertiser expects to create a favourable attitude about

the product which will lead to positive actions in the mind of the consumer, a unique visual attribute is required to enhance the taste and acceptance of the consumer about the product thus advertised.

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 advertisements, which captures the attention, demonstrating use, differentiating the look of an advertisement. The visuals or illustrations in advertisements 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 and emphasises the brand's uniqueness, arouse a legitimate prospect for the product. Effective visualisation is the devices adopted to make advertising more persuasive and interesting to the consumers, to give it distinction and make it memorable.

Every advertisement had a purpose to serve and this brings about the different types of appeals to serve a particular job. A foremost requisite to review and understand the effectiveness of humour in advertising involves the acceptability of variety of creative and visual elements, characters that involves the adoption of various visual representations in the form of drawings, unusual illustrations, photographs, cartoons, caricatures, fictitious and animated characters such as brand mascots, puppets, trademarks, imaginative portrayal of person or animals, unusual punch lines and advertising jingles which stands for a product or a company, indicating the quality that produces or mediates the amusing, comic, laughable, ludicrous and witty part of conveying the message.

Cartoons, puppet characters, demonstrations using both hand drawn illustrations and computer generated images, are some of the techniques used to communicate some implicit advertising messages, where a physical character of an object is exaggerated to reach certain specific target groups, such as children. Animated pictures of pain, cold cough, and personal hygiene, simplify the understanding about the subject and it becomes relatively easy to catch the attention of the viewers with such animated characters which is difficult to explain verbally or with actual photographs, that comes alive with visual effects and is remembered better due to their humourous approach, specially to attract the attention of the children. For example, in the advertisement campaign of Lifebuoy, the visual metaphor illustrates the underlying problems with unusual illustrations, which cannot be expressed by mere headline and body text.

Cartoons and caricatures have been used in advertisements as the most powerful and versatile marketing tool. Advertising mascots are the fictitious characters which stand for a product or a company or both, have immense advertising value. When a product is 'humanised' by giving it a face, arms and legs, it comes alive and is remembered better. Mascots refer to any imaginative character, person or animal used to represent a brand and communicate about the brand and its offerings to the consumers. It is a fictional character which is used in advertising to promote the brand. Once the mascot is associated with a product or service, it becomes the symbol of that particular brand. It helps in brand recalling, making the users recognize the

brand name as soon as they see the mascot. One of the longest running mascots in the history of Indian advertising is the Amul Girl followed by TATA Sky Active -puppet, Canara HSBC Bank mascot -Manager Sahab, Nerolac Paints mascot, Goody-the tiger, ICICI Prudential mascot - Chintamani, LijjatPapad mascot- Bunny, and ITC mascot- Sunny, Vodafone Zoozoos are some of the popular Indian mascots, which represents the true soul and identity of the brand that is embedded in popular acceptance as humourous characters with creative flexibility and execution. The advertising campaigns of Fevicol, have used humour to create and convey the message to the audience in a very light and humourous way that deals with the ridiculous and exaggerated form of presentation and creates situation where the humourous aspect of visualisation which strikes the viewers face directly.

The response toward portrayal of anthropomorphic animals along with human characteristics also plays an important role in advertising, because people tend to draw toward things and objects that are similar to themselves. The physical similarities of the animals with that of humans associate the product, service or idea to create and enhance positive image about the product. For example the caricature of Shera, the mascot of the XIX Commonwealth Games 2010, is taken from the Hindi word 'Sher' (means 'Tiger' in English), embody the power and courage associated with Goddess Durga, The image of the tiger which is also the national animal of India in the caricature form of Shera as the mascot reflects the power, charisma, intelligence and graceful attitude of the majestic Royal Bengal tiger. His athletic proficiency, courage and speed is well evident with the human like portrayal with jersey, boot and most interestingly the folded hand, commemorating Indian hospitality.

In current time, advertisers are trying to create a character that matches the characteristics of the brand, lending it a fresh look and promoting a new medium of communication using claymation technique. For example, Amaron Battery, ICICI Prudential, and TATA AIG are few of the several brands that have succeeded in presenting the brand in an animated (Claymation) version. The television commercials for automotive battery brand, Amaron Battery, executed entirely using the claymation technique to persuade the consumers with caricatures of human characters.

Conclusion

Even though the changing trends of creativity had utilised the technique of art of hand drawn illustrations, cartoons and caricatures and other witty images etc. to endorse the product with humourous appeal, the modern Indian advertising made a transition from such stereotyped representation into a more subtle mockery in recent time with intense indirect persuasive advertising using non-specific images with digital enhancement of visual elements. Conventional sets of caricature and cartoons using line drawings and illustrative styles were explored and re-innovated further with indirect and conceptual approach of utilising real life humourous situation to a more intense visual appeal with pictorial dramatisation of the advertising message. But such indirect approaches also instigated the idea of disgrace advertising messages in some occasions which seem to demoralise the attribute of the real purpose of using cartoons

and caricature for humourous appeal. Sometimes, overuse of humour also leads to isolate the message from the product where the consumers only remember the humour part, rather than the product. Humourous elements in advertising definitely creates brand awareness and positive mood, but sometime outshines the product and hold up the attention of the consumer. In the process of such stylisation, the probability of humour may have a tendency to irritate the attention of the consumer.

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