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Social Awareness through Celebrity Endorsement - Indian Context

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Abstract:

The aim of any advertisement is to communicate information with a purpose to the present and prospective customers and drive them towards a specific product or service by showing its effectiveness and importance. Advertising messages are given about products, services and ideas to specific target audience. Processing of message conveyed by an advertisement is critical for successful advertising communication to the audience. The advertisements which are designed to target general audience for some social awareness campaign have some value added to it, if celebrities endorse the service. An important thing about this type of ad is that they need to be effective, they must be appealing to people's emotions and they must position strongly in their minds. This paper attempts to find out the attributes of celebrity endorsement in social awareness ad campaigns. Research and survey has proved that advertisement with celebs as brand ambassador has a greater appeal to the consumers, so social awareness or public service advertisements should not be an exception. Discussing the Indian scenario, majorly the government has taken up initiative for producing public service or awareness advertisement for fighting social issues. This work attempts to find out diverse aspects of celebrity endorsement in social awareness advertisement.

Keywords: Public service Advertisement, Social Awareness, celebrity endorsement, brand ambassador, appeal

1. Background

Today advertising has evolved into a vast complex form of communication. It has catered into every business and every consumer minds, with literally thousands of different ways to message the consumer. The earliest recognized version of advertising known was done on papyrus by the Egyptians and on the other hand in Pompeii, the ruins suggest that advertising was commonplace. To tell a story is the true purpose of advertising. Every advertisement is set up in such a way that it makes the viewer feel involved with the advertisement in their imagination. Every product, every service, every brand has something unique about it and so it advertises or announces about it through different forms of media as a tool. The mind and imagination are powerful tools to a consumer and thus this (ad) form of communication is required. The different stories told through advertisements allow viewers to think and create their own interpretation of the ad thus creating more engagement with the product or service. Engagement is what the advertisers want to achieve which may finally turn them as consumers or buyers of the product or service.

Now, if what the advertisement is backed with the glamour and popularity of a celebrity? The face value of the product elevates and the market gets increased. The celebrities are identified according to the requirement of the product. Their profile should match with the product or service.

Unlike traditional commercials, Public Service Advertisements (PSA) or Public awareness advertisements were primarily designed to inform and educate rather than sell a product or service. These kinds of ads have a double goal. They convey a social message along with blowing their own trumpets. More convincingly these ads do not goal to make a big sale, but rather to change public opinion and raise awareness for a cause. It has a strategy to educate and evoke a feeling. They are identified with different names in different countries like, in the UK, they are called Public Information Films, in the US, they are known as Public Service Announcements and in Hong Kong they are known as Announcements in the Public Interest, or APIs. Now it has been long that public awareness concepts are used for advertisements.

Finally, when, advertising, celebrity and social awareness all three things connect together they create a new area for communication. Advertisements using celebrities to create awareness is a recent way of communication.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

- To explore views on the concept of celebrity endorsement in social awareness advertisements.
- To find out what role they have played towards social awareness.
- To discuss few case studies on this concept of advertisement.

2. What is Public Service Advertising?

The term “public service or social service advertising” is a term with an aspect for developmental advertising. Public Awareness Advertising, Social Service Advertising and Social Awareness Advertising, Public Service Advertising mention those advertising efforts that are done as a part of social responsibility by entities like advertising agencies, Government, NGO's as well as other business organizations. This is a type of advertising which focuses on social issues like family planning, national integration, pollution, and care for aged and disable, girl child education, anti-smoking etc. Their primary purpose is public education through hard hitting didactic messages. The ads not only aim to sell products or services but also “ideas” and “messages”. Government and charity advertising is usually non-profit making. But, often it uses the persuasive techniques of commercial advertising. However, we should remember that an organization like the health or education council has a very small amount of money to promote anti-smoking in comparison with the giant tobacco firms who spend a great deal on encouraging us to smoke and thereby, by all accounts, to damage our health. Knowingly advertising is one of the means used by manufacturing and service industries to ensure the distribution of commodities to people in the society at large and is designed to create demands for such goods and services. Advertising tries to manipulate people into buying a way of life as well as Page | 173goods. However, the advertisers will argue that great quantity and range of goods produced in a competitive free market economy guarantees the consumer the choice of freedom. So this quality of manipulation and persuasion can also be triggered for raising social awareness. Over the years, the question - 'Is Advertising Essential?' has always been into discussion. Despite of conflicting views, if there is a mass acceptance of a particular kind of advertising, it has to be Public Service Advertising.

The objective behind Public Service or Public Awareness Advertising is to spread social consciousness among the masses and promote social issues. Such advertisements may vary from being subtle to direct and practical to ironic.

Alyque Padamsee was the first Indian to create a Social Awareness Advertisement through his public service film – India on Handicapped Children – “The story of Hope”. Today the public service advertising has become very popular and is considered to be one of the most effective means to create social awareness and bring about a change / shift in the mindsets of people. Some of the social issues in India, which has been brought under notice through ad- campaigns: - Female Foeticide, Polio Eradication, Literacy Campaign, AIDA awareness, Blood Donation, National Integration, Blood Donation, Anti-Smoking, Family Planning, Right to Vote, Save water, save electricity etc.

When it comes to effective Public Service or Social awareness advertising, it is essential to keep the target audience in mind while creating the social message. A comprehensive understanding of the target group further improves the impact of the message being delivered. The advertisements should carry a short message absolutely to the point. The messages even can be dramatic and should ideally stand out from the condition of all other advertisements, to reach the rural mass. These kinds of advertisement s can fall into two broad categories: (i) those ads which make you to *feel* differently and (ii) those ads which make you to *act* differently. All ads can be compelling and effective.

2.1. Early Beginning of Social Awareness or Public Service Advertisements

The first non-governmental initiative was taken in early 1900s; the ad was run free by newspapers to dramatize the concern of child labor. The National Child Labor Committee along with newspaper publishers supported the cause. Thus was also born media co-branding. Again when the U.S. was drawn into World War I in 1917, the Federal Committee of Public Information was created to inspire public support for “why we fight.” Within the Committee, a Division of Pictorial Publicity was formed by the artist Charles Dana Gibson, recruited leading illustrators to create posters constructing support for the war. James Montgomery Flagg drew the assignment to create the “Uncle Sam Needs You” which became one of the most famous and iconic posters of all time. The Red Cross campaign also created as an awakening through awareness ads, it asked citizens to join the organization that was personified in the ads in a Madonna-like image entitled the “Greatest Mother in the World.”

3. Choosing the Celebrity for a Brand

A celebrity to endorse a service or product is decided on certain parameters. The needs of the brand rather than the fame of the celebrity should be the primary criteria when selecting a celebrity spokesperson. The celebrity should have the quality to induce positive emotions in the consumer’s minds and create a buzz. The celebrity’s physical attractiveness, values, and credibility also matter tremendously. The personality of the celebrity should also suit the product or service he endorses. The importance of celebrity endorsements has intensified with the rise of modern media and new concept ads. Celebrity endorsements trigger viewers and turn them into potential consumers. As a brand ropes in a popular celebrity, the brand gains more of convincing power. Now when the product is a social awareness government scheme, it could have an extensive reach with a celebrity. A few basic facts that a brand should take into count to ensure a successful selection of the celebrity as a brand ambassador. The aptness of the celebrity largely depends on the product or service. Most advertisers insist that their celebrity ambassador should have charisma & popularity. This is the reason we see more of movie and television stars, athletes, real-life heroes, etc. acting as brand ambassadors in the market. Selection of the right celebrity is very crucial for a brand; the fame of the celebrity is a primary criterion. All is decided keeping the target audience in mind. In case of social awareness advertisement, the involvement of the celebrities gives an extra edge. Their popularity can have a greater persuasive power; they can convince the target audience and make them work according the desired way. So, the initiative taken for rural development in India has produced ads which involve celebrity as spokesperson. If they speak about health and hygiene, education and other important social issues can be communicated in a more influential manner.

Celebrities have since a long time been an essential element for a new product launch and will remain to do so in the near future as well. It is because of their mass appeal and their loyal fans. But, when it comes to a brand, the impact is very high than just an

advertisement that shows a celebrity. The use of a celebrity magnifies the effect of allowing the consumers to connect their celebrity along with the brand. Diagram below suggest the reasons behind selecting a celebrity.

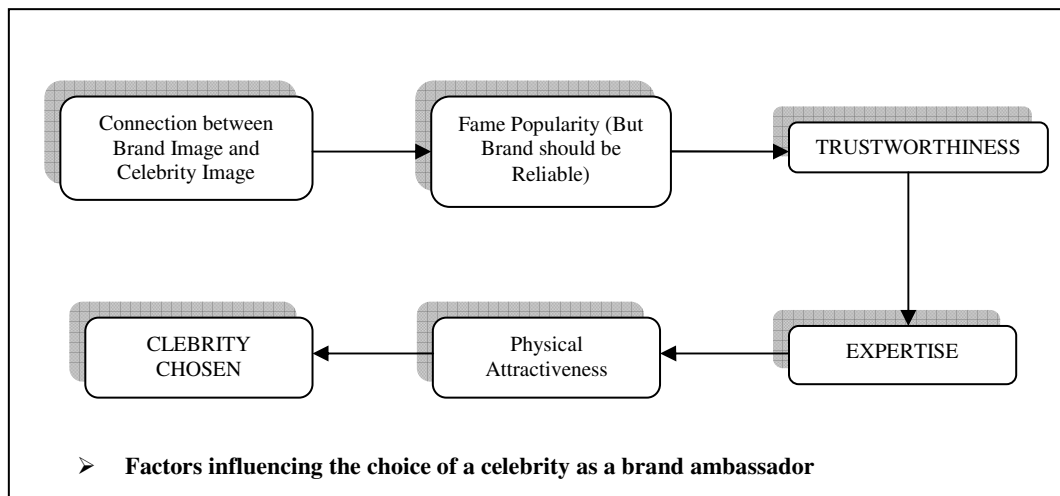


Figure 1

Some celebrity involvement may be there indirectly with the social awareness campaign or else at times a social awareness campaign may be without a celebrity involved in it. In that case what counts is the thought that is conveyed through the ad campaign. Both kinds of advertisement traditions have been further discussed as case studies.

3.1. Case Studies on Social/ Public Awareness Advertisement with Different Aspects

3.1.1. Social / Public Awareness Advertisement with Indirect Celebrity Involvement

TOI ad Single person lead the mob (2008): 'Tum chalo toh Hindustan chale': Gulzar's words struck up the perfect camaraderie with Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy's powerhouse tunes in this awe inspiring campaign for The Times of India. The idea was to inspire people to visit the polling booth and cast their votes to make justifiable use of their democratic rights. The Lead India anthem will go down as one of the most prominent ones in the history of ad campaigns in India.

3.1.2. Social/ Public Awareness Advertisement with No Celebrity Involvement

Tata tea 'Jaago re' ads on election awareness and anti-corruption (2006): Tata tea launched one of the most iconic ad campaigns, 'Jaago Re'. This was the first ad on election awareness and the duty of Indians to implement their right to vote. Soon after, a series of such ads that highlight different socially critical issues within the country was launched.

3.1.3. Social/ Public Awareness Advertisement with Direct Celebrity Involvement

Another ad that was conceptualized and created to perfection was 'Mile sur mera tumhara' (1980). The ad will forever be remembered and celebrated by generations of Indian citizens. 'Mile sur mera tumhara', is a campaign that countless Indian citizens have grown up viewing it. The campaign brought together people from all walks of life, from singers to sportsmen to movie stars. This social awareness advertisement was created to behold and strengthen national integrity.

The Incredible India campaign by Ministry of tourism (2009): The campaign derives a quote from ancient Indian speaking about hospitality 'Atithi Devo Bhava'. For the first time in 2009 Incredible India was being given a face. A face which people would recognize easily; it was Bollywood actor Aamir Khan to present the brand. The ad came in the wake of a series of brutal incidents involving foreigners. The ad campaign was created targeting the domestic audience in the country.

3.2. A Few Challenges that Can Evolve While Advertisers Involve Celebrities:

An undesirable or an immoral behavior by the brand ambassador can create problems. Some instance like, Golfer Tiger Woods lost his deals with Tag Heuer, Gillette, Accenture, Gatorade and a few other firms after it was discovered that he had extramarital affairs with at least a dozen women. His loss of faith in the consumer's mind cost him the loss of ads.

Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan, lost the brand ambassador profile with the snapdeal as he had made controversial comments on perceived intolerance in the country that evoked criticism from many quarters. As a result, several netizens vented their frustration on social networks and even deleted Snapdeal's app to show protest against the company.

3.3. Case Studies on Social/ Public Awareness Advertisement with Celebrity Endorsement

In the Indian scenario, social awareness advertisement has got its importance as and after government has taken up initiative to spread awareness among the common mass with the involvement of some celebrities. The few case studies which have been discussed below

covers awareness program which are endorsed by some celebs. From health schemes to swachh bharat to girl education, all has been under priority. Advertisements using celebrities to create awareness is a recent way of communication in India too.

3.3.1. Case Study 1: 'Do Boond Zindagi ki'

- Celebrity Brand ambassador: Amitabh Bachchan
- Product: Government Schemes to eradicate Polio
- Advertisement Objectives: Campaigns to propagate "do boond zindagi ki"

The Indian government has had a lot of campaigns like 'Kuposhan Bhagao' – for eradication of malnutrition, DOTS campaign for Tuberculosis and Polio Free India. But, as and when Amitabh Bachchan came on TV talking about "Do boond zindagi ki" and started creating awareness it was a success. It created an awareness and awakening among the people about the Polio Ravivar – Polio Sunday – campaign. The ad was in all regional languages and key words of the advertisement hammered as reminders "5 saal ke neeche har bachcha har bar" (Any child below 5 years every child every time, for polio drops). This is perhaps one of the best examples of perfect implementation of the celebrity endorsed public awareness ad-campaign.

The success story of the 'product-service-social-awareness' advertisement was when WHO recognized India Polio Free after no case of Polio registered in the last 3 years. Anyways, the way whole campaign turned out was simply superb as the tag line "Do boond Zindagi Ki" was very apt and easily understood by all. This will remain one of the world's most successful campaigns to be implemented at such a large-scale to popular immunization. The campaign is still on-air, running in its full strength to ensure that the deadly disease doesn't crop up again. Polio Eradication Champion award by Rotary International for his invaluable support to the Polio Eradication Program in India was conferred to UNICEF polio ambassador, Amitabh Bachchan. He has been the face of polio mass media campaigns for nearly a decade advising and persuading parents to ensure "do boond zindagi ki" (two drops of polio vaccine) to every child every time. The brand ambassador selection of the advertisement has justified its choice for being the most dependable and trust worthy face of the nation.

Achievement: The impact of this drive was such that in 2014 India didn't report a single case of the deadly disease. Till date, this particular advertisement has proved to be the best and most successful health campaign India.

3.3.2. Case Study 2: 'Swachh Bharat campaign'

- Celebrity Brand ambassador: Vidya Balan
- Product: Government Schemes for Rural Development and Sanitation.
- Advertisement Objectives: Campaigns to propagate construction and use of toilets

Actress Vidya Balan became the brand ambassador of sanitation campaign of the government of India and would promote the construction and use of toilet in rural India. The government directs people through advertisements on television to construct toilets in their houses. The ad promotes necessity for proper drinking water and sanitation and spread awareness. The ads are largely focused towards urban India for construction and use of toilets. To grow sanitation habits, hand washing, personal hygiene and managing waste among all.

According to UNICEF-WHO Joint Monitoring Program Report 2010, nearly 60 per cent of India's 1.1 billion people still practice open defecation and close to 58% of all open defecations in the World is in India. So the celebrity involved in the campaign has a social responsibility through this ad. The concepts of the advertisements are based on rural backdrop.

3.3.3. Case Study 3: 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao'

- Celebrity Brand ambassador: Madhuri Dixit
- Product: Government Schemes for Girl Child
- Advertisement Objectives: Prevent gender biased sex selective elimination, ensure survival, protection and education of the Girl Child, improve the Nutrition Status of Girl Child and promote a protective environment for girl child.

Another Ad campaign on a serious social awareness issue was launched on January 22, 2015. It was Prime Minister Narendra Modi idea and a key scheme that aimed to address the dipping child sex ratio and empower the girl child in the country. 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' programme was thus launched from Panipat in Haryana and Bollywood actress Madhuri Dixit was roped in as the brand ambassador of this campaign. The issue of decline in CSR is complex and the scheme addressed the issue within the broad framework of survival, protection, education of girl children and eradication of female foeticide.

The advertisement campaign 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' spoke about the scheme which would be implemented first in 100 selected districts, which will cover all states and UTs and is a joint initiative of Women and Child Development, Human Resource Development and Health Ministries.

- Background of the ad: The ad aims to generate awareness and improving the efficiency of welfare services meant for women. The scheme was initiated with an initial corpus of Rs 100 crore. According to Census data, Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years) in India was 927 girl children per 1,000 boys in 2001 which dropped drastically to 919 girls for every 1,000 boys in 2011. A 2012 UNICEF Report ranked India 41st among 195 countries. So, the Government proposed Rs. 150 crores to be spent by Ministry of Home Affairs on a scheme to increase the safety of women in large cities.

4. Conclusion

It is well understood that a well-made advertisement grabs attention and remains in the memory even long after the viewers have left it behind. That is exactly what many of these social causes need. Forcing people to think and worry about various social and environmental issues. Even simply getting the awareness spread is important for rising public support and getting meaningful changes. A few of these ads are supported by the presence of celebrities. Like commercial advertisements, having a celebrity as a brand ambassador can add the face value of the social awareness campaign. As they are important, they must appeal to the observer's emotions. According to "Father of Advertising" David Ogilvy, his contemporary, Howard Gossage, said that "*advertising justifies its existence when used in the public interest—it is much too powerful a tool to use solely for commercial purposes.*"

Social awareness or social consciousness is a controversial subject in today's society. The advertisements convey social messages which should be the means to aware people of the problems that various societies and communities deal with every day. The success of the above discuss cases may encourage social awareness advertisement in India. More celebrities may be engaged and create encouraging advertisement can be produced to curb limitless social problems India face. The celebrity endorsed advertisement should embark a mission to create public awareness. More celebrities can take up initiative along with government, non- government departments or NGOs and promote social issues. Their fame and popularity can be enchased for the social awakening and construct awareness to bring the rural mass out of ignorance.

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