Trends in Indian Advertising

Usha rani Narayana (Dr.N.Usha rani)

Abstract:
Indian advertising has come of age. The creativity of Indian ads has been established beyond doubt. There was a time when India used to look down upon the marketing capability of Indian advertising industry consequently depending heavily on ad campaigns of MNCs and used the ads of western market in the east. The emergence of India as economic super power coupled with revolution in communication technology has provided an impetus to the advertising industry. This paper examines the trends in Indian advertising to understand how advertisements have attempted to change the consumption and behavioural pattern of consumers. It also studies the trends in copy writing, visualization and advertising campaigns besides persuasion techniques adopted to sell products and services. The functioning of advertising agencies – the Idea Merchants, offering variety of services apart from conventional job of creation of ads is also one of issues examined in this paper. The study finds out that Indian advertisers, whose work is valued on par with Western advertising, are working on branding and making consumers brand conscious. In fact branding is inevitable for the survival of quality products. Branding makes the consumer quality-conscious. The study points out that the emerging market for online advertising and marketing in the era of social media and online journalism.

Introduction:
The year 2007 belongs to Indian advertising. India is set to become the world’s largest consumer market. India is on the international economic map.
Financial Times and Business Week have predicted that India is poised to overtake US and China by the year 2025 in terms of GDP growth. India with a population of 1 Billion plus, 1/6 of the world’s population, is the ultimate destination of ‘Idea Merchants’. Brand positioners have hit a goldmine in ever-increasing huge market of 250 million plus middle class to reach out.

The new found economic prosperity is attributed to ICT revolution. India is an emerging economy along with China in the world. Growth has reached saturation point in North America and Europe prompting the world marketers to biggest investment opportunities in India and China.

India has become the proverbial gold mine for international and national brands for setting shop. Entrepreneurs are vying with each other to conquer the market for their fast moving consumer durables and perishables. In India, advertising is an Rs.10, 000 crore industry all set to grow by leaps and bounds.

**Selling Images:**

The job of advertising basically is to sell images. Advertising ought to be persuasive enough to sell products and services. Advertising aims at influencing people’s consumption pattern. It strives for acceptance of idea by the people. Advertisers are therefore better known as idea merchants rather than sellers or propagandists. The sea change in Indian economy has created new opportunities and new approaches for advertising.

- Advertising primarily helps in marketing of product and creates competition.
- It leads to improvement in the quality of the merchandise.
- It helps in expanding markets and increase sales.

**Profile of Consumers**

The Indian consumer market is bursting at seams with 250 million middle class consumers. Of these there are 32 million technology youngsters and 16 million young professionals who are trend setters in the consumer
market with their new found prosperity. Recently India Today magazine conducted a survey on the consumer behavioral pattern of young prosperous working men and women. The survey makes interesting revelations. It says that these youngsters in the age group of 18-28 years are:

• Tech savvy, gadget crazy, internet friendly
• Individualistic, adventurous, impulsive buyers
• Buy the latest, little concern for price tag
• Look for EMI not MRP
• Fond of Books, music, cloths, eating out, movies, mobiles and consumer durables

The trend illustrates that the concept of EMI has created need and desire for the product and has enhanced the purchasing power of these young consumers. Unlike in the past, price is no longer the determining factor in purchase decisions. Ironically when the consumer forum is endeavoring to create awareness about the bargaining advantage of MRP price, these cash rich youngsters have little concern for the price tag.

**Ad Agencies / Communication Companies**

The Darwinian principle has prompted many ad agencies to widen their scope and offer multiple media services to survive in this highly competitive world. Apart from the traditional services of making mere ad campaigns for print, radio and television, the ad agencies today have branched out offering expertise in other media related fields. The most significant services offered by them are;

1. Action marketing – Personalized Customer Care
2. Interactive Marketing – Hi-tech display
3. Lifetime value management
4. Direct marketing
5. Net Advertising
6. Public Relations / Corporate Communications
7. Specialized Financial Services

Action marketing aims at offering personalized and individual care to consumers and helps win consumer loyalty. It operates on a lofty ideology that
consumers are perceived as individuals with independent needs and interests than as mass buyers of a product or service.

In this hi-tech era, clients have lot of expectations from the agency to use and apply technology in ad campaigns. Interactive marketing is a specific service that helps display the hi-tech intervention the agency is capable of and has introduced clients to an open world. As a result of diversified services, the ad agencies are transformed into Communication Companies. This strategy of diversification has enabled many agencies to survive and retain their precious clients in this highly competitive world of advertising.

**New approach to Branding**

Indian advertisers, whose work is valued on par with Western advertising, are rightly working to make the consumers brand conscious. Brand-centric is a western concept widely accepted in developed world and has recently made inroads into Indian advertising. Unlike in the west, branding is a big challenge in India and the consumer market is not mature enough to demand and use branded products. Therefore, it was no surprise when Bill Gates admitted that large scale movement of non-branded products and piracy in India and China have caused heavy loss to Microsoft – the software leader in the world. India certainly has compromised on branding and pricing. In 2004 the NDA led alliance’s government tried to brand India. The extensive ad campaign created a slogan, ‘India Shinning’ to drive home the political message. The campaign reminded one of the days in Indian politics when some ad agency tried to brand Rajiv Gandhi immediately after the demise of Indira Gandhi in tragic circumstances. On both the occasions, the slogan back fired and took away all the shine from India. The efforts at branding fell flat.

In fact branding is inevitable for the survival of quality products. Branding makes the consumer quality-conscious. Surprisingly a nation of 1 billion plus does not have a global brand of its own. Even a small country like Finland with a population of just 5 million people is the home of cell phone make *Nokia*. *Nokia* is the 6th top brand in the global cell market. Therefore Indian advertisers are making efforts to gain public acceptance for brand centric concept. As a result
they are more making ads which are more focused and trendy paying more attention to brand name in the case of textiles, shoes, watch and jewelry. The trend in the information era is to celebrate the brand.

**Emergence of New advertising media -Online Advertising**

In the era of information explosion, it is difficult to ignore the growing popularity of online advertising and marketing.

- According to IAB Reports, Internet advertising revenues has reached a new record of $ 4.9 billion for the first quarter of 2007 and is estimated to touch $ 20 billion for 2007. The 2007 first quarter revenues represent a 26 percent increase over 2006 at $3.8 billion. According to Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) Reports in 2006 Internet advertising earned revenue of $16.8 billion, a 34 percent increase over the previous revenue record of $12.5 billion in 2005.

- Statistics reveal that search engines like Google, Yahoo, and MSN combined took a lion’s share of 80 – 90% of the total ad earnings and continues to dominate online market.

- Newspapers have lost ad revenue to Internet in classified ads in categories like matrimony and jobs. Today Indian matrimony has gone online and a traditional society like India has accepted this technological revolution and searching brides and grooms through search engines.

- Online advertising has outplayed newspapers and is generating good revenue.

- Newspapers which were skeptical about online advertising have launched online editions and e-newspapers in a big way. Today newspapers have found one more source of ad revenue from online advertising. It has the potential to grow and generate ad revenue on par with print ads. Global internet advertising market continues to grow steadily.

- The continued strong growth of revenue is attributed to the distinctive feature of online advertising- interactivity.

**Ads in Print Media**
Globally newspaper advertising revenue increased by 2%. Newspaper circulation in India recorded a 20% increase during 2003-06. However, the global trend is decline in newspaper circulation but the development in India and China is increase in circulation. Traditionally newspapers continue to be the major source of information in countries like India and China. The decline in circulation was checked by newspapers for the following reasons

- Newspapers have become more innovative. Factors like competition and losing heavy chunk of ad revenue to television has forced the newspapers to innovate. Therefore, newspapers have changed the formats and have converted to full or partial colour printing.
- Introduced new features like advertorial – Advertising + Editorial and Impact Feature. Ad writing has influenced news writing. News writing like ad writing has become rhythmic, musical and no longer bland and dull and the language is more spicy and exciting.
- Newspapers are catering to new group of readers whose interests and needs are different from traditional readers. Owing to impact of advertising marketing whiz-kids help shape today’s newspapers.
- Print ads are sleek and expensive packages with colour supplements occupy prime positions and extended cover pages influenced by marketing blitz in selling newspapers and space.
- The whole concept of newspaper has changed into brand positioning and packaging with a motto of news packaged and designed as entertainment.
- There is increasing willingness to look newspaper as a brand.
- ‘A brand offers an assurance of quality and consistency’. If newspaper has to sustain, it has maintain consistent quality.

**Television – the Money Machine**
Television continues to remain the world’s largest advertising medium. Globally television continues to be regarded as the major source of news and entertainment.

- Newspaper retains its position as the second largest advertising medium in the world with decrease in circulation has adversely affected its advertising revenue.
- TV penetration has raised from 85 million homes in 2002 to 108 million homes in 2005; cable and satellite homes 73 million- the largest cable TV market.
- A 2005 media advertising study found TV taking 46% of the total industry size worth Rs.9,493 crore.
- According to reports India’s pay-TV market earned $4.2 billion in 2006 and is believed to grow strongly by 2015.

Studies have revealed that a large percentage of people enjoy watching TV commercials and a majority of consumers receive product information from television. Further, a brutal majority of consumers feel that TV commercials are the greatest influence in buying decisions.

**Trends in Content Design**

It is interesting to note that the trend of ad content is changed to the extent of portraying progressive ideas. Nevertheless, commodification of women continues unabated. Women’s body is constantly being exploited by the advertisers to sell everything from men’s products to agricultural machineries like Tractors. The stereotypical portrayal women in ads continue to be the one of the criticisms of Indian advertising. Nevertheless, some advertisers have broken this tradition and are portraying women as independent, aggressive, intelligent and assertive in their ads. Today portraying the new Indian woman is a challenge to an advertiser as she has changed beyond recognition and male toleration. Woman is the consumer queen and one cannot afford to hurt her image.
Advertisements of detergents, cosmetics, food and beverages have attempted to change the attitude of consumers against women. Many advertisements have attempted to portray the realistic images such as working women, man as a homemaker, preference for a girl child and ecofriendliness.

**New Concepts**

- Relationship of the wife with the husband has changed from total dependence to interdependence.
- Motherhood means Friendship.
- Fair skin – Unisex
- Mother-in-law not an object of terror.
- Homemaker – Man
- Breadwinner – Woman
- Parenting - Man
- New Indian Woman – Independent, Aggressive, Assertive, Confident with an Identity and opinion of her own and not an object of sex.
- The trend is Health-centric. Emphasis on USPs like Health, Taste and Convenience denotes the importance given to consumer needs.
- Change in USP for traditional products like food and cosmetics.
- Products in different categories like Food, Insurance, Cosmetics, Toiletries, Refrigerators, Washing machine, Kitchen gadgets harp on health and eco-friendly ideas.
- Ads are demolishing certain misconceptions like superiority of anything western. They are driving home the messages like superiority of indigenous knowledge over western knowledge to a target audience in the age group of 12-25 years. Youngsters agree if Amla works on hair or Neem works on our complexion.
- Ads are becoming more and more culture-centric. Indianizing western outfits is one among them. Celebrating Indian culture.
- Kids are important target audiences for most categories including consumer durables. Though a child has no purchasing power it has
become an integral part of decision making in the nuclear family. The ad on *Maruti* car is interesting as its USP highlights child’s desire and pride to own a big car than on conventional issue like car mileage. From detergents to automobiles, kids have made many products most recognizable brands.

- The trend is to conceive and write ad films as micro feature films.
- The idea merchants sell the dreams in less than 60 seconds.
- The ad is no longer a string of images. Their narrative element is strong and most of them tell a story.
- The *mantra* is, spend lavishly has become the marketing strategy. Today television commercials command big budget. In 1997, Shekhar Kapur filmed a 3-minute commercial to promote *Charminar*, a cigarette brand. The shooting in Leh cost Rs.2 crore. The *Thumps Up* ad became famous for its adventurous bungee jumping and was shot in Australia- known for bungee jumping in the world and was assisted by world’s best bungee jump experts from New Zealand. The ad cost a fortune for the cold drink company.

**Celebrity Advertising**

- The *mantra* is ‘Instant Recall’ and ‘High Visibility’.
- Studies reveal that film legend Amitabh Bachchan has endorsed more than 70 products in 2006. Food and beverages, textiles, on the shelf drugs, detergent powder, cars, paints and list endorsed by the superstar seems unending.
- Cinestars, cricketers, sportspersons have become brand ambassadors hogging the limelight relegating top models to the background. It is next to impossible to compete to get maximum eyeballs in ads endorsed by superstars like Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Aiswwarya rai, Amir Khan, Kajol, Sachin Tendulkar, Kajol, Kareena Kapoor and youth icon Sania Mirza.
- According to agency reports, in 2005 cricketers starred in 108 ads while film stars featured in 259 ads. Ad copy writers justify celebrity’s
endorsement as having ‘Instant Recall’ in the age of fragmentation of media audience and attention span of the viewer is splintered. Over 5000 commercials compete for viewer’s eyeballs drastically reducing attention span of viewers.

- Total number of brands advertised on TV are over 12,500.
- Ad copy claims that the brands endorsed by celebrities had unique values that match with the personality of the promoters.

1) **Ad Agency**: McCann Erickson  
**Brand**: Dabur Chyawanaprash  
**Company**: Dabur India – Rs. 1,339 crore  
**Brand Ambassador**: Amitabh Bachchan  
“Bachchan and the brand match because they both, having stood the test of time, stands for vitality and life”.

2) **Ad Agency**: O & M  
**Client**: Tata  
**Brand**: Titan  
**Brand Ambassador**: Amir Khan  

“Amir is a picky actor, and we used him to show that style is something you should be picky about”.

3) **Ad Agency**: O & M  
**Client**: Hutch  
**Brand Ambassador**: Pug pup  
**USP**: Networking  
**Competitors**: Airtel – A.R.Rehman’s Music Brand Ambassadors – Kareena Kapoor, Shah Rukh Khan and Sachin Tendulkar  
In Hutch which is Vodaphone now, the celebrity was a pug dog, which became a national celebrity and a household name and perhaps received maximum eyeballs than any other celebrity ads.

**The challenges to copy writer of celebrity ads:**
- Celebrity centric
• Establishing reliability and trustworthiness of brands.
• Making it creative.
• Making it competitive.
• Stars overshadow the brand.

**Reality Ads**

• The trend started a decade ago has found large acceptance. Reality ad is advertising which looks, feels and speaks like reality. It’s procuring authentic unrehearsed consumer statements and not of copywriter’s words.
• Consumers liked the idea of realism as *slice of life* advertising because it’s natural, honest, and more genuine enhancing the credibility. Some of the established brands of Detergents and Toilet Soaps have been using reality advertising.
• Ad need not look real but emotions it portrays ought to look real.

**Trends in Ad Campaigns**

• Visually stunning.
• Technical quality is world class
• Impact of technological advances.
• Spectacular music.
• Entertaining to the core.
• Integration with TV programmes including news bulletins

**Writing for rural market**

• Ad copy writer has a challenge of reaching rural consumers who are estimated to consume 60 % of goods by 2010.
• The consumption of shampoo cachets, soaps, biscuits and cool drinks by village India is increasing.
• There is an estimated 15.6 million rural middle class homes. They use LPG cylinders and motorcycles and have access to newspaper and television.
• Ad Copy for village India is yet to emerge as most of these trends in advertising are unidirectional – urban centric.

• Hindi language has been reinvented and the Hindustani has spelt glamour and has become desirable even in TV commercials. Example; *Thanda matlab Coca-cola.*

• Advertising creative directors feel that ‘**we are now comfortable with our own identity and culture.**’

• Ogilvy & Mather Ad. Agency has come out with a slang dictionary because there is need to connect rural market.

**Ad Dictionary**

1) *Yeh dil mange more / Yeh pyass hai badi*: Pepsi

2) *Wah taj bolia*: Brooke Bond Tea

3) *Thanda matlab- Coca-cola*: Coke

4) *Yeh andar ki baat hai*: Lux undergarments

5) *Mera wala cream*: Nerolac paints

**Nudity and Moral Postures**

• It was in 1992 when Alyque Padamsee kicked up controversy with his *Kama sutra* condom ad campaign.

• It was a Lintas ad which launched a trend with the USP- safe and good sex. But the offending ad featuring Pooja Bedi created a storm in Indian society.

• The obscenity battle between Indian advertiser and the law enforcement agencies took a new turn in 1995 with the models Madhu Sapre and Milind Soman. Both of them posed in the nude for the Tuff Shoes
campaign. Both Sapre and Soman justified the ad as a ‘work of art and should be cast in bronze and put in a museum’.

- In the age of satellite television the values have changed. Today the trend is not nudity but baring reams and reams of skin.

**Conclusion:**

- In the post economic liberalization era, modern Ads are both creative and credible.
- They look, sound and read every inch Indian and eastern. They are informative as well as entertaining.
- Further they have more young talent to choose from.
- Indian market is bombarded with advertising owing to proliferation of TV sets and explosion of TV commercials.
- Abundant opportunities for global brands
- Advertising which is urban centric will expand to untapped virgin rural market.
- Media battle to raise credible brand mindshare.
- Stress on credibility over creativity.
- TAM Rating War between TV Channels.
- Brand warfare.
- Indian advertiser continues to deliver quality commercials. It’s a fine blend of creativity and commercialism. Indian advertising is not lagging in terms of ideas and technology.

References:


2.

*Author: Dr.N.Usha Rani Ph.D, Professor, Department of Studies Communication and Journalism, University of Mysore, Manasagangotri, Mysore-570 006*