

SHOCKVERTISING-METHOD OR MADNESS

Nikhil Uprety

Assistant Professor, Shoolini University of Biotechnology and Management Sciences,
Solani, India
Email: nikhil_uprety@rediffmail.com

ABSTRACT

The concept of Shock Advertising is not new to the world. The ability of advertisements to create a shocking sensation, almost rattling the consumer (and, thereby, rise above the media clutter) has been utilized by many companies worldwide. Due to advent of technology and cut throat competition, marketers and advertisers are trying hard to beat through the clutter of promotional campaigns that are bombarding our daily life. However this interesting concept may backfire if not used diligently. This article tries to throw light on the concept of Shock Advertising and also tries to analyse its scope and future.

Keywords: Shock Advertising, Shockvertising, Brand, Emotions

INTRODUCTION

Fear has always been at the base of all emotions. Friendship, Love, Hate, Revenge, Possessiveness, Obsession all these emotions have one thing in common: "Fear". It is the fear of being alone that pushes one to look for a friend; it is the fear of losing someone close that makes a person possessive. One can say that most of the emotions are fear generated. Playing with these emotions has been the crux of all the advertising activities and campaigns. In India one can see Life Insurance Corporation of India rubbing the emotional level of people but in a very subdued manner. But when marketers and advertisers begin to play with these underlying emotions in a manner that is not subdued but rather strong enough and in a way is good enough to rattle someone, the whole concept of promoting a product through traditional advertising take a u-turn. In this practice the marketers and advertisers "deliberately, startle and offend its audience by violating norms for social values and personal ideals, hit their emotional levels at a much stronger level, just to break through the advertising clutter and grab their attention and also to attract an audience to a certain brand or bring awareness to a certain public service issue, health issue, or cause, shock them and jolt them out of their senses and then pin their attention down, and it is called as a "Shock Advertising" or Shockvertising" for short. This is because Advertising is everywhere, even hidden in TV shows and movies or even the newsroom as product placements. In order to 'cut through the clutter', some advertisers use shock tactics to get more bang for their buck. This is because in today's time the customers are exposed to so many advertisements and messages on a daily bases, it ultimately makes them saturated and indifferent to them.

Moreover, customers today have learned to ignore these messages and advertisements and discard any thing that is unwanted.

This form of advertising is often controversial, disturbing, explicit and crass, and may entail bold and provocative political messages that challenge the public's conventional understanding of the social order. This form of advertising may not only offend but can also frighten as well and shock using scare tactics and elements of fear to sell a product or deliver a public service message, making a "high impact", and potentially offends the customer.

Shock advertising has strength in the way that it has a very high recall value. The viewers of shocking ads are more likely to remember those ads and what they were selling than traditional marketing. This is later attributed to higher sales or awareness depending upon the reasoning for the advertisement.

Shock advertising has in the past been able to attract attention to the product. But, attracting attention is not enough. If the advertisement does not convey the message underlying the ad, it can only remain a shocking memory which won't convert into sales.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

1. To study the scope of Shockvertising
2. To analyse the future of Shockvertising

SCOPE OF SHOCKVERTISING

Time is changing fast. With the changing time, the values, expectations, and communication everything else is changing too. This does not only apply to the society, people but also the tangible products as well. It's all about changing, evolving, distinguishing and growing in the midst of the clutter of so many varieties. Earlier it was a question of gaining acceptance and becoming a distinct Brand. The entire marketing was all about tracing this journey of a product or a commodity and it's becoming a well known and accepted brand.

Brands today are not about advertising or being part of the consumer's lifecycle. Lines today are blurring in the world where entertainment, news, public causes, social media are converging and coming on a common platform. It's not about innovative means of reaching the customer but actually how brands become part of popular culture in a way they represent something more than a product. It does not only convey about the characteristics of a product but a lot more than that. To be a part of a popular collective consciousness, a brand has to be alive in the consumer's mind.

You can't talk about shocking advertisements without referencing United Colours of Benetton former advertising manager Oliviero Toscani, who rather than using the outlet to promote the company, used controversial and sometimes offensive campaigns stemmed from a large budget, as a vehicle to demonstrate his alternative political views.

A company that chooses to create value is no longer communicating with the consumer but with the individual. There is a change in the manner products were being marketed earlier. Now is the ear of customization rather than mass marketing. Goods are created keeping in mind the individual tastes and preferences. Serving customers who are so very different in terms of their diverse backgrounds, culture, upbringing, educational level etc is no mean task. To maintain their competitive advantage, the marketers do indulge in practices like

shockvertising. Shockvertising is well employed, for example, by charitable causes: anti-smoking, anti-fur and anti-homophobia campaigners have all hit the brief in recent years by grabbing attention and challenging preconceptions. So it works when you have a point to prove or perhaps are just one of those brands that don't care what people think.

There are many other companies that have made use of this form of advertising to promote their products, ideas, services. PETA ie. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, an American animal rights organisation have made use of shockvertising to great effect. Their latest ad features slaughtered humans in order to draw out their feelings about humans slaughtering animal. Bangalore traffic police has been running an outdoor advertising campaign, using disturbing photography of a man and women talking on a cell phone and blood oozing out of the cell phone. It is basically meant to shock people out of talking to their friends and families while they are driving.

This concept of Shockvertising is sometimes criticised due to its inherent tendency to be offensive to some viewers, but it has been proven effective. The initial shock invariably burns the accompanying brand name into the viewer's memory.

Inevitably, negative is more "shocking" than the positive shock. This is particularly important for some products or issues that require special attention. This strategy works more for public service ads, to magnify the problem and intensify fear for the message to work. But for products, it is entirely different. You need to connect it back to your products' core values.

Consumers are being exposed to barrage of promotional campaigns and hence today the ads need to scream louder, and from the roof top in order to be heard. The potential consumers can decide in a matter of a split second whether the advertisement is worth their time and attention or not. Hence a sort of calculated risk has to be taken while launching a promotional campaign employing shockvertising tactics.

It is always the negative that attracts and grabs the attention. Shockvertising makes use of this basic nature and plays around with it effectively. It evokes stronger feelings among the consumers, increases their span of attention.

Any brand trying to sell product and services must add to the overall happiness of the customer. Although experts say brands need to have a positive image in order to have an excellent brand recall. Shockvertisement may cause anxiety and increased pulse rate each time the advertisement is aired, but if they are made tastefully, to not cause repulsion from the audience and with a message to arouse consciousness among the public then it will definitely have a deeper impact on the customers. At times negative imagery can also create positive impact as seen in the above examples of Bangalore Police and PETA. Ultimately its aim to get desirability and not negativity or repulsion for the brand and these needs are to be taken care of while creating shockvertisements.

FUTURE OF SHOCKVERTISING

Shockvertising is not a new concept as such, but has grabbed more headlines now due to the advent of latest advancements in technology. If used intelligently, this concept can work wonders for the product as well as the company involved. However, there is always a very thin line that separates an advertisement from giving a shock and offending someone.

Marketers have to be really very careful as far this point is concerned. Shockvertising isn't for everyone. Used effectively, it can send a message that elevates a business entity's profile and positions its brand as forward-thinking. Used ineffectively, shockvertising can backfire and cause long-term brand damage. As volatile as it may be, shockvertising has become a commonly used approach in contemporary advertising. The future of shockvertising lies in an intelligent use of the same as an element of "shock" today may become a just another common promotional tactic tomorrow, because the shelf life of such advertisements is short.

CONCLUSION

There is a plethora of commercials and advertisements that keep floating and hitting the human brain. Advertisers will constantly have to make use of changing elements into consideration, in order to ensure the success of their campaigns amidst the ocean of so many ads. It is therefore mandatory that they keep on being innovative and put the consumer in the first place, considering his desires and emotions. It is through this constant interactivity between consumer and advertiser that one will be able to evaluate which strategies are successful and which ones aren't. Next to this, advertisers must keep in mind not to overuse certain concepts or strategies as the effect or popularity can easily wear off and eventually turn to dislike with the consumer. The key to success lies with those advertisers who keep their ear to the ground and skillfully play to the wishes of the consumers.

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