

BRAND PROMOTION THROUGH STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES: STUDY OF AUDIO VISUAL COMMERCIALS OF SELECTED BRANDS

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling, the oldest form of convincing is increasingly used for brand promotion. This is applicable to various brands targeting prospective clients. Some stories are humorous or satirical while some are serious and nostalgic having emotional appeal and long lasting impact. This research paper endeavors to examine the way commercials engage, entertain and inform Indian audience through story telling techniques. The paper sets out to outline how audio visual advertisements appeal Indian audience and the use of values deeply rooted in Indian culture to tell the narrative.

Ethos, Pathos, and Logos are modes of persuasion from a long time and Storytelling techniques are used in all these forms. This research paper focuses on emotional aspect i.e. Pathos. Stories that reflect emotions like love, affection, bonding and separation that are used to make a strong appeal. Stories that spread values like humanity, loyalty, reliability, commitment and nationality are used by various brands. This paper also investigates various story formats and messages underlined.

The objective of this paper is to study the need for using story telling technique in advertisements and treatment given to these stories. The paper focuses use of social values in Indian context through case study by selecting brands from various sectors. The brands include Fortune, Red Label, Vicks, Anouk and Google.

Keywords

Story telling narratives, brands, promotion, emotions

1. Introduction

“Human memory is story-based”, says R C. Shank, an American cognitive scientist. Humans store, categorize and recollect information in form of stories. According to him a story is useful because it comes with many indices. It touches to our lives, makes us aware and emotionally connects to our minds.

The best way to persuade someone (students, friends, deans, and family members) is by telling a compelling story (McKee, 2003). In a story, not only lot of information is woven but listener's emotions and energy are aroused. It is not east to persuade with a story. It needs rationality as well as creativity to design an argument using conventional rhetoric.

We are all are interested in stories. It's visibly seen when youngsters post their stories regularly in social networking sites which get hundreds of views. Everybody is a story teller. But very few are story builders. They not only understand the structure of story but trigger emotional response and to connect the character of a brand to the people that consume it. People need help in finding what makes them happy, and this is where marketing comes in (Bagozzi and Natarraajan). Happiness can be the outcome via brands enabling consumers to enact stories with specific archetypal plots.

Stories for promoting brands are not new to India. Ambuja cement (Why does not this wall break), Imperial blue (Men will be men series), Raymonds (A complete Man), Fevicol and Cadbury are a few examples. There are characters, chemistry between the characters and strong end. They grab the attention of the viewers and there element of “what next?” till the climax.

The advertisements selected for this paper are Fortune, Red Label, Vicks, Anouk and Google. They are made and telecast in the last six years. They strongly and openly address various social issues which generally are not openly discussed or shown in advertisements. And who are addressing the issues? Who are ready to change our mindset through their actions? They are youngsters, young girls in particular.

The duration of some advertisements is more than four minutes. It's generally not possible to run the full length advertisement on television. Fortune oil for example had two versions, four minutes and two minutes.

2. THE OBJECTIVES

- 1) To find out reasons for using storytelling format in advertisements
- 2) To analyse the presentation of the stories
- 3) To examine how the products and brands enable consumers to become an effective protagonists through storytelling

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher aims to do the Qualitative and quantitative analysis. These advertisements were shown to 100 students in the age of 18 to 22. Each advertisement was followed by five questions related to the particular advertisement. The questions were related to recognition of brand, memory appeal of the brand, message given by the brand, ability to influence the ability and purchasing the products or services of these brands. One descriptive question was added at the end of the experiment.

The researcher watched this advertisements on internet several times and also compared the ads made by the same brand earlier and the advertisements made by competitors for the analysis.

Many advertisements touch our hearts with stories having emotional appeal. Senses Sight, sound, touch, taste and smell are not only senses but memory triggers. Brands connect to the consumers via those emotions. Researcher has tried to find it out through watching the advertisements and through questionnaire as well.

Story telling in advertising is used for various purposes. There is process starting with Cognitive dimension (knowing), continues through effective dimension (feeling) and takes us to co native dimension (doing). The researcher has asked the related questions to the sample for getting the answers and also has observed their reactions after each advertisement.

Secondary data is collected from books and internet. Some research papers related to online media and journalism are also referred.

4. FORTUNE (2014)

This a story of a beautiful relationship between a persistent grandmother and her bedridden grandson who is hospitalised. The grandmother insists that she be allowed to feed him only two spoons of dal as the hospital food is doing no good to him. But the nurse refuses her outright, says that outside food is not allowed for patients. It happens almost every day. One day, on the occasion of her grandson's birthday, grandmother gets along two dabbas, one of which she gives to the nurse and the other she keeps for her grandson. The nurse tastes the home-cooked lentils. The following day, she readily agrees when the old lady requests the nurse to feed him home-cooked dal. Unable to believe, the teary eyed grandma goes to feed her grandson with two spoons of dal. After sometime the grandson takes the dabba from her and gulps the entire dal!

This is story of love, affection, perseverance connecting with the taste of home cooked food. The film ends with the voiceover saying 'Ghar ka Khana, ghar ka khana hota hain'. The viewers easily get connected to the message that there is no joy greater than joy of eating home cooked food. The meaningful lyric Poora bachpan Jubape rakh liya tere aanch ka utara jo maine chakh liya enhances mood and viewers get connected to the theme of the story.

5. THE RED LABEL TEA, 2014

There is a very common situation when we have forgotten door keys and we realised that when we reach the home. A couple in their late fifties or early sixties has the same experience. The husband is bit irritated and blaming the wife for her carelessness. Now they need to find some duplicate key maker to go inside. The lady next door realises the problem she offers help, asks them to come to her house. The husband is reluctant. When she invites them for a cup of tea, starts making tea and when the fragrance having is irresistible the couple enters the flat next door.

Here the lady next door is Muslim having school going daughter. She is helpful, knows the reserved mind set of the couple and husband in particular, keeps the door open knowing they may come to her house. The response is so positive. The couple enters the house and the husband not only likes the tea but asks for a cup more. And the lady is happy to serve it. The story ends with the brand name and the tag line Swad Apnepan ka. The fragrance of Tea and taste both senses connects viewers to the product.

6. VICKS: THE TOUCH OF LOVE, 2017

This is a real life story of a mother told by daughter. The love and bonding in this relation is not new to the world of advertisements. Mother making favourite food of the daughter or massaging oil into the hair of the daughter is very common. The only difference is the daughter here is an adopted child and the mother is a transgender social, activist, Gauri. When viewers get to know about Gauri in the end there is element of surprise, shock. When it was shown to the students there were goose bumps on hands and tears in eyes followed by spontaneous round of applause.

The story ends with the daughter's words. She says that she does not want to be a doctor but a lawyer giving a strong message for equality and rights of transgender. The story ends with the shot of mother walking towards the camera and the words appear on the screen 'everyone deserves the touch of care and Vicks caring for families for generations.'

7. ANOUK: THE CALLING (2016)

Its nice jacket. Lovely colour. It almost hides your bumps. The story starts with these words. And there is an awkward conversation between the two in the car on the way back to their home. The story unfolds through dialogues. Management has decided to promote someone else just because the architect is pregnant. The clients need some senior architect who is around, is the explanation given by boss. The architect is not ready to bow down. "Whom I have worked nights on this project are judging me by my pregnancy and not by my work," she says. The story ends with the shock for the boss as the architect takes her to her new office and declares that she is going to quit the job

The story starts after office hours. Its evening and by the time they reach to the site of new office its darkness. After all there has to be another day and another beginning for the architect. The road to her office is with twists and turns with some speed breakers. But she is knows the path to follow her dreams. The last shot shows the architect walking to the office facing the camera.

The story highlights Workplace discrimination against pregnant women and gives a strong message that pregnancy does not make an end of the career.

8. GOOGLE REUNION (2013)

Google reunion is a story of two friends meeting each other after almost 65 years. When a granddaughter came to know about grandfather’s friend she decides to bring them together. It’s not so easy but it’s not so difficult also. It’s not so easy because she neither knows the address nor the contact number. But it’s not so difficult to find him because there is Google to help her. In fact Google is there at every stage to bring the friend to India. To complete the visa formalities, to search for the flights, to know the weather conditions and so on.

There is a song Wo bhi ek mod tha man me ek mor tha, sung by Piyush Mishra which enhances the mood of the story.

Graph 1

Have you recognized the brand in the advertisement?

	Red Label	Fortune	Vicks	Anouk	Google
Quite clearly	32	39	30	25	80
Clearly	47	55	25	11	16
Not so clearly	18	29	32	36	4
Not at all	3	3	13	28	

9.

Google brand is easily recognized. There are two reasons. The first, it is already the most popular brand used by almost everybody who uses internet. The second reason is its appearance in the story six times. Google dominates the market of digital revenue. Most of the people start their search with Google. Then why is it so that Google needs to promote the brand? With the advent of various apps, there is a trend to go to app directly surpassing Google. Let it be for booking tickets to paying the bills, purchasing something online to searching various products and services. A couple of years ago our internet and search used to start with Google. Now it may not be necessarily the case. The change in user behaviour has made Google to rethink about its service and its branding. In Google reunion the first search starts with tablet but then comes handset for every search. There is Google search for knowing flights to Delhi and weather in Delhi which otherwise is also available on different apps.

The brand Anouk, on the other hand is not easily recognised. The name appears in the beginning and in the end for two seconds. This is online store offering apparels, footwear, accessories and the ad says that the products are available on Myntra. It’s quite likely that viewers misunderstand the advertisement thinking it about Myntra.

Graph 2

Advertisement has a memory appeal

	Red Label	Fortune	Vicks	Anouk	Google
strongly agree	38	16	50	10	55
Agree	51	69	42	57	37
disagree	11	12	4	23	5
Not at all			4	10	3

10.

Google Reunion is a story of love, friendship, bonding with the shade of nostalgia. There is a reference of Jhajharia, a type of sweet and taste as one of the senses acts as a memory trigger. The story ends with the scene in which both the friends in seventies now are enjoying the rain as seven year kids. Not surprising that most of the respondents said that it had a strong memory appeal.

The brand is followed by Vicks. There are six instances when the bonding between mother and daughter is depicted through touch. They are hugging the daughter, walking hand in hand, patting on forehead, massaging oil, covering the eyes of the daughter when there is horror shot in the movie and locking each other’s fingers. These scenes depict love, affection, support, care and protection. The touch as a sense acts as a memory trigger for her. And viewers can relate themselves with the daughter.

There are visuals of the daughter munching Potato chips, kadi chawal. Here again taste as a sense acts as a memory trigger for the audience.

Graph 3

Advertisement is successful in conveying message

	Red Label	Fortune	Vicks	Anouk	Google
strongly agree	39	24	9	18	67
Agree	55	67	57	51	29
disagree	5	8	23	23	1
Not at all	1	1	11	8	3

This story shows how easily two friends from India and Pakistan reunite. The story connects to all the individuals living in India and Pakistan. And the message is Google is not only an engine to search but a force that brings people together irrespective of their cast, religion, language or countries.

Graph 4

Advertisement can influence your attitude

	Red Label	Fortune	Vicks	Anouk	Google
strongly agree	15	15	53	15	42
Agree	60	61	37	24	45
disagree	24	20	6	21	7
Not at all	1	4	4	10	6

Vicks: the touch of love, raises questions about discrimination and denial of rights of transgender people in India. Mother in this story exhibits extraordinary acts of care while giving the message that everybody is capable of lending unconditional love and extending care to every child who needs.

In Google reunion, the grand daughter is bringing persons together.

Graph 5

Will you purchase the product after watching the advertisement?

	Red Label	Fortune	Vicks	Anouk	Google
definitely	15	17	30	7	75
may be	68	30	56	60	18
not at all	17	13	14	33	7

Google was and still is the most popular search engine. No Surprise that viewers have said that they will definitely use the service after watching the advertisement. In case of Anouk, it's not much clear about the product very few responded positively to this question. Besides that, though the brand has a strong memory appeal and successfully conveyed the message one fact that cannot be neglected is the sample which has 70 boys.

11. SUGGESTIONS

There are number of implications for further research from present study

_A comparative study of the story telling techniques by the competing brands can be done so as to find out memory appeal and the impact of these advertisements on the viewers

-A detailed study of stories highlighting specific emotions like love, family bonding, patriotism, feminism can be carried out

-Research can also be done in changing the story telling techniques for branding

12. Conclusion.

Story telling format is used to connect with the viewers effectively. It has a strong emotional appeal and element of nostalgia. When viewers are watching the characters in the story they start identifying themselves with those characters and another story takes place in their minds.

All the advertisements in this study have a happy ending. But mere happy ending is not sufficient for a strong memory appeal. Brands like Google and Vicks are directly connected to all of us because they are part of our day to day life. But through story telling techniques they get connected to the viewers through the use of strong emotions, nostalgia. Smell, touch and taste acts as strong senses that make us identify with the characters in the advertisement

Though some advertisements have a strong emotional appeal or carry out the message very effectively the brands may not necessarily be recollected easily. It happened in case of Anouk. The story stands for taking a strong steps and bold decisions,

supports pregnant woman who starts her business as a response to workplace discrimination. But the brand is not at all established. Understanding the message does not necessarily lead to brand recognition.

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