

The Unshakable...

*This article looks at the value of branding with the use of user imagery .The Indian brand managers have to understand the changes being brought through the advertising in our contemporary society in building distinctive brand image. **Dr TK Panda, Faculty Member, Indian Institute of Management Lucknow** looks at two successful campaigns of Indian brands 'The Unshakable' and 'Kuchh Kar dikhana hai' campaign reflecting the present generation youth and associating them with the brands for marketing success*

Do brands have power? This is a question which is haunting brand managers for a long time. The answer to this is not as simple as it seems. Brand valuation as an approach has succeeded in calculating the financial aspect of a brand. Yet it is not all of branding! Similarly the communication experts have gone beyond miles in explaining the power of a brand as a tool for identification and recall. Yet the ability of researchers to look at brands defying the conventional wisdom to explain the reason of naming a product is still questioned.

The brand has an ability to associate the product with the psychographic of the customers and customers tend to feel the brand as their own or simply a reflection of their being in all forms and levels. The underlying concept of branding has not changed that is it still asserts ownership! The brand other than providing differential advantage has started reflecting the mind set of a nation. In fact all forms of communication are the bearer of the happenings and Alma matter of a generation in a country. Brand power is no more looked upon as a financial power that a company has in the market .It is no more a reflection of the strength of a brand on parameters like consumer loyalty, repeat buying rate, faster adoption rate and higher share holder value for a firm. Advertising is creating a different kind of brand relationship with customers. Though this has been already there in the west

but for us it starts as a new approach towards looking at brands and advertisement altogether.

The ability of a brand to create an emotional bondage, to explain the mind set of a generation and to reflect the very essence of the life style is well reflected in the Indian Market place. Can these brands be able to achieve the commercial objectives of their creation? The American corporate history stands testimony to this level of brand association with life style through the success of brands like Harley Davidson Motorcycles. Till date Harley Davidson has maintained a consistent brand personality based largely on the macho, American and western folk hero associations, it has been successful at broadening its user imagery by drawing on the freedom value. While there was a Japanese onslaught in the American auto market, Harley Davidson withstood the taste of time with this kind of distinct brand association. When most of the Japanese brands were doing feature based promotion Harley expressed the real macho image of American Youth and stayed in the market as a successful story.

Are we experiencing a similar kind of situation in Indian Market? The answer is yes but the reflection has been bit different. Let's look at Bajaj Kawasaki Caliber bikes the unshakable campaign. What do they reflect? Are they expressing Indian youth's power of perseverance; their ability to accept failure as it comes in life and reflect the unshakable call of the country where the youth has to sacrifice the personal happiness for the country. In the first campaign he accepts his failure and the marriage of his girl friend and comes out happily from the girls house (Are Indian Youths Ready for this kind of personal setbacks?) In the second case it is the longish return of the military man to spread happiness on the face of the family members; yet he gets a call and has to report back for the war. In his return also he glorifies the happiness and commitment he keeps for the family and country. Bajaj associates its brand in each of this glorification of Indian Youth.

This kind of emotional bonding does not talk about the product features, the fuel efficiency, the price tag or for that matter any kind of so called marketing communication that helps in marketing brands like the major leader in the market who talks about fuel efficiency, value for money proposition! Why can't they think of such kind of Indian origination of associating brand ownership with life style of Indian youth through their campaign? Of course this kind of personification is not new to Indian market.

Do you remember Lolitaji in the Surf Ad campaign that brought a drastic change to the Indian Middle class housewife's mindset in the 70s and 80s? She came out of the house and entered to the market place and talked about making an independent choice of her own! This was a real surprise to the Indian middle class segment during that time. But those studying the social influence of advertising at macro level will agree that it was a probably a forecast of the future for the Indian middle-class woman.

Subsequent period has seen the emergence of a strong working out going middle-class women of India now making their own independent choices in many things including edible oil for the ailing and stressed husband to the very personal sanitary napkin of various sizes for herself and for the growing daughter. If Lolitaji is any indicator of forecasting of an emerging behavioral pattern then the current campaign is reflection of a growing and psychologically stable Indian Youth.

Indian Youth has always been projected as not too serious and not so much adventure seeking. The ultimate goal of an average youth has long been a decent job and no to many so called vices like boozing. But the story is changing. May I remind you the campaign of *Kuchh Khona hai Kuchh paana hai, pal pal ke jatan se kuchh kar dikhana hai*. This is a campaign reflecting the changing mindset of Indian Youth where they are moving out to unconventional area, be it music or opening a garage. Every body understands the risk of venturing in to this kind of occupations but Indian Youth is ready for this. There is a realization in this campaign different than that of the unshakable campaign. Where as in unshakable it was a reflection of accepting the failure the *apna label...* Campaign is an expression of struggle and success where you stay back with the brand and people with whom you have grown.

If sociologist studying on advertising impacts have anything to do with this, they can realize that the brain that goes in creating the campaigns understands the value of brand association with the life style. He also foresees the advantages of it in building a brand image, which is difficult to build by feature and value propositions. Brand personality can easily be created by the application of user imagery. It is based on either typical users (people you see using the brand) or idealized users (as portrayed in advertising and elsewhere).

User imagery is a powerful driver of a brand personality in a country like India. In these cases the user is already a person reflecting the aspirations, failures and successes of people for whom the brand is targeted. The easy going youth in The Unshakable campaign or the struggler in the *kar dikhana hai campaign* are reflections of the change of the mind set and life style of Indian Youth. They are key indicators for a more matured, risk taking generation of young customers of emerging India.

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