

UNCONVENTIONAL ADVERTISING

Dr Anjali Patkar¹, Dr Parag Ajagaonkar² and Prachi Desai³

^{1,2}Mithibai College.

³Research Scholar,

Abstract : In a marketplace overflowing with advertisements, grabbing the attention of consumers has become an extremely difficult task. Every day, consumers are bombarded with large number of advertisements. As a result, they have virtually become immune to commercial messages. Hence, advertisers are trying to find new, alternative and unexpected ways to reach the customers. One of such strategies is unconventional advertising. Unconventional advertising involve selecting those media options which are not preferred by mainline advertisers. Such type of advertising is suitable mainly for small businesses operating in local areas. Very few studies have been undertaken in this area. Our study tries to find out the objectives of undertaking of unconventional advertising, the scope of unconventional advertising and the different techniques of unconventional advertising

Key words: Advertising, unconventional advertising.

1.1 INTRODUCTION:

In this highly competitive era, consumers are bombarded with advertising messages day in and day out. Newspapers, magazines, television, internet, and even the streets outside, all of them are cluttered with ads that are trying to get the customer's attention. The ads have become part of our lives. The increasing number of advertisements that the viewers are exposed to every day has made them virtually immune to the commercial messages. Hence the advertisers have to find new, alternative and more subtle ways to reach the customers and to create brand awareness. Some of the advertisers are taking measures to stand out from the crowd, one of which is unconventional advertising. Unconventional advertising also referred to as guerrilla advertising, often consists of all those unusual, non-traditional, innovative and inventive means, methods and strategies of promoting a product, service or brand.

Unconventional advertising is often ideal for small businesses who have limited budget for promoting their products. It also is used by big companies in grassroots campaigns to compliment on-going mass media campaigns. It helps the advertisement to stand out of the advertising clutter, creating a lasting image of the brand in the mind of the consumer.

Coca Cola was one of the first brands to use unconventional advertising in their marketing campaigns. In India, this form of advertising is relatively new. However, with the boom of retail outlets and malls, many Indian companies have started using Guerilla Advertising to promote their products. The first amongst such companies were Sony Ericsson, Nokia, McDonald's etc.

Unconventional advertising delivers messages in unexpected forms that most of the time surprises and entertains the viewers. Such advertising is unexpected and it catches audience in locations and situations where they aren't expecting to be advertised at and where they are off guarded. Also, unlike traditional advertising, the unconventional ads don't use persuasive messages trying to convince the audience to buy, but rather they address to customer's subconscious creating memorable images of the promoted brands which last in the mind of the consumer.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To understand the objectives of unconventional advertising
- 2) To find out for whom unconventional advertising is suitable
- 3) To find out the techniques of unconventional advertising

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The term Unconventional advertising is derived from the Spanish term ‘guerrilla’ which was used to describe the irregular troops, who fought with Wellington against Napoleon Bonaparte, during the Peninsular War (1808-14). The guerrillas were not professionally trained troops and resorted to unconventional tactics to achieve their aims. In 1984, US marketing Guru, Jay Conrad Levinson, coined the term “guerrilla advertising” to describe an equally unconventional and unorthodox, but nevertheless effective, approach to marketing.

Hutter and Hoffmann explain that guerrilla advertising is an umbrella phrase that includes multiple techniques such as ambush, ambient, sensation, buzz and viral advertising.

Ay, Aytakin and Nardali (2010) have said that because of economic insecurity, companies have been forced to reconsider their promotional and advertising budgets while trying to maintain and exceed their brand reach, impact, and profitability, resulting in a surge in guerrilla advertising.

Bigat (2012) explains that guerrilla advertising offers companies the opportunity to deliver low-cost and innovative advertising strategies in order to gain a powerful competitive edge and react to the changing environment. He further stated that while traditional advertising has only a handful of methods from which to choose, guerrilla advertising has a full arsenal of tactics that can reach very specifically targeted audiences, making it a powerful marketing tool.

From review of literature, we have observed that significant amount of research has not been done on unconventional advertising. Although the concept of unconventional advertising can be effectively used in the present competitive scenario, very little literature exists on the said subject. Hence we have undertaken this study. We feel that our study will provide more insight into the said subject.

METHODOLOGY

The data has been collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data includes discussions with people from advertising agencies and marketing executives from organizations who have undertaken both conventional and unconventional advertising. Secondary data is collected from books, magazines, journals, newspaper articles, Internet etc.

TECHNIQUES OF UNCONVENTIONAL ADVERTISING

1) Stealth advertising: It refers to the method of advertising that is done secretly i.e. the advertiser tries to get people interested in a product without them realizing that it has been done intentionally. In other words, this type of advertising communicates the message in a subtle and unnoticeable way. Many experts believe that advertising is more effective if people aren’t aware that it’s occurring. Different methods of stealth advertising are commonly used. One common method is product placement in movies or television shows. For instance, a cooking show is paid to use a certain brand of cookware, a movie company is paid to use a certain model of car in its chase scenes and so on. A common version of stealth advertising that is used online is fake news articles or reviews. For example, a person may post an article that seems to be a critique of a product, when in reality, it is actually an advertisement. In some cases, the person may go out of his way to make some kind of negative point about the product while staying mostly positive. This is generally done to make the review seem more credible so that people don’t become suspicious.

2) Ambient advertising: It refers to placement of unique advertising in unusual and unexpected places often using unconventional methods to communicate to target markets. Advertisements are put up on unusual places where we normally don’t see ads. Examples are messages on the back of car park receipts, on the handles of supermarket trolleys and so on. It also includes such techniques as projecting huge images on the sides of buildings, outdoor places or messages on hot air balloons.

3) Elevator advertising: is another form of unconventional advertising that has been frequently used in the past years. The walls and even the floors of the elevator units can be used to promote products, services and brands either by placing stickers, posters or even products inside the units.

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4) Ambush advertising: It is a planned effort of a company that is not a sponsor of a particular event to give the impression that it is by associated its name indirectly to that event, in order to gain at least some of the advantages of a real sponsor. The main purpose of ambush advertising is to confuse the audience about who the sponsors are. This strategy is typically targeted at major sporting events - like the Olympic Games or the world cups in various games - and is a strategy adopted by rivals of the official sponsors.

5) Bait-and-Tease: It is the strategy of getting people interested in something that later is revealed to be something quite different. Quite often, a celebrity uses or talks about a product or a brand without it appearing conspicuous.

6) Viral marketing: It is a promotion technique that focuses on spreading information and opinions about a product or service from person to person, especially by using unconventional means such as the Internet or email. It's a marketing strategy that involves creating an online message that's novel or entertaining enough to prompt consumers to pass it on to others — spreading the message across the Web like a virus at no cost to the advertiser. The message can take the form of video clips, images, text messages or even interactive games and e-books.

7) Bathroom advertising: It has recently become an attractive form of promotion. The location of this form of advertising is unusual i.e. the restroom area. Bathroom ads can take any form, from billboards placed on the walls of the stalls or close to the dryers, to adhesive stickers glued to the floors and mirrors and even interactive or scented displays.

8) Body advertising : This strategy refers to the promotional clothing elements wore by people. Body advertising also includes placement of promotional messages directly on human skin. It is also known as tattoo advertising.

Examples of unconventional advertising



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Unconventional advertising involves placing advertisements in places where the customers least expect. Thus it serves as a surprise tool in the hand of the advertiser to amaze the prospects.
- 2) Unconventional advertising helps the advertiser to come out the clutter which otherwise he would face in conventional advertising like television or press.
- 3) The cost of unconventional advertising is relatively less and it is less standardized. So advertisers with smaller budgets can find this as an effective tool.
- 4) Unconventional advertising is suitable for small business houses operating at the local level. This is because the appeal of most of unconventional advertising tools is restricted to limited area. So such businesses can opt for it.
- 5) It is difficult to measure the actual impact of unconventional advertising like for example, a bench in a park covered with advertisement or a zebra crossing conveying advertising message as it is difficult to find out how many have actually noticed it.
- 6) Ambient advertising which is one of unconventional advertising techniques includes sidewalk painting, sculptures and colorful additions to buildings etc. This if not done properly can spoil the beauty of the surrounding. Furthermore it can also cause some legal wrangles if necessary permission is not sought of the owner of the building.
- 7) For a national advertiser this may not be a useful media as compared to TV, press etc which have national coverage and appeal.
- 8) For costly and luxury products it is better to select conventional medium like magazine as the image of the medium also gets attached to the image of the brand as unconventional medium like elevator advertising or bathroom advertising may not have the same image.
- 9) There are various techniques of nonconventional advertising like sunlight billboard, press kits, novelties etc. Lot of creativity and originality is required to make effective unconventional ads. Further, each technique is different from another, the reach, frequency and appeal also varies considerably from one another. So the advertiser before selecting any tool should try to precisely understand the potential impact of it.
- 10) While traditional advertising can reach large numbers of people, unconventional advertising can better target smaller groups. It is impossible to say that one or the other is better. However, a combination of the two can deliver excellent results.

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