

## SOCIAL ISSUES, NATIONAL PROSPERITY AND CELEBRITY ADVERTISEMENTS

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**Abstract :** Advertising means persuading the potential consumers to change their mindsets and purchase a product, service or an idea. Its appeal has multiplied and varies across media. Based on secondary sources like books and Youtube videos, this paper aims to understand the appeal of social advertising endorsed by Celebrities on TV; thereby contributing to the economic growth of the individual and the nation.

The first part defines Advertising and outlines some aspects of social advertisements. It examines the content of Polio advertisements endorsed by the Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan in particular and shows that it is a powerful approach to sensitize the masses. As Advertising is a prescribed paper in Commerce Colleges, this analysis follows a WebQuest model which could be adopted in classroom teaching. It highlights more social and one commercial advertisement/s.

As indicated, the scope can be extended: the teachers can prepare a WebQuest module for classroom teaching and the learners can build on their familiar knowledge to critically think of relevant social issues. They can spread awareness through creative social advertisements and indirectly contribute to HDI through promotion of informal means of education through TV.

**Key words:** Advertisement, Celebrity, Nation

### INTRODUCTION

Advertising means persuading the potential consumers to change their mindsets and purchase a product, service or an idea. The appeal of advertising has multiplied over the years and varies across media: Print media like newspapers, books, magazines, journals etc.; mass media like radio, television, internet etc. In India, it can be observed that the exponential rise of televisions at every home raises the prospects of television advertisements turning them into a significant tool of persuading the citizens to join hands with the national goals. Based on secondary sources like books and Youtube videos, this paper aims to understand the appeal of non-commercial social advertisements endorsed by Celebrities on TV for they are an informal means of educating the masses and lead to the economic growth of the individual and the nation.

The first part looks at the features of, in Philip Auslander's words, 'The televisual environment' and its significance. The second part defines Advertising and outlines aspects of social advertisements and Celebrity TV advertisements in particular. The paper takes a close look at the Polio Campaign endorsed by Amitabh Bachchan. Based on advertisements available on the Youtube, the paper attempts to analyse the content with respect to its communicative aspects.

**The Televisual Environment** Reflecting on today's environment which is dominated by the cultural dominance of the Television as the media, performance scholar Philip Auslander in *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* draws upon Cecilia Tichi's idea of TV being not 'just an element in our cultural environment' but 'an environment itself' to proclaim that television has gone beyond being a medium to a context leading to a 'televisual' environment. (1991:1) The insight has resonances for TV has penetrated into the homes of the slum-dwellers. So TV can be used creatively to

promote advertising, commercial and non-commercial. The next part will define Advertising and outline the salient features of non-commercial advertising.

**Advertising: Commercial and Non-Commercial** Mahendra Mohan in his comprehensive book *Advertising Management: Concepts and Cases* defines advertising as “a measure of growth of civilization” and “the striving of the human race for betterment and perfection” with the purpose of making “the potential audience aware of the existence of the product, service or idea which would help them fulfill their felt needs” aimed at persuading “to act in accordance with the intent of the advertiser” (1999:1-2). This calls for reflection. a) How does it contribute to the economic growth of the nation? – By functioning as a powerful tool for ‘achieving acceptance of desirable and useful concepts and ideas’ with no or minimal profits. b) What are the non-profit-objectives? – They are preventive aspects of public health, developing a small-family norm, dissuading the public from drunken driving etc. If ‘product’ is replaced by ‘idea’, there are opportunities for achieving desirable social aims through advertising principles to promote citizenship ideals.

Non-commercial advertisements are called as Public Service Advertisements for they foster national goals. They help the public in understanding the problems and motivate them to change their attitude and overcome their fear. As Mohan maintains, these advertisements are an investment in human capital for they enable achievement of social objectives by highlighting issues of health, sanitation, nutrition, literacy, dowry, ill-treatment of women, family planning, youth unrest, labour militancy” (1999:348). The advertiser must consider the ignorance level of the audience and the style of approach to be adopted for reaching out to them using USP (Unique Selling Proposition). For instance, the Polio Campaign through TV Advertisements endorsed by its Brand Ambassador Amitabh Bachchan. Let us first grasp the benefits of Celebrity Advertising used for promoting social causes and for the Celebrities who lend their voice to the social cause.

### **Celebrity Advertisement:**

A Case-Study of Polio Drawing upon the mindset of the illiterate masses who are influenced by Celebrities, engaging a Celebrity sympathetic towards a particular cause proves useful. Herein the celebrity lends his skills, voice and image for highlighting a social/national cause with or without the fees/charges. The iconic Filmstar Amitabh Bachchan is a case in point. He has been associated with social causes like Polio Eradication, AIDS/HIV prevention, Tourism promotion, Human Rights among others. According to Philip Kotler, Advertisement must develop a ‘big idea’ that will bring the message to life in a distinctive and memorable way. Advertising is linked to economic development in the long run for it influences the social values and lifestyle of the public and must have a good appeal. The essentials of a good appeal, as G.S. Sudha in *Sales and Advertising: Management* claims, is having a creative concept which is meaningful, believable, distinctive, based on a theme, communicative, interesting, complete, need-based, easy to understand and research based. (2005:25.3-25.4)

Selecting the TV medium and formulating the message in the national language Hindi to target the masses and celebrity endorsement were the key factors in disseminating the need for immunization for Polio Eradication. This continues with the support of NSS volunteers who go door-to-door or are present on platforms and bus-stops to give two drops of Polio vaccine to children below 5 years. Let us look at the appeal value of the advertisements of Polio Campaign.

The advertisements on polio eradication endorsed by Amitabh Bachchan have a personal appeal for they use both verbal and non-verbal communication, bettering relations between the host and the intended audience. Some have more emotional appeal motivating the public to act on the message. The ad which draws upon the real-life tragic story of Amit Kishore, a polio-victim from Patna, is credible and authentic. It has both emotional and fear appeal with a theme and story-line highlighting the consequences of neglect if the crucial two vaccine drops are not given. This advertisement contains precautions to be taken and the need for medication. The base line serves as a memory tag *Do Boond*. The campaign is based on the hope of eradicating Polio by reaching out to the masses and informally educating them about the need for a healthy child. These ads appear in January to reinforce the message.

The ad wherein Bachchan appears along with another Celebrity Shah Rukh Khan emphasizes the major non-rational obstacles like caste, religion and customs which prevent parents from getting their children immunized and reinforces the message of health above all. The ad wherein Jaya Bachchan appears along with Bachchan creates a close familial bond as he acts out a family drama wherein he appears to be put off by the lack of parental initiative. Likewise the ad where he ropes in Aishwarya Rai and acts out his disappointment at the lack of public response. Another ad with the legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar equates immunization with cricket and reiterates the necessity of following up with the two drops of vaccine upto the age of five. In the ad wherein he is seen with the dream girl Hema Malini, he cites the

example of the heroine who has been working for forty years and brought up her two daughters. The ad ends with HemaMalini emphasizing the need for being a responsible parent. Bachchan's long-term association with the cause of Polio has a personal appeal and based on research, he announced a year where there were no reported cases of Polio indicating that the campaign showed positive results.

In tune with the UNESCO policy document which calls for the integration of ICT technologies into teaching, the internet-rich environment was searched for advertisements to be used as a model in classroom teaching. Herein, the teachers have explored the online Youtube videos and reviewed them with respect to their appeal and use in teaching. As Advertising is prescribed as a paper in Commerce Colleges, at the SYBCom/BA levels, here is a WebQuest model lesson plan:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2JusHxizmspolioadAmitkishore> from Patna with Amitabh Bachchan
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY7VQfpOhZM> Shah Rukh Khan @ iamsrk with Amitabh Bachchan - Polio Vaccine ad
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raGLJ11-sXA> Amitabh Bachchan and Jaya Bachchan Polio Messaging PSA India Unite To End Polio Now
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wood7OFg0IE> India Polio Eradication AD Amitabh BachchanAishwarya Rai
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hC8N4qo6BQ>Sachin Tendulkar and Amitabh Bachchan Polio Messaging PSA India Unite To End Polio Now
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXbUWuYOtt8> Amitabh Bachchan and HemaMalini Polio Messaging PSA India Unite To End Polio Now
7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiPoYk6RyTs> Amitabh Bachchan on India's first year without polio UNICEF

**Other social advertisements** Due to lack of space, instead of attempting a content-analysis, another module of WebQuest for the social causes promoted by Amitabh Bachchan is given. These advertisements are by the National Rural Health Mission: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWn63nuxYZQ> INDIA Family Planning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITbd5kGuurgINDIA> Immunization

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2UqTXIT0e8INDIA> HIV/AIDS; "Age to everything"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bkgl8iesyINDIA> Reproductive Health Age at Marriage

The cause of sanitation and endorsement of the construction of toilets by the celebrity VidyaBalan too contributes to the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan goals; thereby increasing the standards of living and life expectancy. These ads can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBKeZmJeoy4UNICEF> Total Sanitation TVC 3 DULHAN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xS9o9ALg5ZAUNICEF> Total Sanitation TVC 2 DAWAAYI

**Tourism and Income-generation** Amitabh Bachchan has been associated with the Gujarat Tourism Promotion Campaign, lending his Voice and image for the economic prosperity of Gujarat which faced a setback in the aftermath of Godhra riots: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-JiDBEHrycGujarat> Tourism 'Khushbu Gujarat Ki' campaign: Ambaji TV ad. His endorsement fosters the Image of Gujarat as a tourist destination, a win-win situation for tourism will result in the rise of varied ancillary occupations, Amitabh's image as a social advertiser will be enhanced, positively affecting the other products he endorses. As already illustrated in the preceding sections, the scope of the paper can be extended by involving the learners and provoking them to think of preparing WebQuest modules from familiar knowledge and asking them to share them with their peer group. In conclusion, non-commercial social advertisements endorsed by Celebrities can be used fruitfully to sensitize and educate the masses; thereby contributing to the nation's economic prosperity.

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