Social Advertisements and Recall

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INTRODUCTION

Kotler (1971) proposed the concept of social advertising as "the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication and marketing research'. Social advertising approach is used for informing, educating and persuading the society on basic issues (Cismaru, Lavack, and Markewich, 2009). Social advertising identifies social problems and it informs about them, but it does not try to offer immediate solutions (Choi, Eldomiaty, and Kim, 2007; Elliott, 1999). Social advertising do not promote any product, firm or service; its main goal is to evoke a sense of responsibility or to make people do a change in their behavior and attitudes. Social advertising is also an important part of Indian public policy where that policy relates to communications, Family Welfare, Education, Health, and Environment and National Integration (Chauhan, 1995).

Research in the area of social advertising is very narrow as majority of the studies are done in European Nations with few exceptions in India (Biener, Keeler, and Nyman, 2000; Hawkings et al., 2011). Causes that have been studied in the area of social advertisements include tobacco television advertisements (Biener, Keeler, and Nyman, 2000), ethical challenges (Brenkert, 2000), sexual social marketing (Reichert, Heckler, and Jackson, 2001), attitude of college students towards economic, social and ethical consequences (Beard, 2003), AIDS prevention messages and condom usage (Pfeiffer, 2004), cigarette advertising (Gibson et al., 2010; Bansal, John, and Ling, 2005), gambling issues among Youths (Messerlian and Derevensky, 2007), effectiveness of obesity programmes and health behaviour (Suarez-Almazor, 2011; Cismaru and Lavack, 2007), consumer trust and ethics of welfare exchange (Choi, Eldomiaty, and Kim, 2007), and drunk driving (Cismaru, Lavack, and Markewisc, 2009).

There are many social causes existing in a highly diverse country like India. Central as well as State Governments are running many social advertisement campaigns related to these social causes so as to spread awareness to target audiences. For policy makers, evaluation and measuring the effectiveness of these social advertisements is an important part that needs to be evaluated. Cornwell, Weeks and Roy (2005) studied the outcomes of one form of communications, sponsorship, and argued that recall or top-of-mind awareness is an important test to judge its effectiveness. Similar views were presented by other researchers in similar domain (Wakefield and Bennett, 2010; Wakefield, Becker-Olsen, and Cornwell, 2007, Lardinoit and Derbaix, 2001, Boshoff and Gerber, 2008). Same could be applied to social advertisements also where one can judge the effectiveness of various social advertisements by measuring their recall among target audience.

BACKGROUND

Social advertising tries to bring change in the perception of individuals, which at large would bring change in the society. Generally, individuals want them to be the cause of a good cause. It is highly welcomed by all ages than action, humor and sexual appeal in commercial. Research in the area of social advertising is not new though initial researches were carried out in the area of advertising related to tobacco marketing, HIV and similar diseases (Sharma, 2012; Cismaru, Lavack, and Markewisc, 2009). Doing an ethnographic study, Ritson and Elliott (1999) explored the social uses of advertising, within an adolescent audience, arguing that social implications of advertising changes consumer behaviour positively. Advertising text can provide an independent source for rituals that are enacted in a variety of social contexts in order to confer meaning onto their participants and audience. Advertising can form the basis for a wide variety of social interactions that can potentially influence both the qualitative nature and quantitative magnitude of the effect of a particular execution on members of the target audience.

Sharma (2012) conceptually explored the impact of creativity on advertising and discusses campaigns that have left strong impressions on consumers. The presented review study tries to come up with some evidence of creativity by reviewing expert views, past literature in advertising, advertising campaign and marketing activities. Cismaru, Lavack and Markewisc (2009) examined social marketing programs using protection motivation theory (PMT) for preventing drunk driving, and explored how protection motivation theory (PMT) can be used to create effective anti drunk driving communications using qualitative analysis of anti-drunk driving communication materials posted on Internet. The campaigns described are designed to motivate the public to undertake a variety of behaviors, including drinking in moderation or abstaining from alcohol use, choosing a designated driver, or choosing a safe ride home such as a taxi or public transit. The researcher found that social marketing campaigns aimed at preventing drunk driving in English-speaking countries were very successful, and the research showed that PMT can be successfully used in this type of campaigns.

Tangari and Netemeyer (2007) also worked on similar lines and studied the impact of anti-tobacco campaigns and smoking status of user beliefs and intentions. They found that social anti-smoking campaigns and efforts are successful in preventing of trial behavior of adolescents potentially offer a room for considerable profits. Also, young adult smokers had stronger beliefs about secondhand smoke and were also likely to consider quitting. Such young smokers give receptive market for future considerations of antismoking campaigns. Biener, Keeler and Nyman (2000) assessed adults' receptivity to the Massachusetts television anti-tobacco campaign as a function of respondents' demographics, baseline tobacco control attitudes, and changes in smoking status during the campaign, and advertisements' affective qualities. Findings of the study revealed anti-tobacco media campaign achieving high levels of penetration into the adult population and a favorable reaction to the television campaigns. The results suggest that social advertisements depicting suffering as a result of tobacco use may be instrumental in promoting cessation or reinforcing the decision to quit.

Gibson et al. (2010) studied the impact of social advertisements on HIV prevention among injecting drug users (IDUS) and social advertisements were found as a cost effective strategy to prevent HIV among IDUs. This study also represented the involvement of social marketing in applying marketing principles to promote social goods. The research is all about success of social marketing campaign in reaching majority of the estimated 7000 heroin users in Sacramento, California. It was found that exposure to HIV prevention messages with small posters and a newsletter significantly reduced the community-wide prevalence of HIV-related injection risk behavior. On similar lines, Yaminidevi (2014) studied the relationship between peer education and change in behaviour of people towards HIV and other similar

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