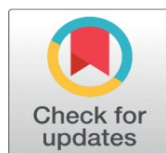


EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF VISUAL STORYTELLING THROUGH ILLUSTRATIONS IN INDIAN ADVERTISING

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ABSTRACT

Visual storytelling is an approach to communicating brand messages to their target audience in an effective manner. Human easily understands abstract concepts through storytelling shown through different types of visual elements like photographs, illustrations, etc. Several brands use illustrations in their campaigns to build a connection with their target consumer and try to depict the brand's values, attitudes, and emotions. Illustrations sometimes help a brand build a unique identity that helps them differentiate their brand from another. This paper aims to analyze the possibilities of using illustration as a visual expression in brand storytelling to increase the effectiveness of advertising messages based on the available case studies. A descriptive methodology has been adopted to analyze the impact of using illustrations by the brand for their campaign to increase effectiveness and recognition. After a thorough analysis, it has been found that using illustration for storytelling can have a positive impact on consumers and can increase brand differentiation with their rival brands.

Keywords: Visual Storytelling, Brand Storytelling, Illustration.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world of competition, every company is striving hard to make a unique identity for their brand which can create a distinctive image in the mind of their target customer. Initially, the primary aim of advertising is to make consumers aware of their brand's product or service and try to persuade them so that they can make a purchase decision. But as the competition rises and people are exposed to thousands of brand advertisements everyday it creates a cluttered market for any brand to grab the attention of their target customers. So, to tackle this these days companies are using the technique of storytelling to tell their brand's values and vision to their target audiences. Creating a positive brand perception among the consumer is the primary aim of the brands these days. And this perception can be created through the five senses of a person i.e. eye, ear, nose, smell, and touch. Visuals are the first thing that is noticed by any consumer. Visuals can create a sense of imagination in the minds of the customers. Among the several ways to show their advertisements visually the use of illustration is becoming popular to grab people's attention and to create a distinctive identity for their brand.

Illustration is the art form through which a story, idea, concept, or narrative can be depicted in a visual form. Illustration has the power to grab the attention of the customer. Illustration can create a sense of uniqueness to a brand. This study

will explore the power of visual storytelling that helps a brand to create a unique identity for their brand which can help them to build a unique relationship with their target customers.

2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE TO VISUAL STORYTELLING IN ADVERTISING IN INDIA

India is a land of stories, mythological epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Jataka tales, etc. are the earlier ways to educate about the lives and teachings of various great personalities like Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Mahavira, etc. Stories are painted on various caves like Ajanta, Ellora, Bagh, Sittanavasal, and Badami to various hand-painted miniatures from Rajput, Mughal, Pala, and Rajasthani. All these have depicted the stories in a visual form (Craven). Indians always included storytelling through visuals to understand any complex concept more easily and make the masses aware of these concepts.

The invention of the printing press in the 15th century by German inventor and craftsman Johannes Gutenberg gave rise to propagating events, stories, and news to the mass audience in a very easy and effective way (Lehmann-Haupt). In the 16th century, Portuguese traders brought the technology to Goa. The first printing press was set up in 1556 at St. Paul's College, Goa. In 1780 India's first ever newspaper "Bengal Gazette" was published by James Augustus Hicky in Kolkata (India).

Post-independence in India, various brands emerged such as Bata, Amul, Parle G, Air India, Lipton, Asian Paints, etc. They use newspapers, billboards, posters, and flyers to showcase their advertisements and pass on information about their product and services to the consumers. Earlier they used to paint the pictures or illustrations by hand but later in 1970 with the introduction to photography most of the advertisements were shown with photographs there was a decline in the use of illustration in advertisements can be seen (Keswani). After the liberalization of the economy opened for the world in the 1990s India witnessed a huge expansion of advertising as several foreign brands such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Hindustan Unilever, LG, etc started their business in India (Ciochetto). After the introduction of the internet and social media advertising scenario of advertising in India has changed tremendously. These days every person has access to the internet over their mobile or computer. This gave rise to brands connecting with their consumers directly which increased the customers and made the world of advertising very competitive. Creating a distinctive image in front of their target customer is becoming very challenging. Now to showcase different from their rival brands in front of target customers brands are using different methods to make a distinctive image. Among the several methods narrating a story through illustration is becoming a new approach in Indian advertising.

3. IMPACT OF VISUAL STORYTELLING IN ADVERTISING THROUGH ILLUSTRATION

The term "storytelling coined in 2003 by Henry Jenkins, expressed it as a new approach to narrative creation that is been used in different media, methods, and perspectives. This type of storytelling focuses on conveying messages through various communication channels making messages more attractive (Beata Zatwarnicka-Madura).

Storytelling in advertising especially through illustrations is a dynamic and powerful way of present times marketing strategies. Storytelling has been used by various brands to make a connection with their audience on an emotional level. It helps in creating a compelling narrative that grabs the attention and resonates with customers. Illustrations act as a visual storyteller that conveys messages in a way that goes beyond words. It has a unique ability to simplify complex ideas making it more engaging and captivating for the audience. In advertising campaigns, illustrations not only enhance the visual appeal but also increase the overall storytelling experience. One more significance of using storytelling through illustration is its ability to evoke emotions. Illustrations have the power to grab the attention of the customer and can be retained by the audience (Singh). Combining visual elements with a well-planned story for the brand can be helpful in eliciting emotional responses from the target audience. Furthermore, storytelling with illustration can help in brand differentiation. In the current cluttered market, it can help a brand to establish a memorable identity for any company. Illustrations help brands to showcase their value, personality, attitude, and distinctive attributes setting them apart from their rival brands. This visual identification not only grabs their attention but also helps in building a recognizable brand image. Also, storytelling through illustration can extend to increase customer engagement, brand recall, brand loyalty, and positive perception towards the brand.

4. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF UTILISING ILLUSTRATIONS IN ADVERTISING

An illustration is a very popular medium to showcase brand ideas, messages, and concepts to their respective target audience. There are several benefits that are associated with illustration that can help a brand to create a distinctive image for a brand.

- Draws visual attention towards a brand's product.
 - Creates awareness to the audience.
 - Resonate well with the text.
 - Better response can be expected through illustration.
 - Provides education to the consumers.
 - Ease of customization which is not possible with the photographs.
 - Avoid monotony sometimes created with overused stock photographs.
 - Cost-effective medium in comparison to photographs. (Bob)
 - Illustrations are a great way for visual narration. Can tailor different styles to appeal to the target audience.
 - Helps in visualizing your concept and reinforcing the brand message. Also, gives a competitive edge to the brand to connect with the audience.
 - Illustration can be engaging, expressive, and inspiring for the customers. It is helpful in targeting especially the younger audience (bluechilli).
- There are several disadvantages that are associated with the illustration that need to be considered while utilizing illustration in any advertisements.
- Sometimes the style of illustration may disturb the message of the advertisement.
 - Illustrations are considered a fun element that can tarnish brand image sometimes.
 - Illustrations are not suitable for depicting stories for luxury brands in comparison to photographs.
 - Interpretation of illustration can be very subjective. It depends on consumers and how they perceive it.

5. SUCCESSFUL BRAND CASE STUDIES

There are several brands that uses illustrations to tell their story and that helps them in building a special bond their target consumers.

“Anand Milk Union Limited”, popularly called as Amul, is a cooperative society based in Gujrat, India. It was established in 1946- it was found as a movement against the exploitation of marginal milk producers by traders and agents in small cities who marketed Polson butter (M. Kumar). Amul famous mascot is a girl wearing frock with polka dots and a bow tied in her hair. Eustace Fernandez and Sylvester DaCunha both these persons are behind the Amul girl mascot (Varma). In 2007, the Amul mascot received her place in Guinness Book of the World Records. The Amul girl campaign, launched believed to be the world's oldest running outdoor advertising campaign (Thakkar). Amul mostly prefers to use illustration on the current events or news that are related to sports, politics, films, and every other fields. It mostly uses blue and red colour theme in its advertisements. Only obituary or any sensitive events which dedicated to the person can be seen in black and white illustration. Amul girl is preferred to be used in mostly every illustration (Choursia). In Figure 1 you can see Amul girl is shown with M.S. Dhoni when he was retired from the international cricket in 2019 depicting the emotions which are associated with the millions of fans for Dhoni. And the headline used “you will be MiSseD!” as MSD stands Mahender Singh Dhoni. The story told here connects with the customers and evoke their emotions such events.

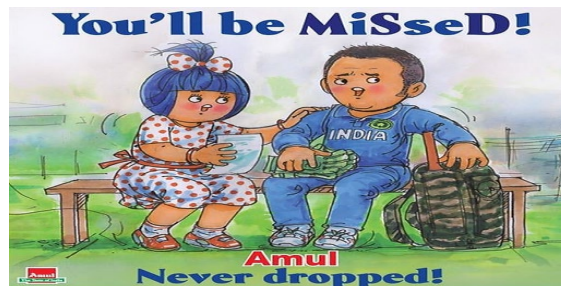


Figure 1: Amul's Take When BCCI Did Not Renew Dhoni's Contract

<https://www.purposestudios.in/post/what-makes-amul-visually-appealing-and-memorable>

In the Figure 2 it was a tribute to Kobe Bryant famous Basket Ball player who died in helicopter crashed. Mostly the depiction of any obituary events are shown in black and white illustration. Amul has this special way to connect with their customer with these current event depiction in their advertisement and also expected their consumer to be updated with the events.



Figure 2: Amul's advertisement on Kobe Bryant Death in 2020.

<https://www.purposestudios.in/post/what-makes-amul-visually-appealing-and-memorable>

Paper Boat (Hector Beverages) company started by four founders Neeraj Kakkar, James Nuttall, Suhas Misra, and Neeraj Biyani in 2013. Paper Boat is fastest-growing juice brand today, selling 11 different traditional-nostalgic Indian foods and beverages such as Aam Panna, jaljeera, chikki, and much more. The single-serving flexible packages use Doy pack, and NASA also uses the similar kind of packaging for sending beverages with their astronauts. The overall theme of Paper boat advertisement campaigns shows the nostalgic events that have occurred with the consumer during their childhood (S. Kumar). In Figure 3 as you can see a boy taking notebooks to the staffroom and teacher seating on a chair reading newspaper looking at the book. This kind of event probably happened with everyone during their school days creating a nostalgic feeling and connect with the consumer on a emotional level. The execution and color scheme making the illustration more appealing and eye catching. Even the logo of Paper Boat has a boat as a pictorial icon that resonates with the childhood boats that most children used to create with paper during their childhood.



Figure 3: That rare visit to the school's staff room!

<https://www.itskm.me/post/how-paper-boat-drinks-built-a-brand-on-nostalgia>

"Red bull" uses a quirky and simple doodle stylized that has long nose and after drink Red bull the wings came out in the characters. Their stories meant to amuse their audiences. In 1984, Dietrich Mateschitz an Austrian developed an energy drink in Thailand made by Chaleo Yoovidhya. It was made to keep people awake and alert all the time. They only used fun cartoon characters ads on TV, like the one with Leonardo Da Vinci in 1992. Their style for advertisements has not changed since then, and they always talk about how "Red Bull gives you wings (Moore)." In Figure 4 a man is Flying sitting on the Red Bull can. Their message is so funny and sarcastic that catches the attentions of the customers.



<https://hashtagpaid.com/banknotes/red-bulls-approach-to-marketing-then-and-now>

Figure 4: Male and female characters are flying around the Red Bull

6. RECOMMENDATION FOR USING ILLUSTRATION IN ADVERTISING.

Storytelling through illustration can add an amazing experience to the customer experience. To use an illustration that can effectively attract and entice the customer towards their brand is a challenging job. So, based on the research here are some recommendations to maximize the impact of this approach:

1. Before designing any advertisement for the consumer, it is really important to understand the target audience about their likes and dislikes. Identification of their preferences, demographics, and cultural aspects is the most important thing. Accordingly, the illustration style and type should be adopted so that it can resonate with their specific needs and be relatable and compelling to them.
2. Development of engaging and cohesive storytelling that should align with the message of the brand. The illustration should be so compelling that should evoke an emotion and captivate the audience's attention.
3. The illustration should showcase consistency through its style, tone, and visual elements that resonate with the brand identity. Consistency can help in differentiating a brand from another rival brand. It also fosters brand recognition and helps in creating a memorable storytelling experience for the customer.
4. The illustrations should express the intended message clearly and impactfully. Any clutter elements could tarnish the brand image. The clarity in storytelling can enhance customers' understanding and can be retained in their memory.
5. Adoption of any character or mascot can help a brand to narrate its story in an effective and impactful way. Mascots can be helpful in enhancing the recall value of the brand.
6. Storytelling through illustration should infuse the brand mission, unique selling propositions, attitude, and values. Illustrations can provide a wonderful platform to subtly convey these aspects and can create a deeper bond between the brand and the customer.
7. One more important point is before launching a campaign, small feedback should be taken that can save a lot of money for the clients.
8. Illustrations should also be made that can be adaptable to various platforms such as print, digital, and social media. The formatting and dimensions should be suitable for each of these platforms that can maximize the reach.

7. CONCLUSION

Developing a unique identity for a brand becoming a new trend in advertising. To achieve this several brands are telling their stories through illustration that helps in differentiating from their rival brands. For executing this strategy, it is important to understanding your target customers is crucial. Developing illustrations that resonate with their preferences, demographics, and cultural background. This approach can help draw attention and build a meaningful connection with the audience. Developing a compelling story is important and it should align with the brand's value and identity. Also, it is important that illustration should be clear to the audience understanding can maximize the message's impact. Another important aspect is the consistency in illustration style, tone, and color scheme. This can be helpful in unifying the brand identity strengthening the storytelling experience, increasing the brand recall, and leaving a memorable impression on consumers. Combining brand values into a story adds depth and showcasing it through illustration subtly conveys the brand's mission, personality, and values, fostering a deeper emotional bond with the audience.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None

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None

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