

## SHOCK ADVERTISING AND ITS IMPACT

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### ABSTRACT

Many advertisements that suddenly get our attention due to the presence of nudity, violation of societal norms, disgusting images, sexual references, vulgarity or moral offensiveness and turns a normal advertisement into shock advertisement. Shock advertising creates huge impact on consumer purchases and brand image but this impact may be positive or negative. Indian society have not seen much gory, sexual and obscene material in advertisement so, it is easy to shock an Indian audience when they expose to shock advertisement but in other foreign countries, audience have been exposed to shocking advertisements and messages for the past ten years and now it is hard to shock that audience. Many brands and government organizations are using shock advertising in India for getting attention of viewers, for example French Connection, Zatak, Denver Deo, Amul Macho, Cancer Society of India, Bangalore Traffic Police etc...This article mainly includes usage of shock advertising in India and its various negative and positive impacts. Read on....

### INTRODUCTION

In our routine life we come across many advertisements that suddenly get our attention due to the presence of an unexpected factor and this unexpected factor is the main ingredient that turns a normal advertisement into shock advertisement<sup>1</sup>. Shock factor may be nudity, violation of societal norms, disgusting images, sexual references, vulgarity or moral offensiveness<sup>2</sup>. Shock advertisements can be shocking and offensive for a variety of reasons, and

violation of social, religious and political norms can occur in many different ways. Benetton are thought to be the pioneers of shock advertising, the Benetton Group is present in 120 countries around the world and its core business is fashion apparel, with their ads portraying an HIV terminal patient, a priest kissing a nun, child labor, etc<sup>3</sup>. Many brands and government organizations are using shock advertising in India for getting attention of viewers for example French Connection, Zatak, Denver Deo, Amul Macho, Cancer Society of India and Bangalore Traffic Police.

Shock advertising is not for everybody. These advertisements are far more effective amongst younger audiences than older audiences because older people are more likely to be strongly offended by advertisements that include vulgar and obscene material. The shock advertisements create curiosity in youth and become useful in raising awareness.

In India recently this type of advertisement has been using by Ceat Tyres. In this advertisement, man is driving a bike and his pregnant wife sit behind him on the bike. One four wheeler driven by young people come to the road suddenly and man presses brake of the bike and save his and his pregnant wife's life. Here advertisement tries to convey that short brake is possible because of good quality of Ceat Tyres and if you want to avoid accident than use Ceat Tyres. Here, shock factor is rough driving by young people (they brake traffic signal rules) and this shock factor is related to the violation of societal norms. This advertisement evokes stronger feelings among the consumers and shocking content in an advertisement significantly increases attention, benefits memory and positively influences behavior<sup>4</sup>.



Source: [www.adopinions.blogspot.com](http://www.adopinions.blogspot.com)<sup>4</sup>

## SHOCK ADVERTISEMENTS IN INDIA

Many brands and government organizations are using shock advertising in India for getting attention of viewers, for example French Connection, Zatak, Denver Deo, Amul Macho, Cancer Society of India, Bangalore Traffic Police etc...

1. Good example of shock advertising is the FCUK campaign of French Connection. See the image of FCUK campaign billboard in Delhi, India. How can one forget the bold letters "FCUK" written on road side billboard or proudly displayed on a teenager's T-shirt?<sup>5</sup>



**Source:** <http://frenchconnection.in><sup>6</sup>

2. The below ad is from the Cancer Society of India and it uses very horrific pictures and a great analogy to convey a point. The pictures in this ad reflect people attempting to commit suicide with text in the bottom right box saying, "There is an easier way of committing suicide. Try Smoking".



**Source:** <http://www.dirjournal.com><sup>7</sup>

Bangalore Traffic Police has been running an outdoor advertising campaign using disturbing photography to shock people out of talking to their friends and families on the phone while they are driving.



Source: <http://ad-add.blogspot.com/2010/10/shock-advertising.html><sup>14</sup>

## **IMPACT OF SHOCK ADVERTISING**

### **Negative impact of shock advertising**

Sometime people ignore scary and shocking advertisements; they assume that it is not for them as they are not that bad<sup>1</sup>.

Shock advertising is like drug addiction; here advertisers also need to increase the dose of shock to get noticed by the viewer because yesterday shock becomes common today<sup>8</sup>.

Using nudity, fear or other strong messages might not always be the best and most effective method to use. A number of researchers argue that by

using offensive advertisements, in the short term a company may be successful in gathering the attention of public and stand out among other advertisers, but in the long run it may face the risk of damaging its customer base and brand image<sup>9,10</sup>. For example, Sears has stopped selling clothing line of Benetton Group in its 400 stores nationwide because the ‘death-row’ ads have crossed the line<sup>11</sup>. The people who are offended by shock advertising will not support a cause or purchase a product from a brand using shock advertising.

**Positive impact of shock advertising**

Shocking ads evokes stronger feelings among the consumers and shocking content in an advertisement significantly increases attention, benefits memory and positively influences behavior. Consumers are more likely to remember shocking advertising content over advertising content that is not shocking<sup>2</sup>. This types of advertisement creates a huge amount of publicity and debate also. Shock advertising has been using in making people aware about things like harmful practices, life taking diseases, social illnesses in addition to that it is also useful in deeds like donating to charity and helping the needy people. The reason charities sometime use to shock advertisement is fairly obvious. As Steve Kershaw, group director at Barnardo’s advertising agency, Bartle Bogle Hegarty (BBH), shock advertising increase the impact of charities which have relatively small advertising budget in a cluttered media environment<sup>12</sup>. For example, Purple Focus Pvt. Ltd. in Indore, India created a powerful shock advertisement on the occasion of the WHO’s World No Tobacco Day with an aim to educate people about the harmful effects of smoking on family members, especially children.



Source: [www.creativityawards.com](http://www.creativityawards.com)<sup>13</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Shock advertising is more acceptable by youth and also Shock is a growing phenomenon today so what shocks today may be common place tomorrow. Indian society have not seen much gory, sexual and obscene material in advertisement so, it is easy to shock an Indian audience when they expose to shocking advertisement but in other foreign countries, audience have been exposed to shocking advertisements and messages for the past ten years and now it is hard to shock that audience. Shocking communications can have positive effects on attention, memory, and behavior. Sometime shock advertising directly violating societal law so, careful target audience selection and savvy creative execution is needed in it. Also Shock advertising can be used around the globe to aware people and to cure many societal illnesses and they can help to reduce the number of harmful practices. Shock advertisement should expose some benefit to using the product, rather than using shocking content as an unrelated attention getting publicity stunt<sup>2</sup> As the Indian consumers losses interest in same types of advertisements, there is always a chance that companies might use shock advertisement to enhance its sales and to stand out from the crowd, for example Denver Deo, Zatak and Amul Macho.

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