



GUERRILLA MARKETING

# Creatives spoof ads, TV shows to aid recall

Advertisers across categories are parodying media content to cut through clutter, infusing comedy in campaigns

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MUMBAI

In 1994, with less than 2% market share, car battery brand Standard Furukawa decided to take on the then Goliath in the segment, Exide Industries Ltd, through aggressive guerrilla advertising.

Standard spent four years spoofing practically every ad that Exide batteries came up with and succeeded in pushing up its market share to 8%. The company was such a "nuisance" that Exide eventually bought Standard.

"That is the power of spoof advertising," insists K.V. Sridhar, national creative director, Leo Burnett India Pvt. Ltd. "If done well, it can work wonders for the brand."

Traditionally used as a combative tool by advertisers to draw negative attention to

competitors, spoof advertising has moved well past this.

It is not just the highly competitive categories such as colas, detergents and automobiles that are resorting to spoof or parody advertising to settle scores. Advertisers across categories are now spoofing media content—often reality shows, popular soaps that have high viewership and, in some cases, even ads from non-competing categories—to cut through the clutter and infuse comedy into their campaigns.

This helps the brand ensure high recall, as the spoof is usu-

ally on popular content that is easily identifiable.

Sample this: An ad for Pizza Hut plays out its theme of "happy endings" by spoofing a reality show and the popular ad campaign for job portal Naukri.com.

It has a lookalike of music director Bappi Lahiri barging into a Pizza Hut outlet and telling a young guy that he's going to make him the next "Indian Saakeera". The music director is a judge on a prime time reality talent hunt show.

In the same ad, Hari Sadu, the horrible boss from the popular Naukri.com ad (you know, the one that goes H...for Hitler, A...for arrogant...), walks in and tells his employee that he has been promoted, an improbable "happy ending".

While the commercial wasn't intended as a spoof, experts say the casting managed to cut through the clutter and create high recall for the brand, as consumers are likely to recognize these characters and understand the context.

"Ideally, we would have liked to have Vivek Oberoi sitting inside Pizza Hut and Aish-



TVAd box

tion set watching a daily soap. Her hair changes colour from black to grey to white, even as the storyline goes around in circles. The ad ends with a reassuring voice-over that says, "All our stories end in seven to eight months".

In the past, campaigns for Kurkure—the snack food from PepsiCo India Holdings Pvt. Ltd—have spoofed popular prime time soap *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*. Its latest commercial features brand ambassador Juhi Chawla spoofing a commercial for Thums Up featuring Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar.

A promo for Hungama TV spoofs content on general entertainment channels such as soaps, children's shows, cookery shows, etc. "The theme song, which was launched last summer, is still playing out on the channel due to its popularity. I mean, who wouldn't identify with being forced to watch television with their parents?" says Aparna Bhosle, director, programming and production, Walt Disney Television International (India).

Research conducted by the channel showed its target audiences, most of whom come from single-television homes, are usually forced to watch what the entire family is watching. No surprise, then, that the song is extremely popular among audiences familiar with that content. "Even when we have roadshows or contests, it (the song) is a popular request. It's funny to see most of them singing along," Bhosle says.

warya Rai walk in with a suitcase. But this (casting) worked out brilliantly," says Swati Bhattacharya, senior creative director, JWT India. "We used characters that were popular and easily recognizable. Not only does it help us cut across the clutter, but it is also about rewarding consumer intelligence," she says.

This route increases recall for the campaign as the ad spoofs content that is familiar and, in most cases, popular. "When there is little to differentiate the product, agencies look for a good reference point that will catch public attention," says Ramesh Thomas,

president and chief knowledge officer (CKO), Equitor Management Consulting Pvt. Ltd. He says that most agencies will then look for reference points that are out of the ordinary. So, while Hari Sadu may not be as iconic as actor Hrithik Roshan, he does figure in the popular imagination: an image that resonates with consumers as a silhouette of a bad boss, the guy they see at work every day.

Spoofing dramatic family soaps is also a popular theme among advertisers. The ad campaign for Sahara One Media and Entertainment Ltd's new channel Firangi shows a woman in front of her televi-

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