The impact of the public service advertisements on rural mass: A case study of Total Sanitation Campaign

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Abstract:

People require constant reinforcement when it comes to the propagation of an idea that needs to be ingrained in their mind. That is why brands often resort to advertisements in various media to push their messages. On similar lines, PSAs or public service advertisements have been rampant to push the concepts of societal good such as health, wildlife conservation and sanitation among others. This paper is concerned with the Total Sanitation Campaign, launched by the government in 1999, and how the PSAs have been instrumental in carrying forward the campaign amongst the rural masses.

It is purely a quantitative study, questionnaire being the tool used for collecting data. The respondents are from Sullia Taluk of Dakshina Kannada district, are areca nut farmers and fall within the age bracket of 30-50 years. They have been chosen by simple random sampling and the information has been depicted in the form of bar charts. According to the research, the term Total Sanitation Campaign is not something that the majority of respondents are familiar with. Free discussion on the public service ads has not been done by the majority of the respondents as they feel that the ads are quite terse. The research also goes on to tell that though the campaign has been able to grab some eyeballs however, it still needs to be reinforced with additional information. Though, the impact of public service advertisements has been positive in terms of sensitizing the people about issues of health and sanitation, it still looks incomplete and much work is still left to do.

Keywords: Impact, Public Service Advertisement, Rural Mass, Total Sanitation Campaign
Introduction:

In a world where there is much chaos and confusion, only authentic communication which is channelled via the perfect media can act as a harbinger of knowledge and consciousness. This is where advertising comes to the picture.

People have always advertised their thoughts and opinions by leveraging the then media. The idea of advertisements has always been there; just the media has been part of a changing landscape. Be it the seeds of revolution sowed by newspapers like Kesari, Independent and Young India to new-age digital ads that ask us to scan QR codes and book orders.

In fact, there has been a jump in the number of ads that are made not only for commercial purpose but for the betterment of society. These ads are known as public service advertisements where both the government and non-government organizations participate. The PSAs aim to persuade the citizens to engage in behaviors that actively promote healthy conduct or good citizenship and are always designed for the benefit of the greater good. For example, the government created a PSA to arrest the problem of smoking in public places; the ad showcased how it affects the nearby people and what punishments the act could incur. On similar lines, a local educational non-profit organization could create an ad that would stress on the need of sending children to school and remind the parents of the mid-day meal scheme to act as a catalyst.

PSAs are highly necessary for a country, especially in a developing one like India, because the majority of people here are still unaware of the basic tenets of leading a balanced lifestyle, measures to improve their standard of living and how their acts impact the lives of others. Moreover, since a public service ad reaches a potentially broad audience, they are an excellent solution to address the above said problem and educate the community about important topics like environmental pollution, mental health, crime, drug abuse and sanitation among other things.

When it comes to sanitation, much work has been done. However, owing to the enormous population of India, it is prudent to say that much work still needs to be done. Moreover, it would not be wrong to say that this is one such area where India still lags behind and has to cover much ground. The Swachh Bharat Mission launched by our PM has claimed to have built more than 100 million toilets, yet in terms of open defecation in 2017, India stands at 74% open-defecation-free; where it lags behind its neighbors like Sri Lanka at 99% ODF, Bangladesh at almost 100% ODF, Pakistan at 90% ODF and Nepal at 78% ODF. Furthermore, since it has come to contention, let us discuss the Total Sanitation Campaign.
Total Sanitation Campaign

Until 1999, the only significant effort done by the government to tackle rural sanitation was the Centrally Sponsored Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP). However, after 13 years of slow progress on the rural sanitation front, the government created the Total Sanitation Campaign, which was a replacement for the CRSP.

The campaign was conceptualised to be a community-led, people-centric, purely demand-driven and an incentive-based programme to address India’s rural sanitation crisis. In policies, increased emphasis was to be given on awareness creation. According to the report published jointly by the Ministry of Rural Development and Water and Sanitation Program (India), emphasis was to be given on imparting Information, Education and Communication (IEC) as a means of promoting sanitation infrastructure and providing a stronger support system which would include training of workers, easy procurement of raw construction materials and setting up of nearby production centres. It also emphasized on the importance of school sanitation and hygiene education (SSHE) which would act as an entry point to encourage a broader acceptance of such practices along with total sanitation.

The campaign’s goals were overall too broad to be measurable and there were many significant changes on a strategic level to improve the execution of the policy over time. The guidelines were modified five years into the initiative, in 2004 and there was a further modification three years down the line until the final objectives were laid out in 2012 as below-

- To bring into effect an improvement in the general living standard in the rural areas
- To accelerate sanitation coverage
- To generate demand for sanitation facilities through awareness creation and health education
- To cover all schools and Anganwadis in rural areas with sanitation facilities and promote hygiene behaviour among students and teachers
- To encourage cost-effective and appropriate technologies development and application in sanitation
- Endeavour to reduce water- and sanitation-related diseases

The main stakeholders of the campaign were the Government of India, the Ministry of Rural Development and the remaining governments of the 29 states and 7 union territories (UTs) in India. Although they were supported by external stakeholders like NGOs, school teachers and local influential people, the normal population could never become a strong stakeholder. The reason is produced by a mason who was interviewed when the 2005 progress report of the campaign was being drafted. He identified the main reason for the public’s resistance to the
TSC- It was difficult to convince people about the need for household toilets as they are habitual of defecating in open spaces.

In 2012, Vidya Balan was roped in as the brand ambassador of this campaign’s successor, Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan. The actress met the then Union Minister for Rural Development, Jairam Ramesh and confirmed the news stating that she was honoured to be a part of this campaign and would aid the government efforts to arrest the problem of poor sanitary hygiene in India. She was part of various ad films which revolved around the idea of “Jaha Soch vaha Shauchalaya” and many more.

Thus, in reality, the campaign turned out to be a government-led, infrastructure-centred, subsidy-based and supply-led campaign.

**Literature Review**

In their research study, The Effect of India's Total Sanitation Campaign on Defecation Behaviors and Child Health in Rural Madhya Pradesh: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial, Sumeet R. Patil, Benjamin F. Arnold, Alicia L. Salvatore, Bertha Briceno, Sandipan Ganguly, John M. Colford Jr, Paul J. Gertler have attempted to analyse the impact of the Total Sanitation Campaign in Madhya Pradesh. The study has found out that in rural Madhya Pradesh, implementation of the campaign has reduced the practice of open defecation and also improved the access of latrines for houses. However, these average changes did not yield a better result in terms of the health of children.

In their study Total Sanitation Campaign: A Success Story of Village Aasgaon in Maharashtra, India, researchers B.L. Chavan and G.B. Rasal have analysed the transformation in the village Aasgaon due to the introduction of two sanitation programs namely Sant Gadage Maharaj Village Cleanliness campaign and Nirmal Gram Programme. Both the programs created a high impact on the mind of the villagers. Their active involvement made their village free from open defecation and the reputed award committees recognised their efforts. Common illnesses were also eradicated from the Aasgaon village as open defecation came to an end.

**The main objective of the study is:**

To understand the effectiveness of public service advertisements of the Total Sanitation Campaign
Other objectives are as follows:

- To explore the level of awareness created by public service advertisements about sanitation
- To analyse the strengths and loopholes of public service advertisements made under total sanitation campaign
- To give suggestions based on the analysis

Research Methodology:

This study is purely quantitative in nature. The survey method has been chosen to collect data, and questionnaires were used. Fifty samples were selected through the lottery method under simple random sampling. The questionnaire comprised both open and close-ended questions in order to get in-depth information. The collected data was analysed and then presented via simple pie diagrams. Only primary research data has been collected and used for this study.

Physical Location of the Study:

Sullia Taluk of Dakshina Kannada is the physical location chosen for this quantitative study. The majority of the population of this Taluk is dependent on agriculture, and it is their primary source of income. All the respondents are areca nut farmers who fall within the age bracket of 30-50 years.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

To present the data most comprehensively, pie diagrams have been used here.
Knowledge and understanding of Total Sanitation Campaign

62% of the people were unaware of the term Total Sanitation Campaign; however, they were able to identify the Public Service Advertisements that were launched under the campaign. So, these respondents are considered as partially aware. 18% of the people were completely aware of the campaign. They could share the information received from public service advertisements of Total sanitation Campaign. 20% of the respondents have neither heard the term Total Sanitation Campaign, nor could they recognize the public service advertisement featured under the respective campaign.
28% of the respondents have revealed that they view the Public service advertisements of Total Sanitation Campaign as passive viewers. 22% of the respondents have paid attention to these advertisements and have also discussed the message with others whereas 50% of the respondents agreed that they have gained quality information from these PSAs but never shared the information with others.
Feedback about the quality of Total Sanitation Campaign advertisement

70% of the respondents strongly feel that the quality of public service advertisements that were made under the Total Sanitation Campaign are terse, 60% of the respondents have an opinion that these advertisements are not entertaining or in other words, were poorly presented. 20% of the respondents said that too many technical words and the use of complex language were a barrier for them in understanding the message of the advertisement.
70% of the respondents say that Total Sanitation Campaign advertisements have made them aware of the need for sanitation, and this awareness motivated them to take action to ensure sanitation in their house and village. Many are inspired to keep their surroundings, streets and public places clean and hygienic as they have realized that such efforts will keep them healthy and away from diseases. They are also spreading awareness among their friends, relatives and neighbors. 20% of the respondents have understood the importance of sanitation; though they are not taking the initiative of keeping their village or community clean, they are ensuring that their house and surroundings are free from garbage waste. They also agreed that this campaign made them feel satisfied with their decision of having a proper waste disposal system, clean bathroom and toilet. In addition to this, they are also devoting time weekly to check whether their streets and farms are hygienic and free from waste, mainly plastic bags. However, 10% of the respondents believe that they have not received any motivation from the Total Sanitation Campaign advertisements and their lives have remained as it was.
Findings:

- Total sanitation campaign has been successful in grabbing the attention of people. However, the objectives and aims of the campaign have not reached the people efficiently.
- Building toilets and ending open defecation has been identified as the critical aspect of sanitation from the perspective of the majority of the respondents.
- There is a need for additional information which must support the information provided by the Total sanitation campaign advertisements.
- As there are many other advertisements related to sanitation by government and also corporate companies, people are not able to differentiate between Total Sanitation Campaign and other sanitation-related advertisements.
- There is a firm opinion that celebrities who appear on the Total Sanitation Campaign advertisements are not famous in all the regions, perhaps, preference should be given to celebrities who are popular and well known in Karnataka.

Recommendations:

- Total sanitation campaign advertisements will be more productive and comprehensive if the length of the advertisement is increased.
- Usage of folk media can yield a better result in terms of spreading awareness as people are more familiar and convenient with it.
- Indigenous values must be considered while making the PSAs as they will make the viewers feel more connected with the message.
- Celebrity endorsement could play a significant role in encouraging people to follow the steps to ensure cleanliness and sanitation, but such celebrities must be locally known by the villagers.
- Social media has become popular among rural youth, so reaching the target audience will be very easy for the government if social media could be used effectively.

Conclusion:

Looking back, in the light of public service advertisements which are aimed at educating the masses the right way of doing things. So in that context, the public service advertisements created under the Total Sanitation Campaign hit right on target. Numerous ads with the theme of 'Jaha Soch Vaha Shauchaalaay' were filmed and they were a hit.

Looking at the campaign from a strategic angle as to why it could not succeed as much as it was anticipated, it all amounts to the approach that was taken. The government thought it would be demand driven and community led, but in actuality it became government led and supply driven.
Enough communities could not be made a part of the movement because of certain loose ends on part of the planning committee.

Firstly, the absence of an influential local person who could swing the moods and generate the demand hit the campaign hard. This was a bug in the think-tank. Secondly, the government did not account for the fact that consumer behavior is hard to change. As of now, we can just wait to see a Swacch Bharat (Clean India).

References:

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