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<td>Author(s)</td>
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Selling Display, Feature and Special Supplement Advertising

By

Arup M Roy
Advertisement space selling is actually 'concept' selling. Unlike a consumer durable or non-durable product selling, advertisement space selling is rather selling 'an idea'. If I sell a pen to someone the person having paid for it can immediately own, feel and use the product. But the buyer of advertisement space cannot get the same tangible result on the spot. The buyer has purchased blank space in a publication where his corporate or product or any other message will be published. This message will get conveyed to the claimed readership of the publication and thereafter the readers may respond to the advertisement which again depends on various factors like the effectiveness of the message that is the advertisement itself. If the ad is a good one the message catches on and vice-versa.

Speaking of response, there are other factors like O T S (Opportunity To See), etc. People hardly have time to go through newspapers thoroughly. One hardly remembers an advertisement which he has seen in the morning. Therefore just one insertion of an advertisement is not, often, enough. It does not generate the required 'opportunity to see'. Hence several factors are involved in getting the results of advertising. It's not like buying a consumer product. It's rather buying an idea, a concept.

The advertisement space seller however does not have to lose heart. There is thousands of crores of money being spent advertising which includes the print media, still having a major share inspite of the invasion of the electronic media.

Having said thus, I hasten to caution that there is of course no place for complacency. It is a tough job, the market is competitive and before one ventures out to sell advertisement space there are a very many lot of thing to consider and to be done.

A market study is essential. Without a proper study of the market in which you are going to sell is not done. For instance, Indian Express, when they launched a hindi daily newspaper in Calcutta, it was first found out that there were two others already there. One was 60 years old and the other older. The total Hindi readership was around 80,000 to 1,00,000 in the city itself. The advertising was roughly...
roughly 12 to 16 cols. per day with a 10 to 12 page on weekdays and a 4 page colour pullout on Sundays.

With the pull of the Hindi speaking readers there, scope of yet another daily was very much there. But this was not all that the study indicated which led to the launch of the new daily. The market survey clearly showed that the existing two newspapers were dishing out local news only. Not having to do much without competition, they were content in whatever they were doing. But the readers felt the void. They were looking for 'national' news just as in major English newspapers. But in Hindi language. So a little bit sophisticated, national Hindi newspaper took birth in Calcutta to put up stiff competition in the Hindi speaking market. The advertisers wanting to cater to the affluent Marwaris in Calcutta supported the publication.

This is all good news. But the Telegraph which was launched a decade ago had to brace themselves to fight against the giant The Statesman. Things were not easy for them. But through sheer planning and organisation or scientific marketing the Telegraph has almost caught up with the now so called giant.

Before going out to sell, one must possess a comprehensive knowledge about the product/publication he or she is about to sell. For example, in the case of a daily newspaper, one must be aware of:

- How many pages the newspaper has on weekdays. Vis-a-vis on Sundays.
- What is the cover price on weekdays and on Sundays. (Fridays here).
- Which is the editorial page.
- Which page gives the sports news.
- On what day does the feature on film-reviews come.
- So on and so forth.

A client once asked me whether so and so was the editor for the publication I had gone to sell. On getting the correct answer he ordered tea and gave me a patient hearing on the proposals I had in mind for his organisation in relation to advertising in our publication. Till this day I have not been able to link the connection between my editor and the proposals for advertising, but I have the feeling that had I not given the right, and simple, answer, the treatment would not have been the same. You never know what leads to what but a thorough knowledge about the product you are selling is absolutely imperative.
Before going to sell one must know the advertisement rates by hearsay. I am sure all of us here know this very well but even at the risk of being boring I would emphasise on the point that a background knowledge helps. Questions like the following keep on coming:

Is there a special rate for the front page?
What is the maximum size acceptable for the front page? Can you take a half page in the front page?
What is the extra charge for an ad in the sports page?
Do you accept ads in the page facing the 'Editorial'.

Some paper does and some don't.
The fact remains that you have to answer these then and there. You just cannot afford to say "that you will get back with the answer in a jiffy". By that time the deal is off. You may have missed the bus.

These are the very basics but we must take cognisance of these basics and treat them as most important.

Equally important is an advance information of the developments in the market.

For instance, this 27th day of September 1993, is the "World Tourism Day". The local Tourist office must be planning some publicity. Are you there?

Because if I had not told you about this prospect, and if you have not gone and seen the Director of Tourism, the other smart guy may have already bagged the cake.

Publicity budgets are limited. One has to have advance information and be there in the fray, if not earlier, at least along with the competitors or else one has to come back empty handed. I would write down this information about 27th September being World Tourism Day or 5th June being World environment Day and so on, in my Diary so that I am reminded well in advance next year to pitch for the business ahead of my contemporaries.

Having dealt with the background, briefly though (as there are a whole lot of other things which may have to considered before we actually go out to meet a client or its advertising agency) I am now coming to the fact that information about the client and its products are also very much important.

I. T. C. Ltd. in Calcutta, is a potential advertiser there. They have various brands advertised heavily in the print media. They
they cannot advertise through Television in India. Therefore they have to depend on the press, hoardings, points of purchase (dealers, posters etc.). They have different brand managers looking after publicity of say 'India Kings'; 'Filter Wills'; 'Classic'; and others. There are different advertising agencies also handling these products. One cannot go to the agency handling 'Classi and talk about 'Filter Wills' which is handled by another agency. This would create a very bad impression. It is very difficult to regain the image created by a false/uncalculated move.

We must be sure of what we are asking for before we submit our proposal.

Times have changed. Nobody is free to indulge in idle talk. The brand manager of 'Scissors' cigarette which is a hot selling product in South India only, expects you to come with a proposal for advertising in a publication which is also doing well in that particular region. If you go to him with a Calcutta paper he will not be interested at all.

Having cautioned thus, we may now come to the fact that there are various types of 'Display' advertisements. But basically when we talk about 'display' ads we mean those which are part of a campaign. That is a series of advertisements meant to get the desired O.T.S. These advertisements have to be dealt with a slightly different attitude as they are the long term revenue earners. Usually they are advertised frequently, may be in bursts of 6 to 10 insertions during a particular period.

Take for example the Coca-Cola ads. A cold drink is usually advertised during summer. They come in quite a few number of insertions. One has to pitch for this sort of ad campaigns with a claim that his publication is read by the Upper-Class of affluent people; most youngsters; the fashionable and not the common tea drinking type. The publication must also preferable be able to accept colour ads and reproduce the colour well. It may be so that the proposal on a long term basis may have to be submitted with a special concessional rate for bulk consumption. After all the much cliched 'give-and-take' policy is also valid here. Otherwise why would call this Business?

There are other display ads too of long term in nature and consist in flow. The Tender notices are such display ads. I would suggest an entirely separate cell which should look after Tenders, servicing Government; Public Sector Undertakings and so on for this valuable
valuable revenue earner.

One must not however forget the Chairman's Speeches; announcement ads and other display ads. They are potential in one way or the other. The Chairman's Speech advertisement for instance is a prestige issue. A business or financial daily not getting an industrial Chairman's Speech is not on. A good space seller will keep note of the dates of Annual General Meetings of various, important companies as that is the time when the Chairman's Speech advertisement is released.

Keeping in touch with the editorial department is helpful. They have the information of what's on in the market. One should take the cue from this and hit the target.

Appointment ads are also categorised as display. Unlike the classified 'situations vacant' in morning dailies, appointments have now the privilege of having a separate page or even two pages depending on the pull of the publication. 'Opportunities Abroad' also is only another extension of appointment ads. To cultivate this sort of advertisements, one has to keep in touch with placement agencies. However these are response oriented advertisements. A separate cell handling appointments, of course for big newspapers, can be suggested to create response and develop inflow of appointment ads.

For instance if a data bank can be generated of incumbents looking for change and linked with the ads published, the advertiser gets response. And that's what he is looking for. And that's what is going to get appointment ads.

SUPPLEMENTS

Topics/subjects for supplements are very many. Supplements can be made on 'industries' like:

Tea
Jute
Automobile
Constructions and so on and on and on. You name it and a supplement can be published.

But it's not that easy. There is a whole lot of work to do before one ventures out to bring out a special issue/number --- supplement.

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Proper planning is necessary here as well. Please find out the costing of a page. Jot down the list of client: Put the expected size of the advertisement against each client. See if the ad revenue matches and goes beyond the costing of a page. The only go for the publication. Otherwise not. This way the supplements are successful. Or they are not worth wasting time.

Please make the supplements value added. After all you do not want to make just one and put an end to it. You have to prepare the supplement in such a manner as to be able to repeat again.

For instance if you are bringing out a supplement on the Tea industry, please call on the Chairman of the Tea Board, or some authorities on Tea and request him to contribute an article. Because as it is people do not have much time to read. And if your supplement is not interesting or informative enough then its the last time you brought out a supplement. Getting ads for supplements is OK but please give value to readers/advertisers. Otherwise they will not come back again.

Supplements can be brought out on occasions like AGMs of big companies, Associations and Councils.

On Export & Imports.

On anniversaries of landmarks.

On festivities like Durga Puja, Deepavali, Christmas, New Year and so on. One has just got to be imaginative, and a supplement is there. Likewise special features can be brought on markets. Like your New Market here, or the Ramna market or the Arangs for that matter. 'Eating out' can be a regular feature giving readers an insight as to which restaurant is where. What is its speciality. The cost of a normal item there and so on. The hotels generally come out to support these features by releasing ads, as they are benefited.

Special schemes linked with circulation can be thought of. Take a particular market. Write about each and every shop and their specialities in brief. Request them to release a small ad. Give the market complimentary copies of the day the feature comes out. Even to those who have not advertised/participated. Next time they may be interested. Do these features periodically. Particularly during festivities. Supplements/features on hirepurchase or instalment payment buying may also be fruitful during festive times. The subjects are endless.
From the inauguration of a Steel Plant or a Bridge or a Hotel to a Sports event to a seminar or function the topics can be truly unfathomable.

The only thing one has to remember is that before a supplement is launched, proper planning has to be done. Value for advertisers money must be taken care of. It could be linked with circulation for added exposure. And the works.

To end my talk I would like to point out that Ananda Bazar Patrika of Calcutta nets a revenue of crores every year bringing out their Saradia Sankhyas. Why not you? Plan well ahead of time. Select good writers. Good poems. Nice illustrations. Keep a childrens section. Have a few pages on cooking/recipes. Devout some attractions on tours and travels. And keep a competitive rate for advertisements. And you have a colourful Saradiga Sankhya.

A publication in Bombay brings out a huge supplement on Ganesh Chaturthi.

Invariable there's a supplement on Onam in South India. Particularly in Kerala.

The English papers publish supplements during Christmas. Easter. And all these supplements have different clientele.

For the saradis Sankhya it could be a saree shop shop interested in advertising. For Christmas it could be a pastry and patties shop. For a sports event it could be Bata the makers of sports shoes in India. Each one has its own separate interest in a different field. Only one has to encash on them.

In other words, display advertisements, features and supplements are the major revenue earners of any publication. Provided they are harnessed properly.