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Economic, Social and Cultural Impact of Broadcast Advertising in Pakistan

by

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ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT OF BROADCAST ADVERTISING IN PAKISTAN

A Country Paper by:
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INTRODUCTION

This country paper about "Economic, Social And Cultural Impact of Broadcast Advertising in Pakistan" has been written for the AMIC Seminar, in New Delhi, from October 21 to 23, 1993. The Seminar focused on the "Legal & Regulatory Aspects of Satellite Broadcasting".

Almost all advertising campaigns being multi-media efforts it is not possible to isolate the impact of broadcast media alone. However, in the campaigns where broadcast advertising expenditure exceeds 60%, it may be reasonable to ascribe the results to these media. Economic and social impact of broadcast advertising has been discussed through case examples of campaigns where broadcast media were used as media of major thrust. The cultural impact has been discussed with reference to the broadcast advertising in general.

BROADCAST ADVERTISING EXPENDITURE

During the fiscal year ending June 30, 1993, the advertisers spent an estimated amount of Rs. 1.335 billion on broadcast advertising. 94% of this amount i.e. Rs.1.25 bn. is estimated to have been spent on Television. Radio claimed 6% with the estimated expenditure of Rs. 85 million.

Continued ...
FIG. 1

BROADCAST ADVERTISING EXPENDITURE IN PAKISTAN
JULY '92 TO JUNE '93 (Estimated)
In the fight for share of advertisers' budget, TV emerged a clear winner in 1970. Since then its lead has been increasing every year. During the past ten years, radio has practically been marginalized. Hence, the total presentation in this paper is based on TV campaigns.

**ECONOMIC IMPACT**

**Cotton Pesticides:**

Until about 12 years ago cotton ranked as a high risk crop. Each year, almost 40% of the crop was lost to pests and insects. Agricultural extension efforts for cotton pesticides as well as some promotion from radio were used in seventies. But they did not make much headway. In early eighties, the companies marketing pesticides turned to TV.

Credit for pioneering effort, on TV, goes to Ciba-Geigy. Ciba ran a virtual text book campaign using the Diffusion of Innovations model from rural sociology. The demonstration effect provided of TV was used to maximum advantage. Ciba mobilised progressive farmers, well known in cotton growing areas, to testify to their experience with Ciba pesticides. Later, Hoechst, Bayer, ICI, Burmah Shell, Sandoz and a dozen Pakistani companies also joined the fray. For the past six years, in cotton season, 30-50 spots of pesticides are broadcast daily from Lahore station of PTV. Additionally, Pesticide spots are also placed in mid-break of popular programmes on National Network. Television has been the only mass medium used in these campaigns.

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Here are the indicators of impact of Pesticide campaigns:

- In 1982, the total cotton area on the average received 1 spray in a season. By 1992 the average number of sprays had increased to 4.5.

- In 1982, the average cotton yield per hectare was 364.1 Kg. By 1992, it crossed 673 Kg, an increase of 84%.

- The annual cotton production has crossed 10 million bales and it is the foremost source of foreign exchange earning for the country. The increased productivity has brought prosperity to millions of farming as well as non-farming families in the country.

- The intensive usage of pesticides has activated the environmentalist lobby and now there is an outcry for environment friendly herbal pesticides.

Ciba retains the market leadership. But now, the passion for increasing the sale has given way to concern for environment and user safety. This year’s campaign of Ciba-Geigy, is a de-marketing campaign. It relies on a series of 8 commercials to educate the users about proper usage and timing for optimal results. I have brought one commercial of Polytrin-C, created by Asiatic Advertising, to illustrate this new strategy.

**Branded Tea:**

For all the brands of Tea, TV has been the principal medium of advertising. Magazines, newspapers and outdoor media are used as support media. Here are some of the indicators
FIG. 2  AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPRAY OF COTTON PESTICIDES/INSECTICIDES ON THE TOTAL COTTON AREA

FIG. 3  COTTON YIELD PER HECTARE (KG.)
of impact over the past ten years:

* The total consumption of Tea has increased by 32%.

* The consumption of loose (unbranded) Tea increased only by 2.5%

* The consumption of branded Tea has shot up by 56%

This year one of the largest traders of loose unbranded Tea (Kohinoor) has also launched three brands in the market and is aggressively advertising these brands on TV.

**SOCIAL IMPACT**

**NDVP Campaign**

In early seventies, many technically qualified young men and women remained unemployed because they lacked experience. The industrial culture in the country was not geared to human resource development. Piracy of experienced workers was preferred over the investment in training raw hands. Employment opportunities in Gulf had not become available. There was considerable frustration among qualified and unemployed young men and women.

Government of the day launched a scheme to provide on the job experience to technically trained manpower to pave the way for its absorption industry. The Government planned to bear the part of the cost of training by giving stipend for the first six months of employment thereafter the employer was required to gradually share the burden. The scheme was called National Development Volunteer Programme and its publicity was entrusted to

*Continued...*
**FIG. 4**

TOTAL MARKET FOR TEA IN PAKISTAN
MNJ Communications.

MNJ created a two pronged campaign directed at selling the idea to future employers and for registration of volunteers. The campaign worked like an electric current. It overnight boosted the morale of the whole nation. Within a span of two weeks over thirty thousand people registered. It is a pity that the prints of most of the commercials of this series are not usable now. I managed to retrieve one commercial, directed at employers, to share with you. PTV had not taken on to colour hence the commercial is black & white.

The NDVP campaign confirmed a place of eminence for MNJ in Pakistan. But NDVP flopped partly due to bureaucratic mishandling and partly because the Government policies were at cross-purposes. While it needed the support of industry to make NDVP a success it also embarked on a massive programme of nationalisation. The ensuing flight of capital and lack of investment in industry spelled disaster for NDVP.

Like Ford's Edsel campaign in United States, the NDVP remains a hotly debated campaign among advertising professionals in Pakistan. The antagonists blame the agency for over-selling without taking into account the weaknesses inherent in the scheme. The protagonists, I am one of them, say that it is wrong to hold the agency responsible for the follies of advertiser. The agency delivered a highly creative and refreshing campaign and its job was over, once the long queues were formed outside registration offices and acceptance of NDVP batches started in industry.

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Ministry Of Health Campaigns:

During the eighties, Ministry Of Health, Government of Pakistan, conducted a number of intensive campaigns to educate the people on health related issues. All these campaigns were conducted on broadcast media. Two of these campaigns are worthy of mention because (a) action dimensions were researchable (b) the campaigns were followed by scientific evaluation.

CDD Programme:

Control of Diarrhoea Disease (CDD) programme sought to promote the use of Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) for the treatment Diarrhoea among infants and children. The programme proved highly successful. A KAP survey conducted in 1992, places the awareness about ORS at 91% and the practice level at 34%.

EPI Programme:

In mid-eighties the Government of Pakistan launched an Expanded Programme Of Immunisation (EPI) for children. The programme sought to educate the mothers about the need for immunisation of child against deadly diseases. Radio and TV were the media of advertising and vaccination service was provided through hospitals, dispensaries, MCH centres and private clinics.

The campaign proved an unqualified success. A sample survey conducted in 1990 placed the immunisation coverage of children 12-23 months at 76%. The resulting euphoria motivated the authorities to discontinue the advertising programme. In the latest survey, conducted in 1992, the immunisation coverage has gone down to 57%.

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Another offensive is being planned to regain the lost ground.

CULTURAL IMPACT

The Age Of Creative Freedom:

Television was launched in Pakistan in 1964. The first TV Code was framed and published in 1969. The Code was revised in 1975. These codes did not cause any ripples in the advertising profession. It was like one of those laws which adorn the statute book but no one has the time or will to enforce. The only part enforced was the list of products for which the TV advertising was totally banned. For others, any Sales Officer could view the commercial and approve it for telecast.

The advertising profession took full advantage of this freedom. Many memorable campaigns were created in that period. I have brought a commercial of Lyla from the MNJ series "A woman will always be Lyla". The campaign was created in mid-seventies and still remains unmatched although hundreds of campaigns for fabrics have been created.

While Lyla campaign took a leaf from the culture of the country, most other campaigns took inspiration from the western lifestyle. Western dress and lifestyle were portrayed in most commercials on the ground that they were modern and carried the aspirational group appeal for the lay consumers. Many commercials took to wanton exploitation of sex appeal and exceeded the norms of decency and propriety in Pakistani society. I have brought three

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examples of the category in which western lifestyle was portrayed:

1. Red & White Filter Cigarettes which violated most of the rules framed for cigarette advertising and played up the “Satisfaction” from smoking with settings which are totally western. It was created by SASA Advertising.

2. Brooke Bond Gold Label Tea which portrays a western lifestyle and does not look like having been shot in Pakistan. It was an IAL creation.

3. Hussain Ki Lawn which presents a sharp contrast to Lyla series. It was created by Crescent Communications.

Backlash Of Seventies:

The religious movement, which toppled the Government in 1977, appears to be a public reaction to the promotion of western culture through TV. The Government of the day was charged with promoting obscenity, nudity, extravagance and anti-Islam value system of the west. Ban was demanded on the projection of material which was not in conformity with the norms of behaviour in an Islamic society.

In July, 1977, all the commercials on air were reviewed. 24 of them were banned outright. In over 300 commercials TV asked the advertisers to make major changes or to drop a few offensive shots. In effect this entailed reshooting of all the commercials and resulted in angry protests from the industry.
The conservative lobby was not satisfied with the half-hearted measures taken in 1977. The protests continued. TV was accused of promoting obscenity, expensive and fast lifestyle. Hence in a second wave of censorship several hundred commercials were ordered off-air in 1980. A circular of PTV dated June 30, 1980 emphasised that the commercials should be “simple and congruous with the Islamic traditions and culture”. The same circular prescribed that:

"a. Ads wherein a deliberate or unintentional attempt is made to exploit the fair sex for commercial purposes are unacceptable for telecast."

"b. Products or services which have little or no relevance to females should avoid their projection in commercials. The main emphasis in the commercial should be on product and unnecessary featuring of female models should be avoided."

"c. Commercials with characters making obscene gestures, assuming shameless postures and/or making unrefined remarks will not be approved for scheduling."

"d. Ladies projected in TV commercials should wear full dressed preferably national. Immodest and indecent dresses in commercials viz. sleeveless and low neck blouses or shirts, hipster sarees, tight outfits exhibiting body contours are not allowed. Ads which depict alien locale and dresses not in harmony without national culture will not be sanctioned for telecast."

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e. No woman should be shown lighting or smoking a cigarette or cigar”.

A subsequent circular, February 12, 1983, while reaffirming the above stipulations went a step further. The new requirement was that “The projection of females in the commercial should not exceed one-fourth of total duration of the commercial in any case”. This upper limit of duration for female models was subsequently relaxed to 30% of duration of commercial.

In 1985, a revised PTV Code of Advertising Standards & Practice was enforced. A central censor committee has been constituted in the Ministry Of Information & Broadcasting, in Islamabad, which approves the commercials before being accepted for telecast.

Cigarette Advertising:

In mid-eighties, Ministry of Health launched intensive anti-smoking campaign. This created an anomalous situation on TV which was the principal medium of advertising for cigarettes. There were persistent demands to ban cigarette advertising on TV. But, PTV did not want to forego this source of revenue which included commitment for regular sponsorship of major sports events. A way out was found by restricting the cigarette commercials to slots after 9.30 p.m. and mandatory inclusion of “Warning” at the end of each cigarette commercial.

The cigarette industry has managed to partly circumvent these requirements by advertising the sports events and programmes sponsored by the brands. The projection of brand in such ads serves as the reminder, in prime time, without the warning which is mandatory in product

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ads. I have brought a commercial of Morven Gold promoting the audience of polo match in Shandur Festival.

Morven Gold has also produced a film entitled "Rhythm Of Unity". This commercial, created by Spectrum Communications, is based on folk dances of Pakistan explores streaks of unity in diverse cultural traditions. It is telecast to felicitate the viewers on festive occasions and is always a treat to watch.

The cigarette industry executives agree that ultimately cigarette advertising will be banned on TV in Pakistan. They are only lobbying to delay the decision by harping on the cost of such decision to PTV and by lending a big helping hand in the promotion of sports.