

Teaser Campaigns: An Effective Advertising Execution for Varied Goods, Services and Ideas

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Abstract

The paper examines the theoretical constructs and applications used to create teaser campaigns in print and television advertising. This paper explains the nature, composition and role of teaser advertising in product promotion. It emphasizes that even though this unique creative format is rooted in attention theories of persuasive communication, its potency w.r.t to recall and recognition functions is advertising cannot be ignored.

Keywords: Mystery; Teasers; Revealers; Curiosity; Brand positioning; Buzz; Brand differentiation; Media conduits

Introduction

Teaser advertising is creative communication at its best. Aaker [1] argued that “this style of advertising not only attracts the target consumers’ attention, but also generates interest and educates the consumer about the product benefits and positioning, thus acting as an effective tool of communication”. Teaser ad is a powerful tool used to convey message to the target audience but in its own style of creating curiosity on what the ad is about and thus directs the attention of target audience (Journal of Advertising, 2001).

Teaser Advertising/Teaser Campaigns

Teaser advertising is not a single advertisement but a two part series of interrelated advertisements (the teaser ads) and a final revealer commonly known as teaser campaigns. From the communication point of view, a campaign is defined as pre planned set of communication activities, designed by change agents in receiver behaviour in specified time period [2]. Broadly based on purpose, communication campaigns are divided into three categories: political campaigns, marketing/advertising campaigns and public communication campaigns. Advertising campaign means a coordinated series of linked advertisements with a single idea or theme.

Yeshin [3] categorises teaser advertising as a creative execution style, commonly used by new products to create an element of intrigue and curiosity to build anticipation and excitement. For practical application and theoretical uniformity, the researcher regards teaser advertising as a creative execution format and curiosity [4] as an appeal.

Wells described teasers as a message execution format, “*teasers do not identify a product or not give enough information to make sense. These ads create curiosity and appeal to anti hard sell attitude of the people*”. It was challenging to classify teaser advertising as either an appeal or an execution because of divergent schools of thought within the experts on the specialised and unique ad form.

Overview of Teaser Advertising in India

Teaser advertising though more in use in recent times was found as an innovative tool of product promotion four decades back. A film’s teaser campaigns have been easily recognisable. At times it begins months before the release of the film. Satyajit Ray’s *Pather Panchali* was the first film to have a teaser advertising campaign marking its arrival. Ray’s advertising background made him use the innovative teasers to

advertise his very first film “*Pather Panchali*” to the audience. In 1988, the runaway hit, *Qayamat se Qayamat Tak (QSQT)* ran a teaser ad campaign to promote the film. It was an outdoor teaser campaign with question headline as the teaser element. It started with the first teaser ad screaming “who is Aamir Khan? A nameless faceless ad, followed by a spate of teasers on Aamir, who was an unknown entity back then. The final revealer ad opened the mystery with full blown launch poster of QSQT with its release date and caption reading introducing Aamir Khan as the lead actor. Post 1992 as more and more brands entered the Indian market, innovations like teasers grew. In 1995, a teaser campaign by Pepsi featuring Remo Fernandez and Juhi Chawla made waves with their “magic days” blind headline [5].

Teaser advertising post millennium

Last decade has seen consistent use of teaser advertising by various national, local and international brands in India. From confectionary to events, teaser advertising is being used by all types of products across various media in the country.

In 2000, trade fair and exhibitions also used teaser advertising to gain attention and footfall. Auto Expo 2000 in Delhi used banners, hoardings and tickers with teaser ads “which is the world’s best selling small cars? In 2000, Maruti ran a teaser advertising campaign for its line extension, Maruti Alto [6] with the teaser ads saying “*It’s hot. Its fast*” in newspapers and television and the final ad revealing the product name, visual and attributes with a tagline—the hottest car in town.

In 2001, Zee TV came out with a cross media teaser campaign on Outdoor, print, radio and TV with face of a woman (visual) and question headline ‘Kaun Hoon Main’ [7] kick-starting the campaign. In 2002 Parle’s Fifty Fifty started with teaser campaign in press followed by 10 sec TV teaser campaign. 2002 also saw the much talked about Hutch “Hi” teaser campaign in Bangalore in the Out of Home Media category.

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In 2003 entered Hyundai Santro and Titan industries in to the teaser advertising mode. Launched in India in 1998, the car aimed to establish itself in the Indian Market without defying its Korean origin. With its two part teaser campaign, the Santro [8] wanted to connect with the Indian audience yet harping on its Korean mechanic efficiency. The teaser campaign integrated both the objectives by a two part teaser with Kim and new brand ambassador, Film actor Shah Rukh Khan involved in a dialogue over its identity. Titan, a well established 16 year old company selected teaser advertising for their television ad campaign of 15 TVC's including the teaser campaign from 8th September till December 2003 for nearly three months duration.

It was not just tangible goods and films; teaser advertising is popular with media products (both news and entertainment products) as well. 2003 marked the release of a multimedia teaser campaign of a new TV show 'Jaise Jaise Koi Nahin on Sony Television Network .September 2003 saw spate of teaser ads all over the Delhi-NCR. Newspapers, billboards, highway bulletins, bus shelters and audio visual media was flooded with callouts on asking interrogative question "Are you ready for Jassi?" with a supporting device underneath : to find out more:- type Jassi and SMS 2525. Ever since teaser advertising became a norm to start a new entertainment show or a reality program format. 2005 saw a successful 6 teaser ad campaign by Bigg Boss, Zee TV and likes. Newspapers have been using teaser campaigns too. 2005 saw Zee Bhaskar create teaser ads on billboards with provocative/intrigue headlines asking what your DNA is? To promote its newspaper DNA. Month long teaser campaign intended to create familiarity with the brand name in the minds of the audiences. Likewise, Tata rolled out an interactive print cum TV teaser campaign created by Dentsu Marcomm. It executed the aggressive pre launch advertising strategy for Toyota Innova. In 2006, Mudra communications created teaser campaign to position the Hercules bicycle as an adult bike with Cricketer Yuvraj Singh as the brand ambassador. Use of celebrity endorsers in teaser campaign was also used by PepsiCo India for its Pepsi TV campaign in 2006. Similarly, 'Time to Shape Up' campaign was partial teaser advertising by Hutch for its sporting event 'Hutch International Marathon'.

In 2007, mobile marketing picked and so did their use of teaser advertising in their brand communication strategies. Hungama and Virgin Mobile opted for classic teaser campaigns in a multi-mediated attempt to create brand buzz¹. In the FMCG Household market, Proctor & Gamble launched the teaser campaign for its cosmetic brand Olay in India before releasing the TVC featuring the brand ambassador Sushmita Sen.

Between 2008 to 2010, leading International electronic brands were using teaser advertising for their line extensions like Sony Playstation and Sony Viao campaigns in India as well as Pan Asia. 2008 saw General Entertainment Channels (GEC) advertise themselves with teaser ads. Mahua TV started its teaser ad campaign on 4th August following it with on air promotions, newspaper ads in the following week, while Network 13 launched a five teaser ad campaign for its digital arm In.com. Regional brands also did teaser ad like Sandesh, Guajrati daily for its 'Vote Indian Vote' campaign in 2009. 2010 saw use of teaser advertising to reposition the existing brands. Electra ran a five ad teaser campaign to change the brand positioning through design element of colour. A set of three teaser ads were used, which said – "Hum laa rahe hai, suraj ko dharthi par" (we are bringing the sun to

¹Brand Buzz is the degree to which a brand is gaining attention (being seen or heard) in the market by relevant audience at relevant time. http://www.rubychacha.com.au/wpcontent/uploads/2012/01/ESOMAR_World_Research_Conference_Athens_2010.pdf

the earth), and showed a young family stretching our joyfully to reach out to the sun. They were followed by the main advertisement, which revealed the brand name and logo and said "The solar energy expert, Laye hai Electra solar water heater, ab har roz surj uthar ayega dharthi par." (We have brought Electra solar water heater). The teaser ads were prepared with blue colour prominently in the background, and with a contrasting graphic of an orange sun. Yet another brand extension through teaser advertising was done by the mobile manufacturer Nokia for its 'Symbian Belle' in 2011. Nokia's official Facebook fan page hosted a teaser campaign that read, "It's almost time to try something new" adding at the bottom "Something new on Symbian". In the services sector, SBI did a teaser campaign for 20 days using our audio medium for home loan takeover across Maharashtra and they promoted it across 20 district level ST bus stands. The automobile industry too realised the potential of online teaser campaigns. In September 2010 an online teaser campaign of Tata Aria with a website builddreamcar.com that asked the volunteers to design a car and win an award with some clues hidden in it. Tata Motors said that "the teaser campaign for Aria received a very good response. In today's times, the web has become a necessary tool of research for any capital purchase."

Not just limited to entertainment, automobiles, computer, and consumer products, teasers were used in political advertising as well. 2003 saw the Indian National Congress Delhi unit come up with a teaser campaign "battle for Delhi" in daily newspapers. Non banking organisations selling financial products too used teaser ads for brands like ING-Vysya. Teaser advertising continues to be adopted as a premiere innovative strategy either in its classical form or in new adaptations especially in consonance with the media vehicle used. Rao [9] marked the use of teaser advertising again for TV show 'Parichay' on Colors General Entertainment Channel to be telecast on prime time television. Nearly two month long teaser campaign focused on the both the lead protagonist and the narrative around him to promote the daily soap. The trend continued this year with interesting classic teaser campaigns of Movers and Shakers and Aamir Khan's Satyamev Jayate. Teaser campaigns on new media are also on the rise. In 2011, Britannia SAB Miller rolled out digital teaser campaigns. While SAB [10] launched its latest brand of beer- Miller High Life in India with a teaser campaign on social media for around 40 days instilling curiosity about 'the coolest job', Britannia innovated with a hunt for the true Snexy, India's first "reality snack show" within the teaser digital campaign ambit. For beer, Miller outlined the purpose behind teaser advertising on social media. 'Derek Jones, director, marketing, SABMiller, India, said, "Many brands in the space that we operate in follow a formalised way of launching their brand. We wanted to be distinctive and different from brands in our space and so we decided to create 'The Coolest Job'. Our consumers are young professionals who have a strong affinity to social media and so we went down the social media route and thought of putting our advertisements across in this way." Success of campaign was evident from the fact that Miller High Life close to 80,000 fans in 40 days without revealing the brand. It also received 5000 resumes for job applications. It was teaser advertising with the twin objectives of arousal and engagement.

Design and Methods

The paper examines the existing literature on teaser advertising and attempts to arrive at conceptual framework of the unique creative execution format under the microscope. Several sources of information have been explored to provide a reliable and valid blueprint for teaser advertising

Theoretical foundation of teaser advertising

The biggest advantage of teaser ads is its inherent ability to arouse curiosity. By concealing information, it creates an information gap [11]. The consumers are intrigued by the cues given in the teaser ads. The knowledge gap coaxes the consumers to intensify their efforts to fill the gap in order to reduce the feeling of deprivation created by the teaser ads. Consumer’s need and desire to know makes them a captive audience of the campaign till they complete the incomplete knowledge structure on the release of the final revealer ad.

Categorised types of advertisements on the basis of attention function. According to him, teaser ads are prevention focussed ads that use ambiguity, confusion and uncertainty to reduce resistance to persuasion. These ads gain consumer attention and encourage open mindedness through building curiosity and interest, introducing a surprising piece of information or creating confusion. Even minded consumers are more likely to try new brands. Demonstrated that confusing the consumers first and then reducing ambiguity in the end by reframing messages increases persuasion. Kardes grouped mystery, surprise and disruptive ads in this category (Table 1).

Teaser campaigns follow the principle of late identification of the brands. Brand identification is delayed by the advertiser till the end of the series of advertisements. Critically thinking if one hand it provides an opportunity to the viewer/reader to form his personal connection with the campaign and hence the brand, there is also the risk of consumers associating the teaser campaign with a competing brand or even an unrelated brand.

Characteristics of a teaser campaign

Levy [12] gave pointers for creating effective teaser campaigns:

Make sure the campaign is relevant to your brand’s message: Effective campaigns can be created if it is linked to the overall ad plan of the brand. A teaser campaign cannot exist in isolation. Impact of teaser can be as intended if it shares vital linkages with either campaigns in the past or the follow up campaigns. Totally unconnected campaigns may yield very short term results. “The main aim is to generate intrigue. But you have to see how relevant the teaser is in the context of the brand” says, Pravin Vadhera, Country Head, Bates OOH Division.

Frequency of teaser ads: Success of a teaser campaign depends upon the number of times teaser ads are presented to the consumer. “The effectiveness of the teaser depends on the frequency of your ad, which depends on budget and placement. It is very important that your ad is noticed. What happens is that media is so fragmented and cluttered, that at times, if the teaser ad isn’t planned well, people don’t relate it to the main ad” stressed Prasoon Joshi, executive chairman and CEO, McCann Worldgroup India.

Teasers needs to be novel in concept: It is very important for the teasers to be fresh in concept and use of elements to carry the teaser message. Similar campaigns leave the audience untouched. Dharini Mishra, Global Head of brand, Suzlon, says she personally found teasers to be very effective, particularly in the case of low-association brands.

Attitude Function	Promotion Focused Ads	Prevention Focussed Ads
Knowledge	Factual	Mystery
	Logical	Surprise
	Competitive	Confusion

Table 1: Adapted from Kardes.

Deliver small bits of information: Conceptualisation of teaser ads is critical. Every teaser must be carefully designed to give some information to take the campaign forward. In classic teaser campaigns, each teaser ad takes the story forward with bits and pieces of information whereas in partial teasers, each teaser presents a small facet of the same idea till the last ad or the final revealer. Size of teaser ads is interlinked to its effectiveness.

Know your audience: While creating teasers it is vital to know the market segmentation and consumer psychology. In this day and age negotiating messaging for the generation X [13] is very challenging. This segment is expanding its presence in the consumer decision making process. Alongside the generation S [14] is also becoming significant lately due to their propensity to consume and heavy consumption of mass media.

Timing is everything: Duration is of utmost importance for an effective teaser campaign. The length of the teaser campaign really depends on the quality of the creative you produce, the frequency of the teaser ads, and whether the product or service you’re introducing is “teaseworthy”.

Build a story: String of teasers is ideal to tell a story and brands do need stories to stay in public memory for a long time. The core of the story is the brand around which the web of intrigue and interaction is woven.

Availability of the product: Teasers coax the people to try the product, hence it becomes necessary for the advertiser to ensure that the product is made available at all the retail outlets through its distribution network on the day of the final revelation. The last ad of the campaign leads consumers to product search. Therefore; make the product available for purchase.

Live up to the expectations: Teaser campaigns raise the level of expectations making it crucial to live up. Bhat, Contract Advertising says, “the reveal should not let people down, because after all, they have invested time and energy looking, analysing these teaser ads and trying to guess what it is. They should get return on investment on their time, otherwise, they feel cheated. This ROI would be in terms of some information that is useful to them”. To them at the time of the climax, in terms of the advertisement as well as the product or the brand.

Different media to maximize teaser effect: Cross media campaigns amplify the impact of teaser advertising on the consumers. Since, teasers aim to grab and hook audience attention, different media vehicles presenting the campaign will optimally raise the opportunity to see.

Big noise at the end: It is very important to come up with a highly engaging and powerful revealer ad to end the campaign. The intensity of the teasers has to be matched or superseded by the revealer. There should be a strong link between the teaser idea and the reveal.

Make the mystery matter to generate gossip, speculation and news stories: Along with the brand, the campaign should tie to an idea or an argument, not just a brand. It will ensure reportage, publicity and media mileage. There are number of factors such as duration of the campaign, clarity of the idea and choice of media that affect the effectiveness of teaser campaigns [15]. Other important factors include the type of teaser campaign, its dominant objective and brand association. What is vital to the success of the campaign is the quality of the revealer advertisement in terms of its creative and informative value. John Forsynth, Mindshare’s Business Director says “it is crucial to a teaser’s success that, as well as really engaging and entertaining

people from the start, there are some tangible benefits to be gained at the end of the campaign". Efficacy of teaser campaigns on digital media was can be explained by using teaser messages when the customer approaches the promotion amount, advised digital marketing news website ClickZ.com.

Role of Teaser Advertising

To introduce a new product

It is the most visible function of teaser campaigns. Teasers are adept at launching a new good, service or programme into the market. It is most often and extensively used at the pioneering stage of the product life cycle. It is used to create interest amongst people even before the product is announced. Cutting across product categories teasers are used to introduce a new product to the consumer. They are designed as precursors to the advent of a new product genre or class or a brand in an existing product category.

To inform about a unique selling proposition

Teasers are used to draw attention towards a key element or attribute of brand, unique to it. In a blogpost, JBtron mentions the teaser campaign of New York telephone, the purpose of the campaign to let people know that they could find anything in the NY phone book.

Establishing a brand

Existing brands can build new identities and images with the help of teaser campaigns. It is an effective strategy to restart a brand story. Teasers in the beginning allow the brand some time to present itself to the target market in the desired manner. It reduces the pace of a general advertising campaign as they allow breathing space for the advertiser and feeling space for the consumer. Serish Nanisetti writes that teaser campaigns are a "great step towards the building of a brand".

Reposition a product

Product positioning [16] is to create a special perceptual space in the mind of a buying prospect for your brand. When change the original positioning statement to present the product in a new light, teasers are used. It is a subset of rebranding strategies adopted by many advertisers in recent times. Vinayak A. J. cited the role of teaser campaign of 'merger soda' an existing product since 1984. The campaign uses a landmark development in Tulu history, coming together of two brand ambassadors after separating several years ago. Devadas Kapikad and Naveen D. Padil were the hit pair in that troupe for many years. They separated a few years ago, making their fans unhappy. The defining moment in the life cycle of the brand became the creative idea of the teaser campaign. Through outdoor teasers in Mangalore, the brand attempts to achieve brand interest and repositioning at the same time.

Brand differentiation

At times teaser campaigns are especially created to carve a niche for itself in the consumer market. Besides the exclusive promise, it can effectively communicate about the differential advantage of one brand over the other. In a similar looking product category, creation of brand interest [17] with teaser campaign helps the consumer to connect exclusively with the brand. Successful campaigns also gain brand recall and recognition [18] much better than what a normal advertising campaign could achieve.

To make advertising more creative

Creativity means to originate, to conceive a thing or an idea that

did not exist before. The creative process is a step by step procedure to combine previously unconnected objects or ideas into a chain of integrated imagination. Through a string of teasers, the creative advertising professional gets an opportunity to reveal his cards in bits and parts instead of laying them on table in one go. The chain reaction helps in creative storytelling as teasers hold audience attention and keep them hooked for the time being. In addition to this, these campaigns are effective in announcing celebrity associations, infusing communication with satire, regional humour, slices of life situations, ceremonies and sagas. Internet teaser campaign "Got Milk" to promote the habit of drinking milk was based on a peculiar sense of humour in which a project organised an action called cow abduction. In USA, number of cow abductions increased, people were talking speculating and theorising about the cause, website showed film footage on abductions where UFO's could be seen. In the end the campaign revealed that aliens are behind these abductions because they know the benefits of drinking milk.

To create buzz

Teasers pique viewer interest by the 'reveal some conceal some strategy'. The untold or half told story arouses the curiosity about the product amongst the consumers'. This further leads to creation of a general buzz about the advertisement. The excitement to know more and know what exactly it is? Or the product or the story generates a buzz in the consumers even without knowing the product. Teaser mantra is to create buzzwords, and give hints.

Consumer engagement and interaction

Such campaigns aim to interact with the consumers, either through monologue or dialogue. The mystery ads initiate a discussion at all levels in the communication pyramid. A good teaser ad is talked about amongst friends (interpersonal communication), in the living rooms, social gatherings (group communication) in the organizations and in the virtual world. Various elements of teasers become talking points in formal and informal communication. While some campaigns work on the objective of talking to the consumers through information in small bits, other campaigns look to engage consumers by making them an active seeker of gratification in the intrigue based puzzle game.

Influences consumption and buying behaviour

Consumer behaviour includes knowing your consumer, the consumer decision process and the consumer perception process [17]. Teasers have a direct or indirect impact on the above three in varying degrees. While the success of a teaser aids brand recall, the expectation to find out the product behind the 'tease' pushes the consumer to gather more information about the ad and finally the product. The chase and the game of finding the hidden takes the consumer nearer to the product. The knowledge gap created by the teaser ads not only galvanise the consumer to seek the final ad and the thereby the name of the product but also propels them to try the product identified. Teasers play a vital role in consumer motivation and product trial. Smith says that teaser ads are specially designed to create ambiguity and the resulting desire for closure thereby increasing the consumers processing motivation

Emotional bonding

Teasers are based curiosity and intrigue to promote a product. The spate of teasers over a period of time leads to peoples' participation in the ad process. General mass looks forward to the next revelation in a teaser campaign to solve the jigsaw puzzle. It creates a bond between

the two bases on participatory communication and reciprocal response to the stimuli.

Integration of media conduits

Since teasers propel the ad campaign to run parallel on more than one media vehicle, it allows multiple media vehicles to combine and coordinate in generating the hype. From print to TV. Outdoor to the internet, all media vehicles are able to carry teasers with equal ease. Even in the trans-media environment, teaser campaigns can be effectively run.

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