

Topical Advertisements & Brand Mascot- A Strategic Combination For Brand Positioning: Study Of Amul

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Abstract : The business world is undergoing a sea change with the introduction of new products and services everyday. Competition is getting stiff and every company is battling for that space in the mind of the customers and thus positioning their offering rightly. Advertising, traditionally played the role of informing, persuading and reminding the customers of the existence of a brand. Over a period of time, innovation in copy and creativity has become an important riding factor for the Advertising has always played a major role in terms of positioning a brand in the mind of a customer. But this battle has only got fiercer with just the brand, differentiating products with more or less the basic ingredients remaining same. Advertisements more or less try to create a differentiation for the product or brand they are promoting but again since most of the basic features remain the same, this becomes a daunting task. The marketers are always on a lookout for attracting and retaining the right set of customers. Some of tested and effective ways to position a brand in the mind of the customer include celebrity endorsements while the others less used ones include topical advertisements (where the current news is drives the advertisements) or a simple advertisement which talks about just the brand using a common person model or a character. This paper aims to understand the role of topical advertising and brand mascots in strategically positioning a brand through topical advertisements. The paper studies the advertisement strategies used by one of the most successful brands offered by AMUL ie. AMUL butter. AMUL Butter uses both brand mascot and topical advertising making it together a powerful strategy for the brand to offer to the target market. A conceptual model is proposed to see how topical advertisements are effective

Keywords: Topical advertising, Brand Mascot, Amul

Introduction: In the world of clutter, it is imperative for a brand to stand out and create its own distinction amidst competition. 4Ps offered to the customer all play a role in positioning a brand in the mind of the customer. Each of the 4Ps i.e. product, price, place and promotion have a role to play in appealing to the customer who in turn will give a response.

AMUL

Amul is one of the most successful dairy brands in India. as the slogan suggests ‘The taste of India’, Amul has always secured a place in the heart and mind of its middle and economic class consumers. The journey of Amul started with a protest against the Polson brand and then led to the inception of a unique business model that led to a direct linkage between milk producers and consumers and thus eliminating the role of the middlemen. This model helped India in emerging as the largest milk producer in the world (www.amul.com) One of the major reasons for the same is its competitive pricing and consistency in quality. Amul butter is one of the strongest brands of Amul that contributes hugely to the overall profitability of the company. 4 Ps i.e. Product (all milk and related products), price (reasonable and affordable), place (reach to every part of the country and promotion (advertisements etc) all have their consistency in order to make a perfect offer to the customer. The spirited slogan ‘The taste of India’ with its emotional appeal appeals to the heart of Indians.

Brand Mascot

A brand character that serves as the ambassador of the company. Mascot serves as a corporate identity for a brand. They present a friendly image. Over a period time many cartoon characters and famous brand mascots have become celebrities (**Krish;2006**). These mascots have their own credibility like the other celebrities

Butter Girl – The Brand Mascot

A brand mascot is a character, The Amul Butter Girl took birth in the year 1966 when Sylvester daCunha, the then MD of the advertising agency that handled the Amul butter account, conceived her for the butter campaign. This butter girl was a move away from the dull, corporate advertisements that were created by the previous agency. This polka dotted frock girl still wins hearts everywhere whether it is the cover of the butter or billboards or advertisements in general. On 17 October 2016, Amul butter girl completed her 50 years of existence from and this was celebrated when she first appeared in the topical ad titled "Thoroughbread". (Source: newskarnataka.com; 2016)

One of India's longest running advertising campaigns, topical campaign has moved with an unchanged theme and style for almost 50 years now

Ever since its birth, the Amul Butter girl is seen interacting with current events through the use of topical copy.

Topical Advertising:

The word topical means of immediate relevance, interest or importance or owing to current events. Advertising is defined generically is 'any paid form of non-personal presentation of goods, ideas, services by an identified sponsor'. There are many forms of advertising but one that has been covered in this study is 'topical advertising'. Topical advertising is when an advertisement is created around something current. Advertisements that are drawn out of such strategies are called topical advertisements. Such advertisements get an added advantage because of the fact that it is current. One can't ignore the fact that anything that is current in the society gets the people to talk about it and are more engaging. Topical advertisements because of their immediacy in nature are creative in nature.

Literature Review:

Content marketing is an ideal marketing technique as it makes use of unobtrusive pulling and not the push techniques to attract the attention of the consumers to brand content (Liu & Huang 2015).

Research (Tafesse;2015) suggests that a user engages most with those brand posts that are consistent, interactive and vivid.

Pulizzi's (2012b:118) argue that authentic brand stories are the major focus of content marketing.

A research (Adigüzel; 2020) identified that the important aspect in positioning is not the producer (marketer, advertiser) of a given brand but the consumers. While managing a brand the two reference points should be the target market and competition.

Research has proved that creativity and wit facilitates in the retention power of the product (Chang, et al 2014). Punning is found to be the most frequently used technique in to generate humor (Attardo S.;2014). Codeswitching is unavoidable in a multilinguistic society (Nilep;2006)

Mamidi (2017) in an interesting study identified that advertisements like Amul, use bilingual techniques that helps them relate to the modern Indian. She further identified that advertisements have expectation from the audience to be up-to-date with the latest happening in the world. The humor that is generated in the ads makes it more appealing and popular.

In another interesting study (Dyner;2008) it has been found that advertisement that are more creative and innovative will be remembered for a longer time. Also, if the message in the advertisement requires any added cognitive processing on the part of the audience it will lead to an increase in its memorability.

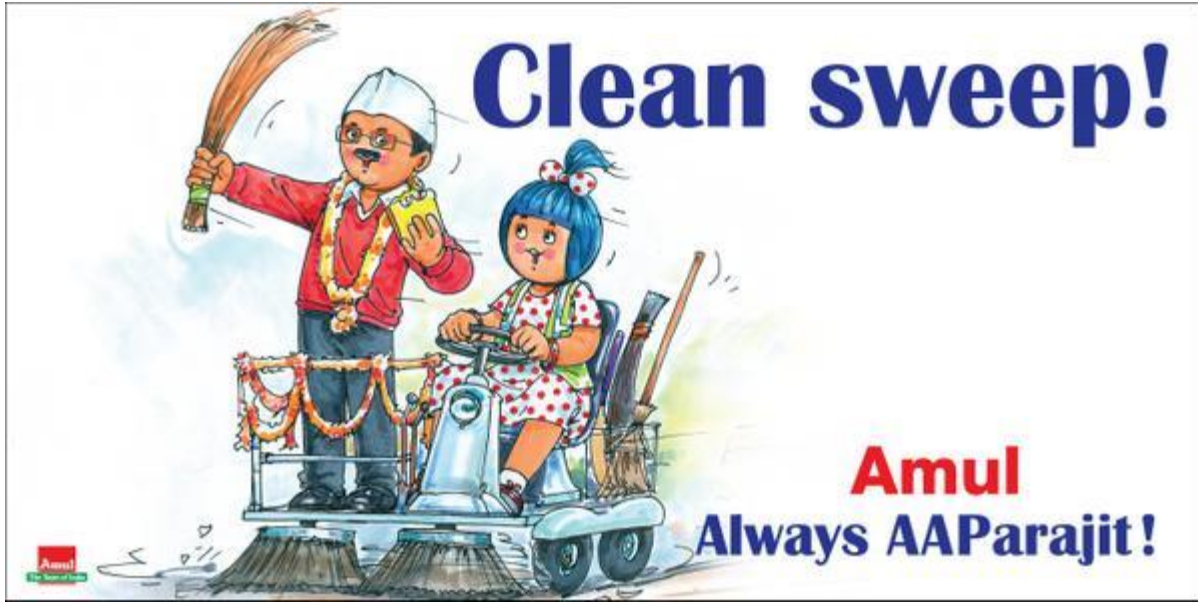
A study (Brieger 2013) reveals that practitioners create and share brand stories online to make the target audience more conversant with the brand.

The story of Amul Print ads and Copy

There are brands that have always created their advertisements around topical advertising and have created success out of it. AMUL in its print advertisements has always used the current situations and created successful advertisements. It has always brilliantly used current situations that have interested customers tremendously. For example when Sachin Tendulkar completed his ten thousand runs in cricket they changed his name to 10dulkar and when Sachin Tendulkar got out in duck they rephrased the same ad and said Sachin Tendhhulkar (dhulkar meaning washed away). Interesting people take note of topical advertisements and the leadership status of AMUL is a testimony to it. Yes, one cant alone give the credit to its strategy but such creative advertisements have definitely added to the strength of the brand.

How does a topical advertisement give strategic advantage?

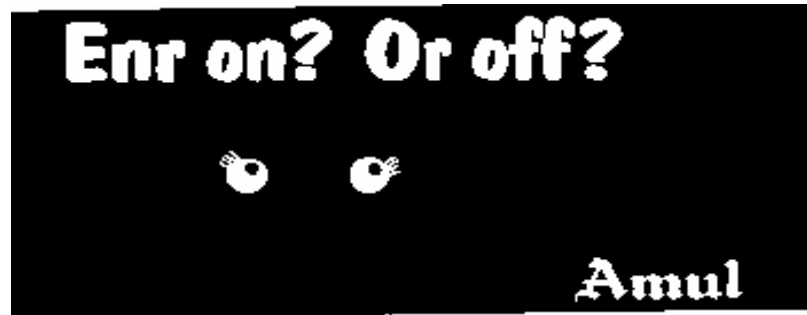
- 1) **Ease of remembrance:** The topic/ current news/ happening is current and not new to the audience. Thus, when the audience sees the same current happening/ news in the advertisement form they are able to relate with it compared to anything which they are seeing for the first time. For example, When AAP Party clean swept the Delhi elections in 2015, AMUL came up with an advertisement saying Clean sweep again giving the message at the bottom showing the brand Amul a winner saying 'Amul Always AAParajit'



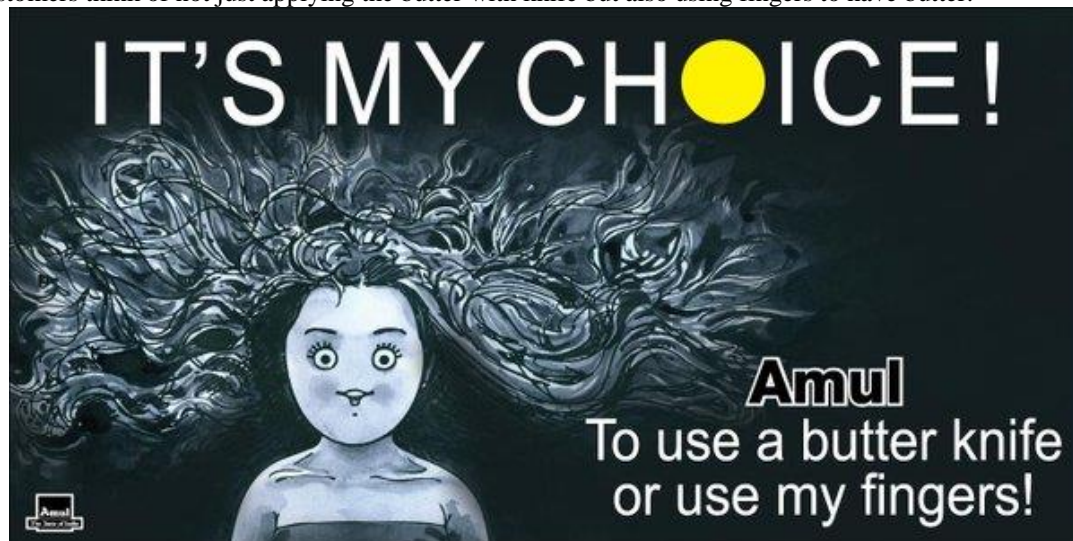
- 2) **Leverages current news:** The base of the positioning is ready with the topic being current. The company with the use of topical ads can with just little effort can reap great benefits. Successful advertising taps into this mindset. Ads that ring with the news can really stand out in this news driven environment. For example when Miss Universe host for the year 2016 made a wrong announcement while crowning leading to the crowning of a wrong contestant, and then followed by the right announcement which led to the taking away of crown from the wrong contestant and thus crowning the right contestant, was showcased brilliantly by AMUL. This advertisement titled as 'Mess Universe' was instantly noticed again showing the brand Amul a winner saying 'Amul gets the crown'



- 3) **Provoke Thoughts:** Some topical advertisements invoke thoughts and tease the mind of the customers. For example; when Enron scandal was in the news Amul came up with an advertisement reading Enr on? Or Off? Asking indirectly if it (Enron) should be on or off showcasing the social responsibility of the brand Amul and consciousness of the brand Amul



4. **Reinforce connection of the brand with the customer:** Topical advertising has the power to reinforce a customer's connect with a brand, or even provides the power to customers re-think of how they perceive their brand. For example: using the famous actress Deepika Padukone's viral video, Amul made its customers think of not just applying the butter with knife but also using fingers to have butter.



Google Doodle successful topical strategy:

Google the life line of information for most people in the world is indeed one of the most powerful brands of all times. This brand google uses doodle. Doodle is a simple drawing that can have concrete representational meaning or may just be abstract shapes. A Google Doodle is a special, temporary alteration of the logo on Google's homepage that is intended to celebrate holidays, events, achievements and people. Google has been successful in changing its logo topically which has led to a better customer engagement. It changes it regularly based on the occasion. For example on the occasion of International Women's Day the Google Doodle represented the spirit of women.

Disadvantage of Topical advertisement:

One visible disadvantage of this topical advertisement is that in the light of creating the advertisement around the current news, the advertiser might not highlight the brand. Such advertisements may not be able to create memorability for long.

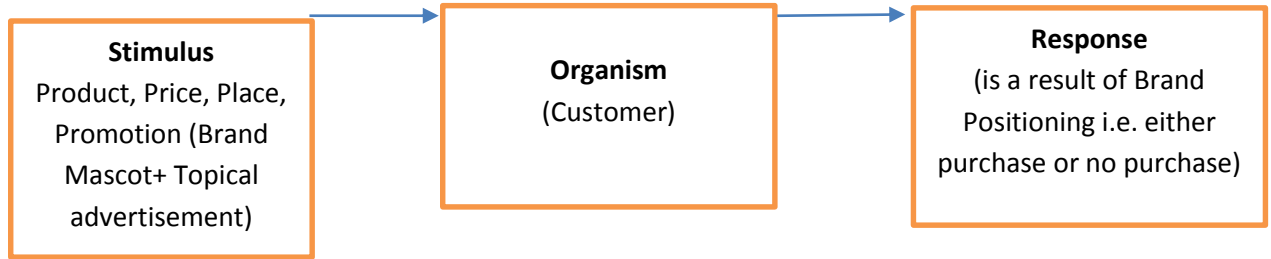
Brand Positioning through Topical Advertisements and Brand Mascot

Brand positioning is a psychological battle and it isn't easy to position a brand rightly as right and wrong is defined by the success of an advertisement.

It has been found (Pairoa and Arunrangsiewed; 2016) that brand mascots are positively related to consumer's decision and intention to purchase products, therefore the organizations should consider the inclusion of brand mascots in their marketing strategies

Brand Mascot and topical advertisements in advertisements offer a powerful stimuli to the customer who in return is able to relate and allow the brand to position itself in the mind. It simply follows the S-O-R Model which says

Fig1 : S-O-R Model to explain Amul Butters Brand Positioning



The Stimulus-Organism-Response model explains how when a marketer offers stimulus in form of (4Ps) to the organism i.e. the customer there will be a response. The response here is an outcome of brand positioning. Even the brand is strongly positioned then the response could be positive (i.e. purchase) or if the brand is weakly positioned then the response could be negative (i.e no purchase)

Let us understand how this can work incase of Amul topical advertisements.

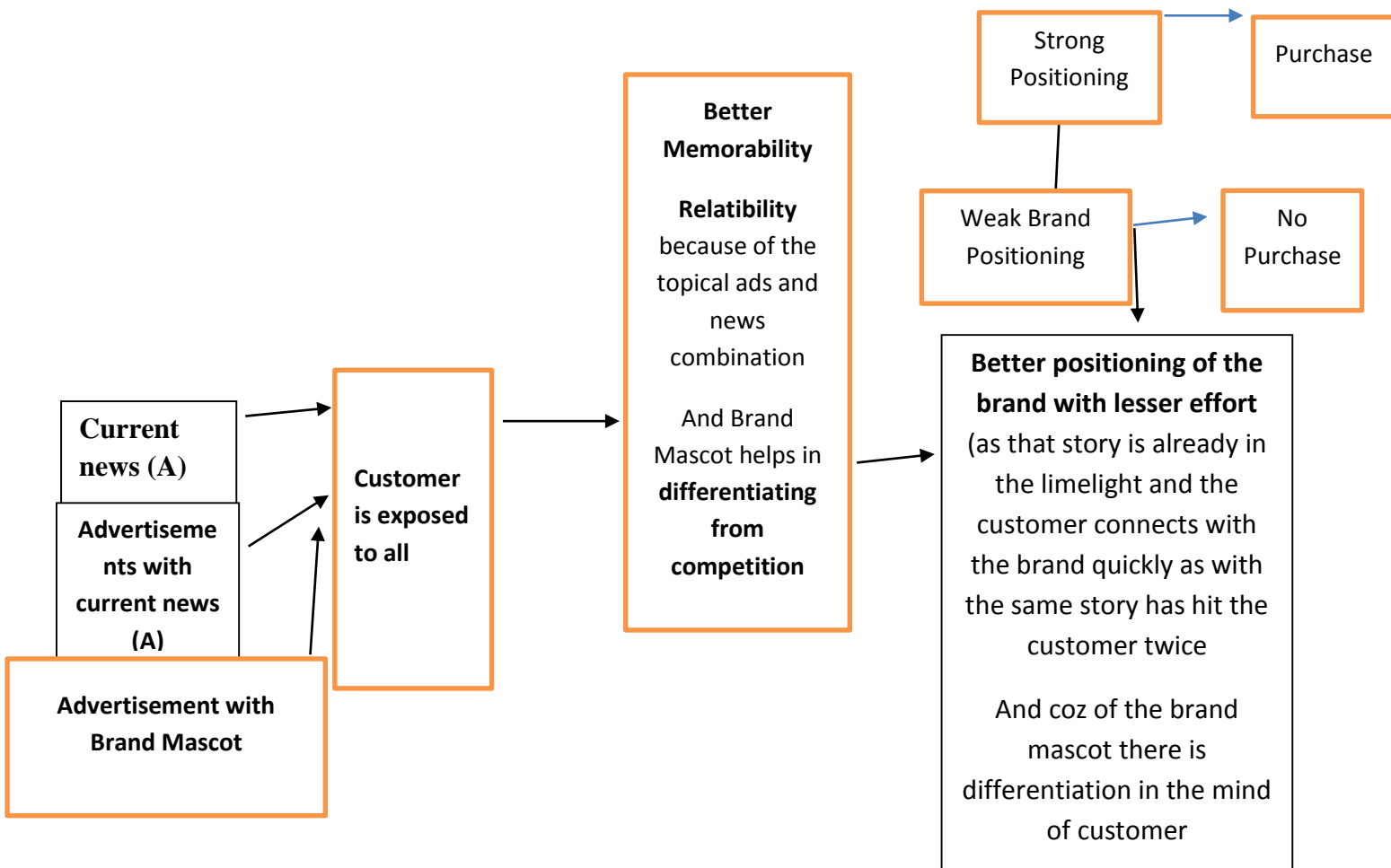


Fig 2: Model suggesting brand positioning using Topical content and brand mascot

Topical strategies could lead to better Customer engagement because of the immediacy of the news used in the strategy. Normally it is seen that the marketers use news that is popular. When such news items are used in the advertisement copy it engages the customers because of not being new to them. When the advertisement uses a brand mascot like the Amul Butter Girl, it leads to stronger differentiation in the mind of customers vis-à-vis competitor brands. If the positioning is strong there will be purchase and if it is weak then the customer will not be motivated enough to make a purchase

Conclusion:

There are a number of strategies and media options available to the marketers of today. Each strategy poses some advantages and some disadvantages. Topical advertising and brand mascots also comes packed with strategic advantages with lesser disadvantages. Topical advertisement leads to better customer engagement by reinforcing the relation between the brand and the customer, provokes thoughts, gives ease of remembrance because of leveraging the current news item. Because of these strategic advantages one can use this approach. Topical advertisement or copy content in combination with brand mascot could lead to better memorability, relatability and brand differentiation.

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