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Branding and Advertainment: Examining the Role of Entertainment Media in Marketing Communication

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to present a theoretical basis for advertainment, including its multiple perspectives and its efficacy as a tool for marketing communication. Furthermore, it evaluates how effective advertainment is in stimulating brand recall and recognition. A study using self-administered questionnaires was conducted to accomplish the goal. The responses obtained from consumers were gathered using the non-probability convenience sampling method. The study reveals that the majority of consumers believe advertainment leave a lasting impression on their minds compared to traditional advertisements. According to findings, advertainment has emerged as a technique that influences the audience's intention to buy a product by making it more credible and appealing to them. Additionally, it enhances brand recall value and makes it easier for a brand to establish itself in the market. Consumers develop a favorable mindset as a result, and their purchasing decisions are influenced.

Keywords - Advertising, Advertainment, Branded entertainment, Communication, Marketing

1. Introduction

Advertising is a means of persuading and attracting people, as well as communicating with them, and creating impact on their minds. In this digital era, advertising is changing the way of communication and consumers are being exposed to more promotional messages than ever before. However, as technology advances people are discovering innovative ways to skip, or block advertisements, which is one of the most crucial issues that advertisers face. Due to busy schedules, shorter attention spans, media fragmentation and technological developments, the appeal of conventional advertising media is fading. Previously, the main purpose of advertising was to bring a product or service in front of a consumer, but due to intense competition and an abundance of advertising messages, this has changed, and today's advertising is now primarily concerned with integrating brands into consumers' everyday interactions in a relatable way. incorporating brands into consumers' daily interactions in a relatable way. It is challenging for a brand or marketer to stand out in a competitive marketplace and establish a deep connection with their target audience.

Everyone uses the internet and smartphones in this digital age to stay in touch with loved ones, socially active on web portals and watch entertainment content. India now has 82 million internet users, with the number likely to grow in the future. Due to this fast advancement of technology and the shifting patterns of entertainment consumption, brands have begun to look for innovative ways to advertise. Earlier television and print media were the

dominant advertising mediums, but this has changed and now a variety of new media are used for marketing communications. One of these new media that is becoming more popular in India is advertainment, which aims to influence and engage consumers. The combination of advertising and entertainment is referred to as advertainment. It is the incorporation of advertising into entertainment-oriented media including movies, music, web series, video games and so on. By incorporating brands and their messages into entertainment contexts, advertisers may break up the repetition of traditional advertising and enhance brand recall.

The objectives of this paper are two-fold. First and foremost, it provides an in-depth understanding of the concept of advertainment in India. Second, this paper delves on the effectiveness of advertising brands within entertainment mediums.

2. Literature Review

Advertainment is a way of communication that combines elements of advertising and entertainment with the goal of overcoming people's predisposition to change channels or lower the volume during traditional advertising, especially among television viewers. It evolved in reaction to the escalating frequency of advertising, increasing advertising expenses, and falling efficacy of conventional advertising messages. The term 'advertainment' was coined by Patrizia Musso in 1999 to describe the practice of promoting a product or service by presenting a story in series. The practice of advertainment uses the same narrative structures as television fiction, a story is told in segments through a collection of continuous advertisements that introduce a new product and develop the storyline with information. As a result, it's a popular method for providing continuous updates on various cellular telephone services without boring viewers.

Russell (2007) explains that the word advertainment was devised to describe how advertising and entertainment have become more entwined. It refers to marketing strategies that include brand messages into the content of entertainment mediums. Kretchmer (2004) investigates the significance of product placement development as well as the blurring of the boundaries between entertainment and commercial persuasion along with promotion of brands in television shows and video games. Gupta and Lord (1998) evaluated the recall efficacy of auditory and visual modes of product placement in movies to each other and to advertising. The authors discovered that prominent brand placements were more likely to be remembered than advertisements. A product's evident mention in the audio script without a visual presentation resulted in higher recall than a discreet visual placement without audio. They also discovered that adding more complementing audio messages to a product that already had prominent visual portrayal did not significantly boost recall.

Buckley, Ashman, and Haenlein (2025) analyze the role of influencer marketing, highlighting the audience engagement, interaction and authenticity it provides. The study explains that entertainment driven digital experiences can enhance relationship of consumers with brand and increase the effectiveness of marketing communication. Fernández-Gómez, Neira Placer, and Feijoo Fernández (2024) studied advertainment and influencer advertising among young audiences. They found that advertainment enhances brand awareness and audience engagement while making promotional content less interfering than traditional advertising. Product placement is the most common type of advertainment, in which the name, logo, or packaging of a brand is utilized as a prop in the entertainment content. The second technique is product integration, which includes a brand or product in a character's speech or activity. The last one is branded entertainment, or branded content, in which a

brand takes the lead while creating entertainment content to increase brand recognition by associating it with content that supports its values.

3. Adverainment Prevalence in Entertainment Media

Advertising has become widespread in various genres of entertainment media. All types of entertainment media, including films, video games, and web series are seeing a multibillion-dollar boom in the product placement industry.

3.1 Bollywood Movies

In India, films are a common form of entertainment, and its influence can be seen in the fact that Indians view film actors as iconic figs. Coca-Cola's appearance in the motion picture *Shree 420* in 1955 became the first recorded instance of brand placement. Following this many other Bollywood movies came up with brand placements such as Bournvita in *Raaz* (1967), Coca-Cola in *An Evening in Paris* (1967), Wills in *Johny Mera Naam* (1970), Coco-Cola, Lipton, Dalda in the film *Bawarchi* (1972) and Rajdoot motorbike in romantic movie *Bobby* (1973). This type of product placement was perpetuated and began to develop by providing more visibility to brands and by inserting many products in a single film. By the decades close, movies were being used to introduce new brands.

Bollywood became an appealing spot for big businesses to reposition themselves through sponsored entertainment in 2012. In the movie *Ferrari ki Sawaari*, the expensive sports automobile by Ferrari, was promoted. The advertiser-funded programming is raised to a new level in the 2013 movie *Mere Dad Ki Maruti*. The brand name is loudly advertised throughout the whole two hours of the film, not only in the title. This indicates that in contrast to earlier informal brand appearances as props, the technique of placing products has come a long way in the Hindi film business and is now more prevalent. Modern filmmakers started writing stories that were specifically developed for the brand, so that the integration appears effortless. This practice is becoming ever more prevalent in Indian film and is bringing an unparalleled shift in the entertainment and marketing sector. Define abbreviations and acronyms the first time they are used in the text, even after they have been defined in the abstract. Do not use abbreviations in the title or heads unless they are unavoidable.

3.2 Web Series

Despite the fact that the majority of the attention has been on adverainment in movies, this trend is rapidly extending to web series. Due to its extensive reach and dedicated focus on reaching millennials to tell brand stories, this entertainment medium presents enormous opportunity for marketers in terms of brand integrations.

Since the emergence of online streaming services like Disney Hotstar, Netflix, and Voot as well as websites like YouTube and Facebook, the popularity of web series has risen. The Viral Fever (TVF), All India Bakchod (AIB), Y-Films, and Arré are some renowned web series makers in India that are always coming up with fresh ideas and diverse narrative lines to captivate youngsters. Brands and advertisers have a lot of possibilities to promote because of the way people consume content in the digital world.

Web series have a significant following that regularly tunes in and watches them, which gives marketers the opportunity to include their brand in the content, position their product, integrate their logo, develop a character for their brand, become the title sponsor, and other strategies. Therefore, advertisers are continually creating innovative strategies and investigating the new advertising possibilities of digital media and web series.

3.3 Video Games

Video games are now incorporating branded entertainment and product placement trends. Advergaming, which refers to the incorporation of brands into video games, is the smallest but fastest-growing subset of the advertainment practice. With a current market worth of USD 890 million, the Indian gaming business is one of the largest gaming industries worldwide.

Many popular brands have used advergames to spread their message or raise brand awareness. Crazy Taxi, a popular racing game, was introduced in 1999. In it, the player assumes the character of a taxi driver who makes money by taking passengers to their destinations while pulling wild stunts. Well recognized brands like KFC, Levi's, and Pizza Hut were employed by the designers in the creation of their map. Crazy Taxi includes a precise model and design of every store, in contrast to other advergames that mostly focus on the logo. Considerably research has proved that video games have a high degree of involvement, since 10 to 15 minutes of playing a game is likely to have a bigger influence than a radio or television advertisement of 10 seconds. The creation of an engaging gaming experience that successfully communicates the brand's value is the single most important aspect of any advergame success.

4. Research Methodology

The efficacy of advertainment is evaluated in this paper using brand recall as a criterion. Existing literature and articles were read, and an online survey using a questionnaire was conducted to analyse this. The survey is limited to 360 respondents, largely young people between the ages of 18 and 45 restricted to Delhi- NCR region.

5. Analysis & Findings

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, primarily percentages and frequencies technique. The analysis was intended to describe the awareness, perception, and attitude of respondents towards advertainment. First, the traditional advertising channels, primarily television, were discussed with the respondents (Refer fig 1).

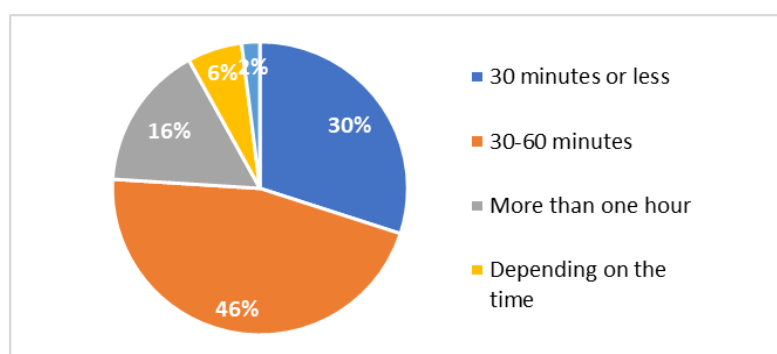


Fig. 1. Duration of watching television per day

After examining the information most people find television advertisements disturbing, respondents were questioned about whether they change the channel when advertisements appear in between the shows. 42% of respondents indicated they occasionally switch channels, 49% said they always switch channels and 9% said they never switch channels (Fig 2).

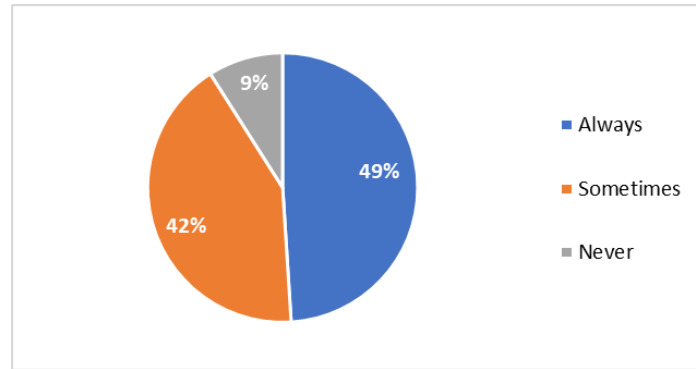


Fig. 2. Tendency to switch channels whenever advertisements shown on television

In response to a question on how television or newspaper advertising affect consumers purchasing decisions, 43% of respondents stated they get influenced by advertisements, and this will have an impact on their buying decisions, considering the fact that 57% of respondents indicated they are not influenced by advertisements.

When the phrase ‘Advertainment’ was tested for familiarity, 16% of respondents indicated that they heard it, 46% indicated that they had heard it quite a bit, and 38% indicated that they never heard this term (refer fig 3). The respondents who were unfamiliar and just moderately familiar with the concept were given a brief explanation of advertainment to assist them comprehend it.

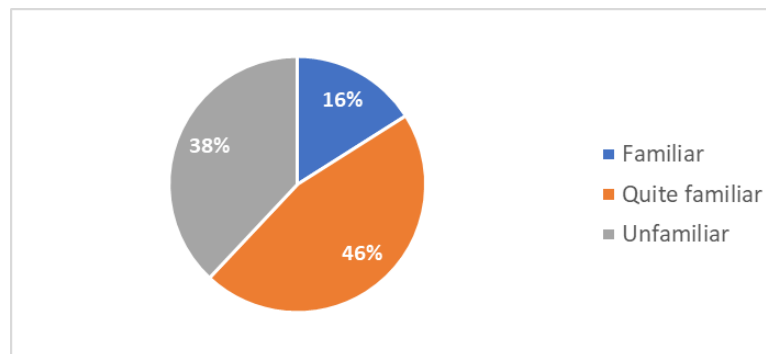


Fig. 3. Familiarity with the term ‘Advertainment’

After assessing how familiar the respondents were with this advertising technique, we asked them where they had seen this sort of advertising. The majority of respondents had seen instances of advertainment in movies, followed by web series, television programmes and eventually video games.

The respondents were asked what kind of brand integration grabs their highest attention. As per the responses received when the brand is used by an actor it catches the highest attention, when it is verbally mentioned it has a moderate impact and when the brand is displayed in background the least attention was given to it. This shows that prominent visual and verbal placement got maximum attention of a consumer as compared to subtle placements.

When asked how their attitudes towards a brand change after recognizing it in a movie or other entertainment media, 72% of respondents said their views about a brand have changed positively, 10% said their attitudes have changed negatively, and 18% said their attitudes have not changed. The respondents who stated that seeing a brand in a movie caused a favorable shift in their opinions provide explanations for the attitude shift, including the actor’s popularity, the movie’s positive image and the

lifestyle that the brand's use represents. The positive brand image established by the movie has the greatest influence on customer's attitude.

Subsequently consumers were questioned whether they think advertising brands in entertainment mediums is an effective tool of marketing communication. According to most respondents, advertainment is a smart tool of marketing communication if employed efficiently. Figure 4 shows that integrating brands into entertainment media makes them less obnoxious and irritating, makes them more appealing, has a subliminal effect on the viewer, and differentiates them from other brands.

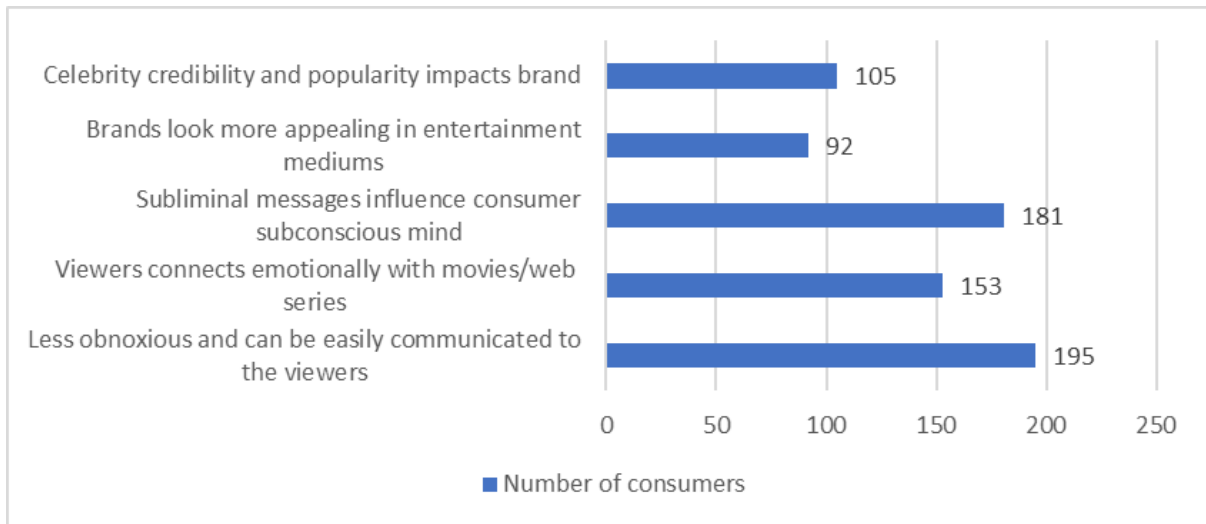


Fig. 4. Reason to Agree (69% respondents) with the above statement

However, those who disagree with the assertion claim that brands are overlooked because of the focus on the plot and characters, as well as other factors such as the brand diverts attention and irritates, the failing of entertainment content affects brand reputation, and entertainment mediums are for enjoyment, not advertising (refer fig 5).

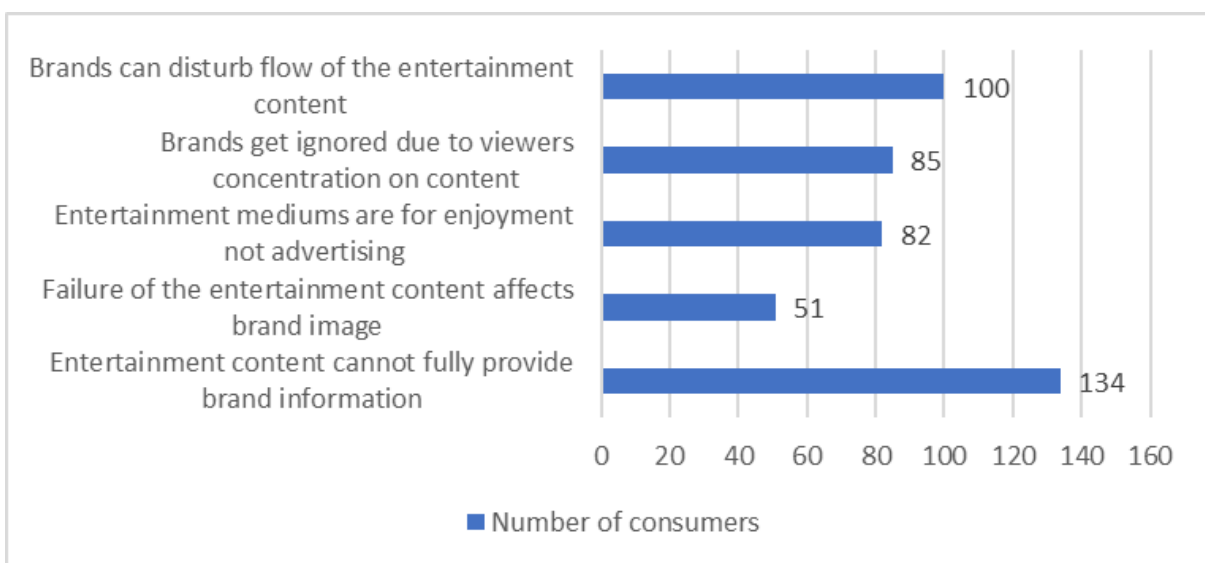


Fig. 5. Reason to Disagree (31% respondents) with the above statement

When it comes to audience attitudes and acceptance, the analysis of this questionnaire survey shows that respondents perceived advertainment as an effective communication tool. A large number of respondents mentioned noticing brands in movies followed by web series, whereas video games, television programmes, and books and novels had the least number of views. Since video games are mostly played by a certain age group and the idea of advertainment in television programmes is not very prevalent in India, that is why not all people are specifically aware of this medium. The majority of respondents agree that consumers are more likely to purchase brands if the entertainment content endorses a positive brand image. Additionally, it is evident from the survey that active brand placements such as those in which the actor uses the product or addresses it directly are easy to recognize.

The majority of respondents consider that entertainment-based advertising may be preferable to conventional forms of advertising, however some do not. When we study the explanations, the findings indicate that consumers have a favorable attitude about advertainment since it is less obnoxious and allows them to connect and interact with the brand. However, one drawback of advertainment is that it misses out the detailed information about a product or service.

6. Conclusion

This research paper concluded that consumers had an optimistic view towards advertainment strategy. They are quite familiar with this combination of entertainment and advertising, which has a high rate of identification and recall. A brand's image improves when consumers hear or see it in a natural environment on a large screen beside a celebrity. The use of advertainment was acceptable as long as it seemed appropriate and relevant to the entertainment content. Although this intriguing trend is still in its initial stages, and only a few brands have attempted to use it as an advertising platform, the level of involvement and engagement it provides might make it a powerful promotional tool. Through placement in entertainment media, brands may form a strong connection with their target audiences. This form of media is especially appealing to individuals who tend to avoid traditional advertising.

During the conduct of this research, it was discovered that the majority of respondents had a favorable opinion of advertainment as a means of communicating brand messages. Advertisers, media strategists, scriptwriters, and producers should keep in mind that brand recall is greatly influenced by originality and creativity. The content should be created with the intended audience in mind. In terms of brand memory and recognition, this medium offers a lot of potential. Hence, we can recapitulate by concluding that advertainment is emerging as a useful form of advertising.

With the advent of technology and escalating need of less cluttered communication channels, embedding brands within entertainment media is a great strategy. Advertainment and traditional advertising are both non-sustainable, as traditional advertisements generate wide awareness, advertainment adds richness and interactivity to the brand. Entertainment mediums provide opportunities to marketers and corporates to leverage on clutter free environment, emotional quotient, and psychological impact through the content. Advertainment is a new wave of marketing communication which is going to last with its entertainment spark and complement the traditional forms of communication.

7. Limitations

This research paper has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the data. The study employed convenience sampling techniques which do not represent a broader population. The

sample was restricted to Delhi NCR region, which may not reflect the perceptions of other geographical regions. The study had descriptive analysis and did not employ inferential techniques.

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