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'Bring the brand back' How to tell a story (also see in Jpeg)

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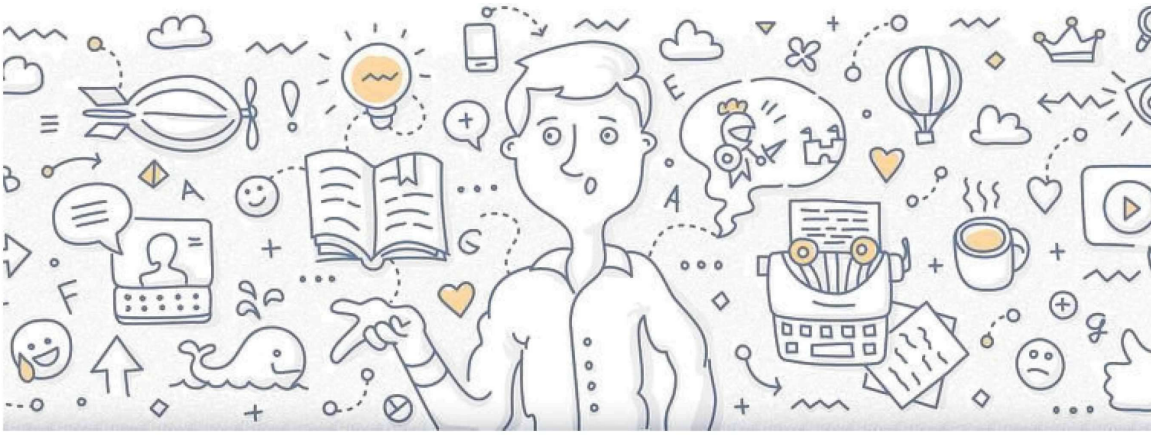
THE CONTENT MARKETING CONUNDRUM

'Bring the brand back' How to tell a sto

AMRITA NAIR-GHASWALLA



It's story time! Storytelling humanises brands and takes them closer to customers RASSCO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Think back to your favourite advertisement. Chances are it's a mass media ad campaign from several years ago.

Historically, advertising agencies have excelled at generating entertaining, memorable content and presenting it to large audiences. It is a model that has been built on decades of experience.

Gone are those days. Sunil Alagh, SKA Advisors (and former Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Britannia Industries), insists what the advertising world needs right now is content infused with creativity.

How often do brands actually get 30 seconds of a viewer's undivided attention, and how is it that content often takes a back seat in a brand's creative campaign, he questions.

The changing dynamics has led several ad agencies close to death, with their commissions and fees eroded. Advertising agencies, themselves, have been forced to change, turn into specialists in various departments such as media buying, research and design, from handling all functions as a single unit.

Digitisation brought about the real change, considering the 800 million people who use mobile phones, and the 300 million who use smartphones.

The one thing that can now get consumer attention is content. Alagh says among the industries most profoundly affected by digitisation are those engaged in creating content, and the advertising sector is at the helm.

"Earlier, there was a lot of emphasis on content, and one went through a period of pure content, but now it's the other extreme of just creativity," he adds.

Explaining pure content, he cites the Surf advertisement. When "the company wanted to launch its washing powder, they would go around demonstrating - a dirty shirt went into a bucket, the detergent was mixed with the water, and the shirt came out clean. That is pure content. Then advertising became more creative."

"Nirma was one of the initial creative campaigns where the young girl danced. The ad was set to music and dancing, and that's when creativity started to creep in. Now, there is excessive dependence on creativity and less on content. We need a balance between the two."

The need for balance is urgent: Content is growing at an unprecedented

"The entire route is content. To hell with creativity!"

simple world with a clear route to business results. Marketers knew exactly what they needed to focus on and most times, it actually worked.

"Though having creativity in your ad is great fun, the brand gets more or less lost in the din. Whilst ads are memorable, ask someone what the product being advertised was, what is the brand, and people tend to struggle. One has to pay attention to this," he says.

Pumping money into advertisements has always been an issue.

"Companies with a lot of money like Levers and Nestle achieve recall through repetition of ads. However, 60-70 per cent of companies don't have that kind of money. They use their ads for short bursts, and therefore it is imperative that these brands stand out in the clutter," he says.

The right recipe

What works is media.

"Pure content works beautifully if you are creating a new product with a clear attribute. If you have something in your product which no one else has, then you can make your product the hero. However, today, there is a minuscule difference in most products," contends Alagh. "That is where you start playing on emotions and the need to blend creativity with pure content, not forgetting the brand in the bargain," he adds.

Alagh insists he had a similar rule whilst at Britannia, especially with outdoor advertisements. "I used to insist 30 per cent of the ad should be my brand. It used to be tough to get the agency to accept this, as they would

The brand is getting lost in the rush to make creative ads, says Sunil Alagh, veteran marketer and strategist. How are marketers ensuring their story is not lost in the process?

important thing. A lot of the younger generation in ad agencies get so wrapped up in their creativity, they forget the brand. The brand should not be like a postage stamp on an envelope where it gets lost," he adds.

This, however, can work for a product that is already there for the last 50 years in the market and everybody knows the brand.

Brand ambassadors

The dependence on brand ambassadors could be a very expensive proposition, insists Alagh. Noting that actor Sunny Leone is the brand ambassador of a mineral water company, Alagh questions her fit for the health and water categories.

"The first point is, do you need a brand ambassador at all? Actor Shah Rukh Khan is advertising so many products. One remembers Shah Rukh, but do you remember all the brands? Brands need to ask themselves this question first."

Ads must be memorable

When it comes to selling ideas at the heart of meaningful campaigns, very little has actually changed. Alagh says making a brand stand out from the clutter is key.

There is only one way to distinguish great advertising from good advertising. Focus on the brand

AMRITA NAIR-GHASWALLA

Gadre Marine Export, producers and exporters of packaged seafood, were keen to build brands. The company was eager to push its crabsticks and crab claws across the country alongwith regular seafood.

Crab sticks are processed seafood shaped to resemble the leg meat of a crab.

"They realised a huge opportunity existed in the market, and there was no competition. The company is the largest exporter of crab sticks," says Jignesh Maniar, Founder of Onads Communication, an advertising agency.

"The product fascinated me though I am a vegetarian. I realised there is a great opportunity to tell a story here given that it is almost like an out-of-box invention," says Maniar.

Though popular the world over, most Indians don't know much about crab sticks. So began the journey in 2015, to popularise them in India. After the seafood producer signed Michelin star chef Vikas Khanna to endorse the brand, it kicked off its advertising campaign 'What The Fish'. The tagline 'We have made fish taste like crab' brought forth an innovative story in the brand's history.

brand and a strategy f growth,"
PrasoonJoshi,CEO,McCann Group India and Chairman, (Asia Pacific) at a recent Mum-bai. Joshi says storytelling to humanise b people tend to "consume images, colours and ideas" products, the ad man insis been churning out story after creating a world around the b

"Marketers need to emotions, package life ex They need to highlight rel the human connect, which s Joshi.

Mobile company OnePlus use this strategy with its titled 'The Perfect Partn #HappyDiwali' for its Div campaign. With brands goi during Diwali, "it was imp push ourselves to serve some stuff and break through th says Rajesh Narasimhan Creative Director, Dentsu Dig which worked on the campai

"People tend to respond to to storytelling. Marketers n their personal experie necessary, to bring out the our world and tell them with says Anuraag Khandelwal, Creative Director and Creat Soho Square.

Khandelwal has been on since childhood. Public spac temples, beaches, cinemas a stations were mostly out o Thus was born an idea for tile H&R Johnson, of making pub more accessible to those even small joys can take struggle.

The first phase of the R Project was lacked off at Kir Goa, where a ramp using the fir

rate as traditional advertising is getting disrupted at an exponential rate. Audiences are ignoring ads, most times setting ad blockers in place.

Alagh maintains earlier it was a argue that the creative elements were lost because too much space was being taken by the brand," he says.

The brand as hero

"The brand continues to be the most through a healthy blend of content and creativity with a dash of humour, if possible. "The entire route is content. To hell with creativity! Also, brands must become more proactive, not reactive," he adds.

More and more brands are becoming content creators, for "if you don't have a story, your brand is just another commodity," says Maniar.

By creating content and not ads, brands are hoping they can reach consumers and build stronger relationships with them.

Gifted storytellers are taking the cue. "Your story is the foundation of your

Tiles was built to help the differ access the beach and "feel gushing at their feet". The initia hundreds of such people visit a the first time in their li Khandelwal.

With three million views media, it sparked a conversa paved the way for more ra built in various other public s