Study of green advertisements in Indian automobile sector for environmental sustainability

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Abstract. Worsening state of environment is a major concern for the world today. One major sector which is supposed to be the most notorious in degrading environment is the transportation sector. It is therefore important for the transportation sector to think of ways to reduce its carbon footprint. One of the popular ways is the adoption of green marketing which incorporates all the elements namely product, price, place and promotion. It means that the objective of the transportation sector should not just to develop the environmental friendly products but they should give the environment friendly identity too. The present paper has attempted to understand the green initiatives taken by the car manufacturing firms. For this purpose we have studied the advertisements shown on the television. The advertisements shown in the Television during 2012-2016 have been collected. Cues have been developed to interpret the advertisements with the help of previously conducted studies. Some of the cases have been discussed in the present paper too. The results indicate that the car making firms are still hesitating to establish the identity of cars as environment friendly.

1. Introduction

One important aspect to understand the green marketing is the green advertisement which also constitutes one element of marketing mix of green marketing. Here it is important to understand that the essence of advertising is brand building approach [1]. It can therefore be said that automobile manufacturer when advertise they wish to convey a particular image of the product to the final consumers. Similar meaning got portrayed when Barabba and Zaltman [2] attempted to clear the meaning of advertising. Advertising for them too is a means to state that what the advertiser can provide to the consumers. Considering the same meaning of advertising, one might expect that environmental concern would be a primary theme in vehicle advertising, as our world these days are facing the pollution problems [3]. Our study has attempted to analyse the advertising messages and themes that could have found whether the firms are using the environmental themes in the advertisements or not. This study examines car-advertising themes with an aim of finding the prevalence of green advertising in India from June 2012 to December 2016, focusing on the national television audience.

1.1. Green Advertising

Green advertising usually involves the practice of claims that either underlines the association between the product/service with the environment, or the commitment of brand towards the ecosystems [4]. It
may also understand as the conception of promotional communication that appeals to the requirement of environment friendly consumers [5]. Green advertisements usually emphasize the environmental attributes or ecological implications of the product [6].

During 1990's in western countries, development of taxonomies for classifying green advertisements using content analysis was the main focus. In these researches, Specificity and validity of the claims are primarily investigated. Most of these studies indicated that environmental claims made in green advertisements were vague, unsubstantiated, omitted factual information and served as an image building exercise for most firms [7-9]. Most green advertisements depicted the green image of an organization without any substantiation [3-9]. Green advertisements from developing countries have been analysed only recently. Green automobile advertisements in China [10], green advertisements in Malaysia [11] are studies that use samples from developing countries.

1.2. Green Marketing and Advertising in India

Indian companies recently have started taking steady steps to be ecologically conscious [12]. But some of the studies found that irrespective whatever has been the feature of the automobile firms they are still hesitant of showing themselves to be environment friendly. One probable reason may the lower level of consumer awareness. Business houses like the Tata, Unilever, Mahindra, Wipro and ITC are active participants in green and sustainability initiatives [12]. Additionally, it is also known that only 5% of environmental claims made in green campaigns are entirely true in India [13] and they are not always based on authentic scientific evidence [14]. This is an important consequence of a lack of regulation of environmental claims in India.

1.3. Regulation of green advertising claims in India

Efficient regulation of green advertising claims has been the objective of a number of public policy studies [7], [15]. Most developed countries have governing bodies that have strict regulations regarding green washing. The FTC (Federal Trade Commission) in the U.S. DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) in the U.K. provides standards for the usage of green advertising claims. However, green advertising is considered to be in the nascent stage in India with no accepted guidelines to standardize environmental claims [16].

1.4. Environmental knowledge and green advertising

Most researchers have investigated the role of environmental concern in influencing consumer responses to green advertisements [6] [17-21] and have largely ignored environmental knowledge. Environmental knowledge can be defined as the ability to distinguish between the symbols, concepts and behaviour related to environmental protection [22]. Some researchers say that the link between environmental knowledge and pro-environmental behaviour is not well-established [22-23]. Yet, some say that the value of environmental education cannot be undermined in motivating environmentally responsible behaviour and purchase intentions [24] or encouraging environmentally concerned decision making in the market place [25]. Consumer knowledge can be measured as “subjective” or “objective” knowledge. Subjective knowledge is measured as a self-assessed report of one’s knowledge and the consumers rate their own knowledge level. Objective knowledge reflects what is stored in memory and is an actual measure of what an individual knows [26]. People who report high subjective environmental knowledge may not have the requisite knowledge to make correct ecological decisions [27]. Manrai et al. [28] use “subjective environmental knowledge” measures by asking respondents to rate how much they knew about environmental issues and found a positive relationship between purchase intention and subjective knowledge. They were not able to relate subjective knowledge to brand attitudes. When the consumer is knowledgeable on specific issues like pollution, he develops a favorable attitude towards purchasing green products [29]. Rashid [30] found that consumer awareness of eco-labels is low in Malaysia and educating the consumer is necessary to increase their purchase intentions towards green products. Low consumer awareness is one of the reasons for failure of green marketing tools like eco-labels in developing countries Gallastegui [31-
Consumer education on environmental issues or eco-literacy is therefore essential for encouraging green purchases [33]. Tilikidou [34] found moderate correlation between objective environmental knowledge and pro-environmental purchasing behaviour. Recent research has determined that higher levels of objective environmental knowledge determined purchase intentions among students. Researchers either use measures of subjective environmental knowledge [28] [35] or objective environmental knowledge [36-37] in their studies. Marketing studies have also found that consumer’s expertise is based on objective knowledge as they tend to overestimate their subjective knowledge [38]. Some researchers also feel that subjective knowledge might be an incorrect measure of environmental issues [35]. Consumers with low levels of knowledge or awareness have a low ability to process green advertisements. Again, if they are not concerned about the environment, then too, they have low motivation to process a green advertisement. Advertisement processing is characteristically a low involvement scenario and attitude persistence can be achieved only when the message is elaborated systematically [39]. Only when the message is processed in a more elaborate manner, memory is also enhanced for the message information [40]. Therefore green advertising studies should focus on increasing involvement in low motivation and awareness situations.

2. Methodology
To analyse the advertisements, it was collected from online source which use to keep the record of advertisements as per the date of its publication. The research method is shown in figure 1. All the advertisements that were available for the period of 2012-2016 have been downloaded for further analysis. While selecting the advertisements only car advertisements were chosen. The total number of such TV ads which were unique and were published in the time frame of 2012-16 were 156. A new set of 22 themes were defined (Table.1) as per the need of the present research. The work of Ferguson et al. 2003 who have worked on the study of themes of advertisements was very instrumental in deciding the themes too. All the themes were further broken down into many cues which was based on previous studies and suggestion from the people of advertisement people. Based on the theme and their cues, 156 advertisements were analysed.

3. Results and Discussions
The analysis showed the distribution of primary themes of advertisements (2 of the 22 themes are not included in the table because they were not mentioned). Performance was the most frequent primary theme depicted in the advertisements (44%), followed by Luxury/prestige themes (21%), economy/good value (16%), and themes that stressed the Attractive styling of the vehicle (14%). Exciting/fun to drive was the theme of 13% of the advertisements, and for younger people was featured in about 13%. Comfort/convenience featured in 12% of the selected advertisements whereas for families were shown in 9% of the advertisements. Among other themes, new technology (4%), safety (3%), new/different (3%), incentives/sales (2%), environment friendly (2%), an escape (1%), award winner (1%), heritage (1%), quality, reliability, durability (1%), well-engineered (1%), others (6%) were being found.
Table 1. Appearance of themes in selective TV advertisements in numbers and percentage

| Themes              | Number of appearance in selective TV Advertisements | % Appearance in selective TV advertisements |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 1 Performance       | 68                                                  | 43.59                                       |
| 2 Luxury/prestige   | 32                                                  | 20.51                                       |
| 3 Economy/good value| 25                                                  | 16.03                                       |
| 4 Attractive styling | 22                                                  | 14.10                                       |
| 5 Exciting/fun to drive | 21                                             | 13.46                                       |
| 6 For younger people| 19                                                  | 12.18                                       |
| 7 Comfort/convenience| 18                                                 | 11.54                                       |
| 8 For families       | 14                                                  | 8.97                                        |
| 9 New technology     | 7                                                   | 4.49                                        |
| 10 Safety            | 5                                                   | 3.21                                        |
| 11 New/different     | 4                                                   | 2.56                                        |
| 13 Incentive/sales  | 3                                                   | 1.92                                        |
| 14 Environment friendly | 3                                             | 1.92                                        |
| 15 An escape         | 2                                                   | 1.28                                        |
| 16 Award winner      | 2                                                   | 1.28                                        |
| 17 Heritage          | 2                                                   | 1.28                                        |
| 18 Quality, reliability, durability | 2                         | 1.28                                        |
| 19 Well-engineered   | 1                                                   | 0.64                                        |
| 20 Other             | 9                                                   | 5.77                                        |

The analysis (table 1), shows that most of the car’s advertisement highlights the performance aspect of the car followed by luxury, exciting and fun to drive. But the most important aspect is that very few of the car’s advertisements are talking about the environment features, clearly reflecting that car marketers are least concerned about advertising the green features. The probable reason is the demand which is reflected in the next chapter, the result here also are not in line of green manufacturing as being claimed by the car manufacturing firms. Two cases of the advertisements analysis based on the cues and theme have also been stated below.

3.1. Case study of Maruti Suzuki Ciaz

In an attempt to exemplify the analysis of TV advertisement we have taken the case studies. First case is that of Maruti Suzuki Ciaz which has been featured by the Bollywood actor Ranveer Kapoor. He has been shown as a well-dressed gentle man (luxury/prestige) and he has been dressing for a new car which states itself as the India’s first diesel hybrid car (environment friendly). In the advertisement one can easily find the cues as for example a well-dressed gentle man, the statement of hybrid diesel car, statement of new technology, vehicle moving at speed. These cues indicate that marketers are focusing on themes like luxury/prestige, environment friendly, new technology, and performance.

3.2. Case study of Hyundai Creta

The perfect SUV (Hyundai) advertisement starts with a demonstration of its fit and finish (quality/reliability/durability) of the interior of the car. Young couple (for younger people) has been shown running on high speed and cornering at speed in this advertisement. These three cues indicate
that marketers are focusing on three themes that is performance and quality/reliability/durability and for younger people.

3.3. Case study of other cars
Advertisement of Mahindra Verito Vibe wherein it has been shown that some male and female friends are enjoying the ride. The advertisement ends with special mention of its price. In this advertisement, the marketer is intended to show the enjoyable ride with the dear ones at a low price. In another example of Maruti Suzuki Alto, it has been shown as complete set of performance. In this advertisement, when two musician friends one young male and a female, are not able to get the perfect music composition. They take a ride of Alto K10 which is having an engine capacity of 1000 cc, 68 PS power with sleek look with a mileage of 20.92 km/1. In yet another example of cost benefit is Beat of Chevrolet which is having features like electronic power steering fitted with air bags for safety, foldable seat in the ratio of 60:40, with a mileage of 25.44 km/litre, and 3 year free servicing. In the advertisement of Fiat an extra discount of up to 78 thousand in their cars has been shown. The cues of well-dressed gentle man in the advertisement of Etios with special mention of style or in the advertisement of Renault Pulse where the Bollywood actor Anil Kapoor is a well-dressed gentleman taking care of day to day life with full energy.

In case of Eco (Maruti Suzuki) full family of bride and groom both are moving in a car which can adjust the full family. This car is also fitted with AC and a strong engine at the same it is also available in CNG variant which provides cheaper mobility. In another advertisement of Honda Amaze, the full family is getting ready for a ride. Here the cues of full family in the car and quoting the car as the ‘best in class cabin space’ shows the marketer’s intention of showing the comfort. In the advertisement of Ford Figo Aspire the car marketers have emphasized the availability of six airbags in the car.

4. Conclusion
With the increasing pressure on our environment, companies are supposed to be follow green marketing however the present content analysis of the Indian TV advertisements show a contrary result. The content analysis shows that the performance is the most important theme during all the years taken under consideration for the present study followed by luxury, economy and attractive styling. At the same time eco-friendly themes are least shown in the Indian TV advertisements. This indicate the present state of the automobile sector with reference to seriousness toward degrading environment. This is an alarming finding which leads to a number of new questions toward all the stakeholders that whether it is the automobile players, the government and the users are really concerned about the environment.

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