

## Usp Vs Covid 19: Changes in Commercial Advertisements

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### Abstract

Advertisement is a notice or announcement in a public medium promoting a product, service, or event or publicizing a job vacancy. Therefore, without any hesitation we can say that 'Advertisement' plays an important role in our daily life. Through advertisements or commercials, we come to know about new products launched in market. Many of us are buying products after watching commercials. We fix our brand of each and every product even if it is food item, clothing, cosmetics, cleaning products or electronic items by the frequent watching of commercials. Advertisements persuade the consumer to make decisions on buying the product. Usually, advertisements created by the company will have factors that define and project the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) of the Brand to the consumers. But after the sudden outbreak of Covid 19 the market became dull due to the financial crisis of the consumers, because this small virus highly affected or downhill the economic status of each and every country. This affected the income of the families and they stopped shopping through offline and online. This situation deadly affected market. Both Consumption and Production of products bring to a standstill. To retain the market and create an attention among consumers, companies promote their products in advertisements relate with Covid 19. This shows Covid 19 becomes a Unique Selling Proposition (USP) of each product to sustain in market during crisis. They started changing their marketing strategy by changing the advertisement without changing the product. They restructured their advertisement by adding the tagline 'Stay Safe' or Protection from Corona Virus.

Most of the advertising agencies made Social Medias as one of their important platforms during this period. Here they have no time and space constrains. People enjoy these advertisements very much as they also have time to watch these advertisements. Many more people started online shopping during this pandemic situation. So, advertising companies exhibit their advertisements in online shopping sites like amazon, flipkart etc... Companies changed their strategy in advertising by changing the narrative part. Did the consumers believe these types of advertisements? How did they conceive these types of advertisements? Did they buy any product after watching these advertisements?

**Key Words-** Corona Virus, Advertisements, USP, Marketing, Belief, Brand, Products, Consumers, Consumer Behaviour, Narrative part.

### Introduction

The novel Corona virus was first detected in Wuhan, China and within a couple of months it affected all over the world. This 'Small' Virus remain stuck all lives. It affected all spans of life like education, business, entertainment, travel and tourism, etc... the economic crisis resulted due to covid 19 and affected each and every family and they bring to an end purchasing luxury products and started financial planning for daily use amenities. Obviously, this affected the Markets. Consumer is the King in the market. Without consumers no product can survive. So, to recover the market, companies change the strategy of advertisements. As the coronavirus progresses, Companies are using covid 19 as a USP to market their product, this strategy is called as seasonal

influence in advertising. **Cultivation theory** of mass communication defines the long-term effect of television viewing habits or watching advertisements in any platform, which is adapted towards advertisement viewing habits and its effect on the purchase of the product. Some advertisements were projected in the way of social responsibility during the pandemic; overall it markets their product in another tone to the consumer. In recent advertisements starting from floor cleaning liquid to the sale of sarees through online shopping, they use this covid pandemic as their USP. This study leads a perspective of narrative and visual perception on the transition of content in Indian advertisements during pre and post covid with samples selected based on qualitative analysis on various brands and products in the Indian market. Here they create attention to their product in the shadow of covid 19, this happens with all kinds of products and services. This article mainly focuses on consumer products and its advertisements during pre and post covid 19.

“Advertising must engage consumers; it must trigger some sort of mental activity with them; it must activate or engage them in some sense” (Arvidsson, 2006). More than science, branding of the product during covid 19 went to an extreme in the way Unique Selling Proposition (USP) was treated in advisements. Covid 19 as a key element big propaganda went on social media by local sellers. Here the companies want to trigger the mental and psychological nature of each individual to buy their products to protect themselves from covid by any means. The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), a self-regulatory industry body, told VICE News that since April 2020, they have seen an uptick in claims and looked into roughly 500 of them related to the prevention and cure of COVID-19. But the regulatory measures are not been taken by any official bodies relate with advertisements in India. Misleading consumers to buy their product in the name of immune booster, guard against covid, etc... Main stream media like Newspapers and television channels promote those advertisements without checking out the facts and claims against covid 19. Advertisements and branding their product in the market will be based on the demographic nature and consumers-based market study. During Covid many advertising agencies they stuck with the business due to lockdown happened in India during end of March 2020. This sudden lockdown made advertisers and big companies to think on holding their customers, here’s how brands are dealing with lockdown in India. Creating emotional communication for brand create a more appeal and acceptance among the consumers to buy a product even during covid 19. Hammam India unit of Unilever create a series of advertisements to promote the brand with social responsibility. At the initial stage of lockdown, they came with the tagline in their advertisement tagline as “Stay safe inside” which results with social responsibility-based advertisements in television channels. Social responsibility advertisements sometimes change the mind and attitude of consumers towards a product.

There happened a lot of changes in advertisements at this pandemic situation. Agencies gave importance to the tag line ‘Stay Safe’. They did not change the product but changed the narrative part in their advertisements. But they didn’t imagine how consumers feel about it, what did they sense after watching these advertisements. Did these advertisements help the product to steady in the market or did it help to boost the sale? These are the main questions of this study. Many new products launched or brands which we have never heard also made their shelf space during this period. “Stay away from germs” are the tag line of these products and their advertisements on these products highlighted the tag line and consumers were offered by many discount schemes also.

## Literature Reviews

“The survival and recouping of the industry are dependent on the capacity of the advertisers and the agencies for adaptation to the environment which had an unprecedented impact from the pandemic all of a sudden, without much time to fully understand how it affected them beforehand. The pandemic was a blow to a number of industries, not alone advertisement, even though the magnitude is different for different ones. And it mostly depends on the type, medium and primary market the industry served”(Litsa, 2020).

“The shrinking in the economic activity profoundly changed the advertising content in its course. This can be identified from the reorientation of the brands which continued to advertise, and they focused mainly in passing messages which gave meaning in the particular context of the pandemic. The compilation of Bruno Liesse gives substantial overview of advertisements during the COVID-19 crisis.”D. E., & J. P. (22 December 2020)

“To attract consumers the companies and advertisement agencies started changing their narrative part in the advertisements. They give importance for health-related advertisement and messages. The recent trend shows that the change in the narrative part is very effective and a narrative as seeking to raise the awareness of the importance of health and hygiene in each and every family. First of all, the consumers will notice the negative aspects about covid mentioned in the advertisement. This generates the fear factor about covid 19 in audience mind. The companies exploit this fear factor and then they narrate the advantages of using their product to stay away from covid virus. The effectiveness of narrative transportation in health-related messages is due to this self-referencing mental simulation generated by the immersion into the narrative.” (Schwab, P. N. (2020).

“Advertising agencies and companies concentrated on the narrative part and finally we the consumers feel that they are servicing us and taking care of our family through their product. This made a great change for them in this crisis to regain their market. Finally, they present a series of propositions linking the formal structure of advertising to responses related to the creation of service brand image.”F. K., & Okan, E. Y. (18 June 2020).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

### **AIM, OBJECTIVE & HYPOTHESIS:**

Here we use qualitative method to study this topic, mainly focused on the narrative changes that the advertisement agencies made in their commercials during this pandemic period. The main objective of this study follows.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To exhibit the adaption of covid as unique selling proposition (USP) of commercial products in advertisements.
- To Study the brand positioning of commercial products through change in ‘narrative part’ advertisement during Covid 19.
- To study about the changes in tag line mentioned in the products during covid 19.
- To Exhibit the adaption of covid as the fear factor of the consumers.

After noticing the changes in the narrative part in the advertisement did consumers continue the same brand or else, they go for a new brand, because they changed only the narrative part did not change the packet or they did not introduce a new product into the market. Only by changing the narrative part did the brand loyal consumers felt that we will not believe in this brand. The advertising agencies changed the narrative part according to certain theories are they successful in them. Did the advertising agencies and companies exploit the fear factor of the consumers? The consumers were trying their best to protect their family from corona virus and for that they give much importance to cleanliness of themselves and their home. So, changing the narrative part by using the term Covid 19 the advertisements can able to cultivate a feeling in the mind of the consumers that these products help them to be safe.

**RESEARCH METHOD:** To satisfy the objectives, qualitative research was held. The main characteristic of qualitative research is that it is most appropriate for small samples, while its outcomes are not measurable and quantifiable. Cultivation theory proposed by George Gerbner helped to complete this research. This theory is one of the main theories in media texts. By repeating the same thing again and again consciously or unconsciously slowly we believe that what the media is saying is right. The theory postulates that watching television frequently influences an individual to develop certain ideas of reality or beliefs and assumptions about life that mirror the most consistent or universal values that are showcased on television. The more a person watches television, the more likely he is to be influenced by what he watches when compared to others who watch less but share other similar demographic characteristics. Over the years, cultivation theory is applied to studies on health, religion, sex roles, political orientations, etc. Through cultivation theory the advertising agencies can be able to cultivate that these products protect them and their home from corona virus.

**Choice of the advertisements** It is commercials that tell us stories within seconds. And the advertisements show how each and every member of a home effectively took part in the cleaning of the home with powerful cleaning products and facing this situation. So here we choose the advertisements that give importance to family and healthcare.

**Sample selection** for the study we choose most common brands like Harpic Bathroom Cleaner, Harpic Toilet Cleaner, Lizol Floor Cleaner, different products of Savlon, Santhoor Soap, and a bathroom and floor cleaner Tshine. Here Savlon is the only company that introduced new products during the time of Covid 19. This helps them a lot to influence the mind of the consumers. In reference part you tube links are attached to all the advertisements which we have taken for samples.

- Advertisement of **Harpic** bathroom cleaner, which we commonly use to clean toilets and bathroom. We watched their advertisements before the outbreak of covid19, they didn't mention the word corona virus anywhere in their advertisements. But, after dictating corona virus they use to highlight the tag line that this bathroom cleaner will kill corona virus germs. Remember the company shows this advertisement without changing their product or packing they changed the narrative portion only, even on the packet of the product they didn't mention the word Covid 19. They judiciously changed their marketing plan to back to regular in the shop shelves. Like Harpic we have so many examples in front of us. Next, we have a look on the floor cleaning product
  - **Lizol**, they also clearly use the term Corona Virus in the narrative part of the advertisement without making any change in the product.
  - **'Savlon'** in their product they add the terms 'virus and bacteria' after dictating Corona Virus. Before that they use the word 'Germs' in their soaps. Savlon Company introduced a chain of products like masks, cloth disinfectant, Savlon Hexa soap during this time and they mentioned the word 'bacteria and viruses on all their products. This grabs the attention of the consumers and they became one of main brand among health care during this pandemic situation.
  - 'Tshine' a floor cleaning product, as it is a product from Jyothi lab it is considered as a regional product. They focused Kerala market. They also changed their advertisement just by placing a textual content in their advertisement and it is like "it kills Corona Virus".
  - **Santhoor Soap**- we all know that the narrative part of the advertisement of Santoor Soap projects that this soap protects our skin from ageing. But now they focus their advertisement by changing the narrative part as it is like it protects from germs and keep young.
- These are some commercials tracked for this study. To attract families, all these advertisements focused on family health and care between the family members. Many advertisers shifted their marketing methodology to keep up with the current consumers. Another strategy in marketing has been to constantly reassure the audience through

messages of, how the companies are following the protocols. If the brand can advertise this creatively, they are sure to address the concerns of their audience and also be able to win over new customers. Few of them have switched from direct and conventional form of advertising and fully focused on offering bits of advice or messages associated with Coronavirus. Most of these advertisers came up with a positive approach.

“During this pandemic situation consumer’s mental status and buying nature changed a lot. They focused more on health and hygiene products. They planned a lot for purchasing goods due to lack of money. There happened a tremendous growth of online shopping for cleaning products, hygiene products, groceries, dress materials, cosmetics and medicines during this situation. The viewership of television and usage of social media platforms increased a lot. Through online platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter they advertise their products, as they know most of the people are with their mobiles during this pandemic situation. The companies utilise this situation very well. To attract consumers towards their products through advertisements they offered discounts and offers for many products. “Everyone was home watching more video, and commuting time was in many cases reallocated to media consumption. Movies were released via streaming. Cord-cutting was on the rise: eMarketer forecast late last year was that more than 6 million U.S. households had cancelled their pay TV subscriptions in 2020, with TV ad spend dropping 15%, to its lowest level since 2011.” M. G. (sat, mar 13 2021).

“As more people increase their social media usage during the pandemic, they also seem to be more willing to engage with social ads. The behavioural change can be attributed to the growing need to connect with others during challenging times.” C. P. (12 June 2020).

## Conclusion

The companies exploit Fear factor- (Corona Virus) of the consumers for establishing their market value and to certain extent they were successfully attained in it. Remember all these advertisements are telecasted in television in afternoon and in during prime time. They mainly targeted women audience the advertising agencies know that then only they can achieve the goal. Women will not change from the brand which they are using from all of a sudden. So, the only task of the companies is to make women keep using their brand. The time slot of these advertisements is also coming into notice. These commercials are telecasted mostly when the home makers watch television, which is from 12 noon to 3 pm and from 6.30 to 10.30 in between and after their household chores.

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