

Zero spend = the new smart!

Innovation and frugality are the new mantras for marketing success

As India becomes a global hotspot for start-ups and entrepreneurial businesses, more and more 'small' entities are popping up with 'big' dreams. With everyone trying their hand at marketing & advertising in some way, the scenario in front of today's consumer is that of huge clutter & cacophony.

To beat this clutter and stand out on their own, there is a fast emerging group of smart brands imbibing 'innovation' into the DNA of their marketing efforts, and practising 'frugal marketing'. Marketing is no longer about the sledgehammer approach where higher spends imply higher impact, rather today's success stories are defined by how sharp you are in your marketing strategy and its execution.

Based on my experience in working for brands with mammoth marketing budgets like P&G, Dabur, Reckitt and Reliance Mobile and conversely with start-ups with squeezed budgets, I can share the following 'tricks of the trade':

- **Narrow-cast your target audience.**
- **Own the ecosystem:** Build a stronghold on your ecosystem comprising sales people, industry, experts, associations, influencers, journalists, employees, analysts, government/regulatory as well as consumers.
- **Create your own marketing channels and platforms:** Focus on or build channels that suit you best. Alternatively, collaborate with brands for providing a common platform.
- **Plan basis insights rather than information:** As insights are dynamic, there needs to be a conscious effort to keep generating, curating and acting on insights.
- **Go online and use the latest medium of technology:** While today it is primarily digital, mobile and tablet which rule the roost, tomorrow it can be 'Lantern' a new-age free data device that's garnering a lot of attention globally.

More often than not, unconventional platforms and non-mass-media marketing initiatives will be able to give you that 'bang for your buck'. Here are marketing campaigns that undoubtedly qualify as 'frugal marketing':

Smart use of PR: Eveready, while launching its rechargeable battery range 'Eveready Recharge', distributed actual batteries to media persons for powering their digital cameras – a major end-use gadget for these batteries. This helped the brand build a lot of credibility among the media which in turn resulted in the brand being written about



PESHA ACHARYA

widely and with minimal costs.

Loyalty: The 'First Citizen' customer loyalty programme from retail major Shopper's Stop is one where customers are treated to various special privileges including on-the-spot reward points redemption, exclusive previews of sales and other offers. Shopper's Stop has successfully been able to pollinate this concept beyond just the marketing & CRM team to its sales & operations teams as well. Net effect is that Shopper's Stop gets over 70 per cent of its current business from its First Citizen customers.

Innovative point-of-sale visual merchandising: As the CMO for Reliance Digital my challenge was to offer the right expert technology advice, do it in a friendly and easy way. Adding to the visual merchandising tools already present, we started a practice of distributing 'Shopper Guides' inside Reliance Digital stores across multiple product categories to help customers decide. With a large number of TV screens available inside the store, this was taken one step forward subsequently, when the shopping guides were converted into smartly designed animated films that played on the screens as the customers continued their browsing.

Customer, not consumer: Paints major ICI Dulux observed during its consumer studies that most of the key purchase recommendations and decisions are being influenced by painters, architects and the interior designer community. Hence, while launching their premium 'Dulux Velvet Touch' range, ICI started holding meets aimed at this community and spending as much as 30 per cent of marketing budgets on it, thus achieving higher efficiencies for their overall marketing spends.

Innovation: Any list of case studies on 'frugal marketing' can never be complete without the 'the best job in the world' campaign run by the tourism board of Queensland, Australia, for the Whitsunday Islands. It was a marketing campaign in the garb of a recruitment drive for the 'caretaker of the island'. At the end of the campaign there were over 35,000 applicants from 200 countries, from which one was selected as the 'caretaker' finally. The campaign helped generate over \$200 million in global publicity for the islands and was inducted into the PR News Platinum PR Awards Hall of Fame in New York City.

The author is former CMO, Reliance Digital, and now founder & CEO, Think As Consumer. He can be reached at peshwa@thinkasconsumer.com