

Youngster's Perception towards Covid -19 Public Service Advertisements in Gujarat – An Empirical Study of Electronic Media

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Abstract

It all began with an outbreak from Wuhan, China and later spreading to the other parts of the world. From lockdown, mass testing, contact tracking to other self- precautionary measures each one of us have slowly struggled, adapted and are overcoming the pandemic with our new normalcy. The journey was not easy for each one of us, neither was it easy for World Health Organization (WHO) and the government officials across varied countries. It was the time to discover and in parallel create public awareness to refrain the outbreak spread. Especially in India where population size being so massive, and also the population mix being so strong, one India has many India to be targeted. A right message to reach to its end audience, the drive really had to be focusing on the diversified mass segments, therefore need for multiple mediums and modes of communication, attempting different appeals for the same simple message was a must.

1. Introduction

It all began with an outbreak from Wuhan, China and later spreading to the other parts of the world. From lockdown, mass testing, contact tracking to other self- precautionary measures each one of us have slowly struggled, adapted and are overcoming the pandemic with our new normalcy. The journey was not easy for each one of us, neither was it easy for World Health Organization (WHO) and the government officials across varied countries. It was the time to discover and in parallel create public awareness to refrain the outbreak spread. Especially in India where population size being so massive, and also the population mix being so strong, one India has many India to be targeted. A right message to reach to its end audience, the drive really had to be focusing on the diversified mass segments, therefore need for multiple mediums and modes of communication, attempting different appeals for the same simple message was a must.

It was visible that apart from the government bodies there were many brands that joined this pandemic fight by shifting their routine purposeful commercial campaigns to advertisements advocating social responsibility. Through their wagon brands are persuading viewers to stay safe, exercise caution also attempting to articulate gratitude to the frontline workers and to be vigilant enough to fence the corona virus spread.

1.1. Brand Activations during Pandemic

Google India's #Thank you Doctors, nurses and all healthcare workers, was YouTube's most watched Public Service Advertisements in the tenure of three months, based on ad leader board in India. The leader board also further chooses those brands that didn't set off silent and engaged with their audiences even though the country was in lockdown. Brands like SBI tags itself with a punch line 'Ghar mein Khushiyan', where Parle India asks us to take a pause and tags itself with 'Lets catch up with life'. HDFC went to a level further releasing an official song 'Hum Haar Nahi Maanenge' in association with A. R. Rehman and Prasoon Joshi. Kia takes it brand with a punch line of #RewindKia, #Let's all just rewind. The RSPL group for its brand

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Ghadi Detergent powder came forwards with 'Surakshit rahe swasth rahe'. Brands like Dabur and Oreo made it a bit lighter by adding fun to the situation, Dabur focused on WFH(Work From Home) #WFH to hamare data kar rahe, #Chabaatey raho India, Oreo reminded its viewers to stay playful #At home with Oreo. Britannia Good Day said a Thank you India ke Khushibaaz, and Duroflex in this race of stay home couldn't be backed out, they came with a bang by tagging themselves with Duroflex 'The joy of staying in and rejoicing moments in bed'. These were the brands that connected themselves with the cause and went with the flow sounding to be contemporary brands.

So along with corporate there were many NGOs, government bodies who actively joined this wagon, for spreading awareness. Traffic police personnel in Bangalore gave a viral hit through their live road demonstration of hand sanitization and other self- safety measures. Mobile app, print adds, posters, pop-ups, radio inserts, default caller tunes and likewise many more humungous 360 degree approach of creating awareness and genuine effort of reaching out, each single individual of the country was made. But the big question is to see how a viewer who is exposed to multiple information repeatedly responds to this overexposure of ads at times and how does he or she perceive the same. Especially when the target group of audience has good capability of blocking and defence mechanism

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Electronic Media

The major form of electronic media is the radio, the television and the internet. These three mediums become the key source to reach out to the vast array of people in India, at times to educate them, to create awareness or may be needed by the corporate to persuade. Particularly young generation are so very involved with the electronic media, that their involvement to this level calls out this media to be 'the monster', according to Sangeetha N and Vinitha J. There are foremost marks of new media as it includes synchronicity demassification, interactivity. Lot of media proliferation has happened and it has had affected the way commercials are produced and delivered. There has been a lot of flow from other media channels, due to its ease of accessing the mass and being still the low cost. But in spite of this huge benefit offered by other alternative media, television and other electronic medium stays in-vulnerable, due to the lowering effectiveness of other prevailing counter channels (Cho, 2003; Cho and Cheon, 2004; Coulter et al., 2001; Shamdasani et al., 2001). Thus electronic medium is highly effective and most recommendable medium of communication to the mass population, especially when the purpose is not to sell but to create awareness and bring in habitual impact on the social cause, and to support the said, BARC's report states that the youth in India falling between the age group of 15- 30 years contribute TV viewership of 33 percentage, and followed by 20 percentage viewership contribution made by children. Thus since the major viewership, out of the total TV viewership being contributed by the youth and the kids, it is highly worthy and feasible to select electronic media as the source of channel for Public Service Advertisement in India, especially when the issue is so serious like Covid-19, may the concern of communication be the spread of the virus, or to create awareness for preventive measures or may it be even for vaccination awareness campaigns.

2.2 Public Service Advertisements

For Public Service Advertising to be effective it should have relevance, interest, entertainment and a strong message for its audiences. And the very important criteria is that the message especially the social message should be actionable or should be able to evoke a desirable response and thereby lead to an attitudinal or behavioural change (Bill Goodwill, 2012). Globally there had been several thought provoking and impactful Public Service Advertisements few among the many in the history of Ad council are Smokey Bear, The mind is a terrible thing to waste, only you can prevent the fire, The crying Indian, to Friends don't let friends drive drunk (Peggy Conlon & Janet Robinson, 2004). Likewise in India the first PSA, was the advert run by the newspapers concerning the issue of child labour (Aishwarya Chatterjee, 2016). Later few campaigns aiming at the social issues like children, women, AIDS awareness and clean water supply were aired. Even for a long tenure the social ads of Polio, and family planning "hum do humare do" and also further massively promoting the usage of condoms and having safe sex, ruled the nation (Bhatia, 2009).

Modern era nation's dominating concerns are: domestic violence, save water, equal right for male female and religion, tobacco consumption, eve teasing, right to vote (M. William, O'Barr, 2006) and to that of raising concerns of spread of diseases like; dengue, malaria, swine flu and today corona virus.

The serious the issue turns out to be the responsibility of airing a PSA doubles. The fragmentation of the audiences, proliferation of media and highly distracting concentration levels of the audience, it becomes a prime force important role of the advert makers to make the social ads even more attractive and effective and hence transferring the actual action step to be taken through their message. Thus it is of utmost importance to understand the perception the audiences

3. Research Methodology

Descriptive method is used in the study, with an aim to study the audience's perception towards covid-19 Public Service Advertisements and further also to introspect what is the impact of these adverts on youngsters in Gujarat. This paper also intends to study the impact of covid-19 PSAs on audiences; it also articulates and compares the most impactful medium out of the three electronic media, used during the pandemic to create awareness. Further it determines to study the association between the demographic variables and perception and further also to infer the differential impact of Covid-19 PSA's on audiences. The total of 400 youngsters from across the major cities of Gujarat is considered for the study. A non-probabilistic convenience sampling method is been used to meet the objectives as stated above. The data is further stratified based on age, gender, income, occupation, location and their media preferences. 100 respondents from each select major cities of Gujarat state, i.e. Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Vadodara and Surat are considered, they are further classified in to age group falling in the range of 15 to 24 years, with differences in their media preferences, likings, their gender, number of members earning in a family and these variables are the demographical variables. The Independent variables considered for the study are Message Style and type (PSA with Positive, negative, self-help, altruistic type of content). The dependent variables are consumer perception (perceptual selection, organizing and interpretation). The analysis has been done using techniques like Factor analysis, test of variance and chi-square analysis using SPSS 20. The alpha coefficient for the 20 set items used to test perception, a dependent variable is 0.703 (Cronbach 1951). Further the alpha coefficient for 6 item scale used for the dependent variable, behavioural intensions is 0.712 and also for the 7 item scale used for knowledge effect a dependent variable for the study is also 0.82, advocating the items to have relatively high internal consistency (Charlotee, Perry.R, 2004).

3.1 Objectives

- (1) To study the audience's perception towards Covid-19 PSAs
- (2) To study the impact of these campaigns on youngsters
- (3) To compare and articulate the most impactful medium out of the three electronic media used during the pandemic of Covid-19 (the radio, the television and the internet).
- (4) To study the association between the demographic variables and perception and further also to infer the differential impact of Covid-19 PSA's on audiences

3.2 Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant difference between gender and the electronic media exposure

H2: There is a significant difference between acceptance of message style or message type and gender

H3: There is an impact of age, gender and number of earning members on youngster's Perception towards Covid-19 PSA's

4. Results

From the given options when the respondents were asked to rank the most noticed ad based on the content it has, the highest rank assigned in case of covid-19 PSAs were, the ads with facts as content and followed by the ad with content of normal people. Rest all other options like of a PSA having a celebrity, humour, an interesting music and creativity was least preferred, assuming the anxiety and tensions attached to the social issue. Out of 400 respondents 323 of them opted for the self-help message style over the altruistic and the remaining 77 were in favour of altruistic (help others) message style. This vast deviation was noticed due to the strong belief of being saved first, only then would they be capable of helping out others. Also further the PSA's having more of positive tendency was favoured more over the negative messages.

4.1 The Knowledge and the Belief / Action Effect

The impact of Public Service Advertisements were studied further based on two dimensions the knowledge effect and the belief/ action effect. From the data collected of 400 respondents from major cities of Gujarat state. The overall average of descriptive statistics of the youth, in terms of knowledge effect asked through a five-pointer scale is above 3.5 to range of 4.75, which clearly indicates that the exposure of public service

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advertisements of covid-19 are strongly increasing the knowledge of the youngsters. It is helping the youngsters to increase their awareness, towards the totally unknown and unrecorded issue, corona virus. The PSA’s does set reminders, makes the TGA think about the danger associated, also leads the youngster’s to further discuss the concerns and causes with others. But slight lower averages are been witnessed, when it comes with the parameter of practicing the said social distancing and other preventing hygienic measures. They did further show agreeableness of them having proud feeling, when they take precautionary measures and safe guard them. It gives them a sense of being responsible towards others and also makes them feel of being hopeful for the future.

The Impact study further lead to understanding, the belief set and action taken by the youth, having been exposed to a covid-19 PSA, they were analysed on the basis of their actions, and was found believing that taking Covid preventive measure would save lives of many. They also were aware about the contagious spread and that others could be harmed due to their actions. But something very contradicting was found in the data, wherein the youths supported the statement mentioning that they believe not wearing a mask in public, makes them look cool. They favoured this negative gesture and the descriptive score of this statement was found to be very high. They also showed a negative notion towards the social distancing and to regularly sanitizing themselves. They did believe that they each one of us are responsible towards taking safety norms and together can bring in change in the community as a whole. Thus with this we can conclude on both the dimensions that the Covid PSA’s are able to create a positive knowledge set, but when it comes to basic actions as a preventive measure, the youth show some averse.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

H1: There is a significant difference between gender and the electronic media exposure

To prepare for the study of ANOVA test, participants were divided two group Male and Female representing the independent variable and electronic media being the dependent variable. One-way Anova was conducted to understand the difference between male and female acceptance of electronic media.

Table 1: ANOVA_Gender_Vs_Media

<u>N</u>		<u>Mean</u>		Mean Difference (High-Low)	F	P
F	M	F	M			
197	203	52.43	61.1	8.67	5.12	0.675

The p value of less than .05 was required for significance. The ANOVA was significant $F(1, 197)= 5.12, p= 0.675$. This result allowed to reject the alternative hypothesis and hence accepting the null hypothesis H_0 , stating there is no significant difference between male and female with respect to their exposure to electronic medias. Since the overall test was not significant, a post hoc test using Dunnett’s C test, to compare the mean of two taken groups cannot be used here in this case for further control group comparison.

H2: There is a significant difference between acceptance of message style or message type and gender

Table 2: ANOVA_Gender_Vs_MsgStyle

<u>N</u>		<u>Mean</u>		Mean Difference (High-Low)	F	P
F	M	F	M			
197	203	58.23	49.01	9.22	5.07	0.25

The ANOVA was significant The ANOVA was significant $F(1, 197)= 5.07, p= 0.25$. This result allowed to reject the null hypothesis H_0 . And accept the alternative, declaring there is a significant difference between male and female with respect to their reception of message style and advertisement content and the message type. In view of the fact that, the overall test was significant, a post hoc test was conducted using Dunnett’s C test, to compare the mean of two taken groups. The results indicated female had significantly higher acceptance than the male counterparts.

Based on the data of 400 youngsters, in which 197 female and 203 were male from the major cities of Gujarat state, their preference towards electronic media were as follows: out of 197 young female

respondents 85 of them opted for Internet as their choice of electronic media, 77 of them opted for Television to be their choice and only the remaining 35 females preferred radio as a choice of electronic media, from where they are likely to gauge the exposure of a Covid-19 PSA's. And the male counter parts their preference was also similar but with slight variations in ratio in preference of the electronic media. Out of 203 male, 120 of them preferred Internet, 52 preferred Television and the remaining 31 preferred radio. This could be due to the lockdown which gave a tremendous growth in digital content view and entertainment on digital platforms, this also could be because of single screen preferences which has erupted more amongst the youngsters and also due to the isolation tendency either by choice or due to the disease. On the other extreme end the preference to radio announcements were less seen in both male and female youngsters, this could be due to the changes in occasion of radio usage, may be also due to lesser travels and also the youngsters have been found preferring the podcast video content, or and slideshow content more over a radio insert. Thus even the radio announcement either in audio or video form started getting uploaded again on various digital platforms, which is why the data reveal such doable numbers.

H3: There is an impact of age, gender and number of earning members on youngster's Perception towards Covid-19 PSA's

The 20 statement set was framed to study the perception of youngster's towards covid-19 pandemic, the statement selected were well supported by the literature review. Chi-square test was run to study the association of number of income sources and their perception, to understand further whether there is a significant difference in the perceptual parameter with the alterations in the youngster's being affluence. The test was run through SPSS 20. Although the overall descriptive statistics inclined towards positive direction, supporting the youngster's having the influence of Public service advertisements on their perception. Except, for few statements pertaining to interpretation. Which clearly indicates there is an influence of PSA's on perception. But when further studied with respect to the demographical variables like gender and number of earning members the null hypothesis gets accepted stating that, there is no association between the more number of earnings and gender in a youth's family and its effect over perception. Higher income group of youngsters only believe differently towards PSAs being strong enough to sets reminder of their message, with a sig(p) value of .024. Further they also associate strongly with a PSA with a pledge or dial-up number, with the sig(p) value of .047 and further for 17th and 18th variable too, the strong association is viewed and the statements were PSAs frequently aired makes them feel, government cares for them, sig(p) value of .026. Also leading them to be more judgemental about the people, while they view the people in the Public Service Advertisements, they take them to be more in-disciplined and too bad, with a sig(p) value of .022.

4.3 Factor Analysis

For the impact evaluation factor analysis was used. Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy are both tests that is used to determine the factorability of the matrix as a whole. The value of Bartlett's test of sphericity is with a Sig (P <0.001, P=0.000). Further the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure is 0.832 which is greater than 0.6.

Table 3: Bartlett's & KMO Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.879
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	953.107
	Df	190
	Sig.	.000

When the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure is superior to 0.6 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant, hence factorability is assumed. Thus with this it is fitting to progress with Factor analysis to examine the factors affecting youngsters perception.

On performing the Varimax Rotation Method with Kaiser Normalization, Factor 1 comprises of nine items with factor loading ranging from 0.53 to 0.806. Table 3 indicates the items in Factor 1, the items are Creativity motivates, Statistics helps, Multiple Testimony, Government or Ministry symbol, Similarity, fear factor leads to ease of interpretation , affected ones are noted, sets reminder, dial-up number completes. Thus construct 1 Factor 1 can be named as **Authentication seekers**.

Factor 2 comprises of six items with factor loading ranging from 0.596 to 0.780. In Factor 2 the items are Switch channel, Celebrity holds, Precautionary measures in issue more noticed, changes involvement,

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government PSA’s more convincing, Frequently aired thus feels government is concerned about the public. Thus construct 2 Factor 2 can be named as **Hard to please- Rational**.

Factor 3 comprises of four items with factor loading ranging from 0.66 to 0.83. In Factor 3 the items are noticeable, intense, simplify, realistic. The last variable falling below the accepted range of 0.05 is hence removed from the construct list. Thus construct 3 Factor 3 can be named as **Easy to please- Non- Rational**.

Table 4: Factor Analysis_ Rotated Component Matrix
Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component		
	1	2	3
PSA_BeingCreative_Motivates_toView	.806		
PSA_WithStatistics_help_learn_more	.789		.430
Multiple_Testimony	.756		
PSA_WithMinistrySymbol_Better_Interpretation	.708		
PSA_LinksSimilarity	.704		
FearFactor_Makes_InterpretationFaster	.686		
IN_PSA_MostNoted_is_affected ones	.683		
PSA_GivesReminder_Exposure	.572		.407
PSA_WithDialNumber_Feels_Complete	.530		.448
I_Switch_Channel_Avoid_PSA		.780	
PSA_With_Celeb_Increase_acceptance		.712	
IN_PSA_PrecautionaryStep_MostNoted		.676	
PSA_Changes_My_Involvement		.631	
PSA_Govt._More_Convincing		.625	.447
PSA_FrequentlyAired_ShowsPublicConcern		.596	
PSA_Always_noticebale			.803
PSA_intense			.768
PSA_Simplifies_the_Content	.418		.681
PSA_Realistic			.660
PSA_MakesMeJudgePeopleAreBad_Indisciplined	.479		.480

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

5. Conclusion

With this it can be concluded that a Public Service Advertisement aiming the pandemic, covi-19 has a huge impact on the knowledge effect on the youngsters and has only partial impact on their belief and action set. Further based on ANOVA test result, where in the study intended to understand the difference between male and female acceptance of electronic media, the results indicated that the exposure to electronic media has nothing to do with the gender of a youngster, both tend to select a medium of electronic based on their choice and this choice has no relation with the gender they belong to. It was further found that there was difference in the reception of message style (Self- help or altruistic) and advertisement content (humorous, emotional, normal people, content with facts, testimonials, my story types, or interesting background music) also the

message type (positive or negative). It was also found that the demographical variables like age, gender and number of earning members, has no differential impact on perception. The youngster's within their group irrespective of their demographical differences perceive the PSA's similarly. Though there is no difference between the youngster but the overall descriptive statistics shows a huge impact on public service advertisements having an influence on their perception. Thus we can conclude from the statistics result that a Public Service Advertisement is efficient in making alterations in youngsters selection criteria, their organizing criteria, and little does they influence on their interpretation factor. But the two sub variables of perception i.e. the selection and organizing is a major breakthrough to recognize that the PSA's of Covid-19 are highly influential. Further with the factor analysis the impact assessment was rightly executed and also could generate different types of youth and could divide them further in groups of three : **Authentication seekers, Hard to please- Rational and the Easy to please- Non- Rational youngster's** which throws some more light as to why do the interpretation the last stage of perceptual process hinder, and why in spite of having high impact on knowledge set the youngster belief is partial altered and actions are not quite reflective. Also if this is keenly further cross examined, lot of other influential factors would pop out. And last not the least overall the youngsters both the male and female preferred internet content as an electronic media platform of choice, over the television and the radio inserts, the shift in this trend is quite impacted due the current scenario of Novel Corona virus, and this will keep growing more due to the streaming trend by various online sites or application, which is further more going to take up the screen time of these youngsters more dedicatedly to the internet medium.

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