

Television Commercials to encourage electorates to vote: A study of advertising campaigns by big corporate organizations

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Abstract: The paper is a study of advertising campaigns launched by big corporate houses during elections with the aim of encouraging electorates to vote. Lok Sabha polling began in India on April 7, 2014 and was concluded on May 12, 2014. Big corporate houses utilised this time by launching TVCs and social advertising campaigns to encourage the electorate to exercise their right to vote. Even some news channels also launched TVCs for increasing voter awareness.

The overall turnout in all the nine phases of polling this year stood at 66.48 per cent, posting the highest in the history of Lok Sabha elections, surpassing the previous best of 64.01 per cent in 1984.

Tata Tea, Rupa Frontline, HUL, Google India, ABP News are some companies who have tried to encourage people to vote through their social advertising campaign.

Survey research method was adopted while the questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. The findings show that TVCs launched by corporate organizations are liked by viewers and encouraged them to vote.

The findings also show that TVCs with the election as a theme have good recall value among the viewers. Based on the findings, the paper concludes that the advertising campaigns launched by big corporate houses have positive impact on electorate and motivated them to vote in general elections.

Keywords: Voting, Elections, Social Advertising, Television Commercials.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social advertising is the use of advertising to inform the public about a social issue or to influence their behaviour. It is designed to educate or motivate consumers on a matter of social importance. Companies use social advertising to enhance company's image, reputation and name awareness among the masses.

Social advertising campaigns are often successful in raising awareness. It is the Application of commercial marketing concepts, knowledge, and techniques to non-commercial ends for the society's welfare.

During General elections many companies launched social ad campaigns to promote elections and voting. Brands took this event as the opportunity to become a socially responsible organization by promoting and motivating citizens to vote for India.

Election Commission of India had endorsed a number of voter awareness campaigns in the run-up to the 2014 Lok Sabha election, including those from not-for profit organizations as well as media houses.

Election Commission has found much support for the cause from various quarters, from non-government organizations to social-networking sites, such as Facebook, and advertisers. Advertisers too have seen merit in joining the cause. Not only does it help for the brand to be associated with a good cause and be seen as a part of the community vying for betterment and change, it also helps them cut through the clutter with election-based themes and imagery in their communication. Such communication tends to resonate better with consumers who already have politics and the election on their mind.

Politics is a national pastime and is perhaps the only thing after cricket where everybody has a point of view. People can be seen having animated political discussions at bus stops, cafeterias, inside trains, tea stalls, at work station in office, almost everywhere. This election season big corporate organizations launched their advertising campaigns with elections as their main theme.

Some of the social ad campaigns launched during the election season were

Pidilite Fevicol TV commercial was reflecting upon the prevailing election environment in the country. Fevicol has always focussed their communication strategy on live situations, this TVC rides on the election bandwagon. The TVC is developed by O&M, and has kept in line with Fevicol's brand proposition of strong bonding. The TVC brings a unique and humorous take on the election scenario and in line with their earlier ads where the Fevicol brand used day to day situations in a funny way to communicate. Fevicol Crazy Chairs TVC captures the atmosphere created by the general assembly elections in the country. It borrows the excitement and interest of a common man and thereby creating a sync with the audience.

Rupa Frontline with the aim to increase voting percentage has and promote the turnout in elections launched their TVC. The TVC was created by Scarecrow Communications and tried to hit on the indifferent approach towards voting which is an unresolved issue in India and the election statistics over the years prove the same. Taking forward the former tagline of Frontline - Sabse Aage (Ahead of everyone), the new tagline - 'Raho duniya se ek kadam aage' (Stay a step ahead of the world) takes the brand thought one step further.

The ad campaign launched by **Havells** fans aimed at bringing in change. A clever advert that plays on the brand's 'Hawaa Badlegi' proposition to send out the message that the 'cash for vote' trick will not work with today's upright electorate. The campaign's message was clear and loud that ministers and bureaucrats are public servants and that's what they should do.

Hindustan Unilever's (HUL), targeting urban first-time-voters launched their TVC on 'Voting as a coming-of-age moment'. The campaign is endorsed by the Election Commission. The campaign has been created by leading advertising professionals, Piyush Pandey and R Balakrishnan (Balki) chairman and chief creative officer with Lowe Lintas and Partners and top B-school students of the country. The campaign was born out of an initiative called Lessons in Marketing Excellence (L.I.M.E.), an inter b-school challenge conducted annually by HUL and CNBC TV18. With the elections around the corner, the four finalists were asked to come up with a plan to tackle voter apathy and ensure an increase in voter participation. The jury panel for the finale was chaired by the chief election commissioner V.S. Sampath. The winning case study, by students of Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore (IIM-B), highlighted the stark difference between how rural and urban citizens approach elections in a country with more than 800 million voters. Urban voters are more politically apathetic and therefore less likely to vote because they feel disconnected from the political candidates. (Srinivasan, 2014).

The Delhi-based **Association for Democratic Reforms** (ADR) came up with a commercial wherein Aamir Khan advising against selling of votes and going by the slogan, 'Achche ko Chune, Sachche ko Chune'.

(Sen, 2014). **Google India**, launched a campaign featuring 97-year old retired school teacher Shyam Saran Negi, India's first voter, from Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh. The brief for O&M Group Creative Director Sukesh Nayak was to talk to the millions of first-time voters who are part of the Internet generation. The aim was to inspire them to vote of their own volition. Even an election message from a brand will work only if the brand is in the consideration set of the audience the campaign is targeting. As an Internet company, which would see the youth turn to it for research on the polls, from checking if names have been registered to the nearest polling booth, Google wanted to be a part of this important stage in their lives.

ITC's Sunfeast Yippee advertisement was devised for its audience - kids and mothers both. A TVC, showing a group of kids about to form a party of their own with demands of doing away with homework etc. distracted by the smell of noodles cooking nearby, has been running on kids' channels. The commercial does not directly talk about voting but surely speaks on making a party.

(Srivastava, 2014). **Tata Global Beverages Ltd** launched an initiative under their brand Tata Tea, called Jaago Re— Power of 49 campaign, which was aimed at women voters. The objective of the campaign was to create a large number of educated women voters with a view that an informed female electorate would propel the political leaders to include women issues in the in the forthcoming elections. There another TVC titled '*Kala Teeka*' (Black dot), encourages women to vote if they want to bring a change.

(Prakashan, 2014). **The Idea Cellular** company highlighting the relevance of mobile Internet to the masses launched their new campaign *No ullu banoing*. And one of the TVC shows how a political leader is making big claims and one of the person from rally plays video on mobile phone and says 'pichle saal bhi yehi kaha tha India ko no ullu banoing'. Keeping in mind the election phase going on, the ad campaign has come up with this election themed advertisement, which sure gels well with their ideology of *No ullu banoing*. Though cellular companies have been providing Internet connection for ages, it has still to be explored by the large mass of rural areas. So Idea's *No ullu banoing* campaign is bound to connect with villagers. The conceptualisation of the ad film is done by Lowe Lintas.

Hero Motocorp launched a campaign for its bike HF Deluxe, with a message for the Indian electorate '*Ab ki baar talent ko vote dete hain*'. The film features two men riding on a bike. Before they set off, the rider asks his friend who he will vote for. He responds that he will vote for Ramesh, reasoning: '*Hamare taraf ke hain*' (He is from our side / He is one of us). Enroute, they witness a cricket match on a giant screen. When asked to stop, the rider tells his friend that he will when someone from 'our side' is playing. The scenario repeats itself when they ride past a film star. As they see a talent show hoarding, the rider says Neha will win, because she is from their side. When the puzzled man reasons that there needs to be emphasis on talent, the rider makes his point: the elections are India's biggest talent show, and one should vote for the deserving.

Hero wanted to bring out a message during the election season through their HF Deluxe bike which has '*Naya Indian*' as its baseline. We wanted to target the youth of the country who are getting more aware and would be actively voting this year. The TVC gives out the message that one should not vote on the basis of caste, colour or creed and look at the bigger picture, that is how the country can progress.

(Sen, 2014). **WagonR**, the compact car from the Maruti Suzuki stable, believes in the idea that shorter campaigns can bring the biggest changes. The brand's newest campaign was a 10-second TVC which poses a serious question. Conceptualised by Dentsu Creative Impact, the campaign tries to reinforce WagonR as the smart choice. It uses the current favourite topic – General Elections – to drive its point to the masses. The TVC opens with a man lurking suspiciously next to a parked WagonR. When the owner arrives, the man tries to hand him a bundle of cash. He says to the owner, "Take the money and give me the car." The owner naturally refuses. As the owner drives away in his WagonR, he asks viewers, "If you wouldn't sell your car for some money, why would you sell your country out?" The TVC ends with a request to all Indians to vote responsibly. The idea behind the campaign is to engage the smart Indian voter.

(Menon, 2013) After a span of two years, **Vicks Coughdrops** has released a new campaign that encourages people to speak without hesitation. The heritage brand in their TVC tells its consumers to speak their mind without hesitation. '*Kehne mein hich kich*' (Hindi for hesitation in speaking) is the catchphrase of the current campaign. In TVC, a girl is stopped on the roadside by a politician's henchman who asks her whom she voted for. She tries to answer, but is unable to do so due to some irritation in her throat (a metaphor for her hesitation). However, after taking Vicks Coughdrops, she boldly tells him that he will know the answer when the results are announced. The super at the end states '*Jaise bhi khich khich, bolo bina hich kich*'.

(Nagpal, 2014) **ABP News** channel's campaign created by Lowe Lintas 'how do you make your political decisions?' aims to carve a space for itself with its election-related programming. The campaign's core thought is to encourage people to make an informed choice about their candidate. The film opens to a group of friends having a light-hearted discussion on politics, especially about the candidates and political parties contesting for the 2014 elections. Some of them are trying to make a serious point, while the others cut out the seriousness by making jocular remarks. Towards the end, an ABP anchor is featured, asking viewers if this is how they make their most important choice – that of who will lead the

country. The campaign tries to get the viewers watch ABP News to form the correct political opinion. It leaves behind a powerful message “sahi rajneetik rai banana ke liye dekhiye sirf ABP News”.

Star Plus channel introduced an initiative to encourage first time voters to register for the General Elections. The campaign was led by its popular face and youth icon – Veera. In India, the number of potential first time voters during this election, is estimated at a massive 12 crores. In this light Star Plus, wanted to spread awareness about voting rights amongst first time voters and mobilize the youth.

MTV India has launched a campaign to encourage the youth of the country to vote. The campaign called ‘Rock the vote’ is accompanied by a double entendre tagline ‘Dabaona... button’ and will seek to mobilize all youngsters aged 18 & above to register themselves as voters. MTV has partnered with Rock the Vote (USA), a non profit, non partisan organisation which pushes political awareness amongst youth across many countries including the USA, Canada and Chile. Founded 21 years ago, Rock the Vote (USA) has registered more than 5 million young people to vote and has become a trusted source of information for young people about registering to vote and casting a ballot.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has following objectives:

- If such ad campaigns and TVCs encourage electorate to vote
- Whether TVCs or ad campaign are liked by viewers
- Why viewers like such commercials
- Why companies launched such commercials
- Is television advertising a good medium to promote voting in India
- Do people remember ads even after campaign is over

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In an era of immense brand clutter it has become imperative for advertisers to look beyond traditional brand messaging to connect with their target audience. Tata Global Beverages' Jago Re campaign for Tata Tea, where the brand has talked about various election-related corrupt practices is yet another example. The brand's most recent initiative is the 'Power of 49' campaign, where it has tried to encourage the women of India to vote, by saying that 49 per cent of the Indian electorate comprises of women. (Shashidhar, 2014)

(Jayaram and Challapalli, 2014) Brands have always used events such as elections as part of their ad campaigns but this time, they became a platform for engagement. The ads would improve consumers' recall of brands, they might not affect their buying decisions. Arun Iyer, National Creative Director, Lowe Lintas, believes advertising created a lot of societal pressure on people to vote and led to a better turnout. A lot of brands wanted to jump on because of the issue's topicality, and most conversations, in real life and on social media, were about this topic. Brands thought, in some way we will be in their (consumers') consciousness.

(Swamy, 2014) The election fever, clearly, has caught on. Red FM's tagline for its campaign was "Button Dabaa ke Bajaa" and Hindustan Unilever has been wooing viewers with its "Please Vote" slogan. The catchphrase for Havells Fans — "Hawa badlegi" — has been given a contemporary twist with an election-related ad. MTV India has its "Rock the Vote" campaign and Hero Honda goes with the tagline "Desh ka Sabse Bada Talent Show" for the elections. Some believe that they have made a difference, arguing that the campaigns have done their bit to increase the number of votes in this election. The voter turnout in Delhi was 65.09 per cent this time against 52 per cent in 2009.

Ads alone aren't responsible for the voter turnout but we have been an effective trigger, the aim was to awaken the dormant voter. “In India, the number of potential first-time voters during this election is estimated at a massive 12 crore. So we wanted to spread awareness among first time voters. We want to encourage the youth to exercise their vote and contribute to the nation's progress," says Nikhil Madhok, senior vice-president, marketing and content strategy, Star Plus. (Swamy, 2014).

(Sehgal, 2014) Several admakers, keeping in mind the election mood came up with amazing commercials, should also be thanked for the campaigns that motivated people to come out and vote for the honest and talented candidates. No doubt the main aim of the commercials was to endorse the products, but the admakers made sure that the message reached the target audience through the educative, humorous and entertaining commercials.

(Srivastava, 2014) According to its creative partner Lowe Lintas, while the last campaign awakened 'women in general', the new TVC aims to awaken the 'educated or so called well informed class of India', who don't believe that voting can make a difference. The task this time is to 'awaken the awakened', to tell them about the power of voting and the change it can bring about. People will always connect with a message which they think will definitely and quickly have an impact. The challenge with a strong message like this is that it will always be larger than the brand but I think brand 'Tata Tea', and even bigger 'Tata', benefit from such an empowering message. Probably the creative execution can be more on the lines of the earlier 'Power of 49 politician' ad, which incorporates the product clearly in the storyline.

(Sen, 2014) Staying relevant in the minds of the consumer is extremely important for every brand. Being topical is one interesting way of doing it, but the topics you choose to stay relevant also need to resonate with the brand. And when it came to brand WagonR, General Elections was a perfect fit. Since 'smart' is the positioning that the brand is based on, urging India to 'vote smart' was a natural extension.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study employed survey research method. Baran (1999, p.350) writes that surveys are designed to scientifically describe phenomena and their relationships in the actual environment at a given time. Survey is appropriate for this study in that it is used for investigating if viewers like ad campaigns which were designed to encourage them to vote and also if such TVCs increase brand recall of the product.

The sample size taken is 600 and age group taken is above 18 years. The questionnaire was used for data collection and the technique for data analysis was simple percentage method expressed in table of frequencies and Fig.s.

5. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Age distribution of respondents

Age	No. Of respondents	Percentage
18-25 years	164	27%
26-35 years	182	30%
36-45 years	130	22%
Above 46 years	124	21%
Total	600	

Table 1 shows age group of respondents. 27% were youth voter mostly first time voters.

Table 2: gender distribution of respondents

Gender	No. Of respondents	Percentage
Male	240	40%
Females	360	60%
Total	600	

Table 2 shows ratio of male and female respondents.

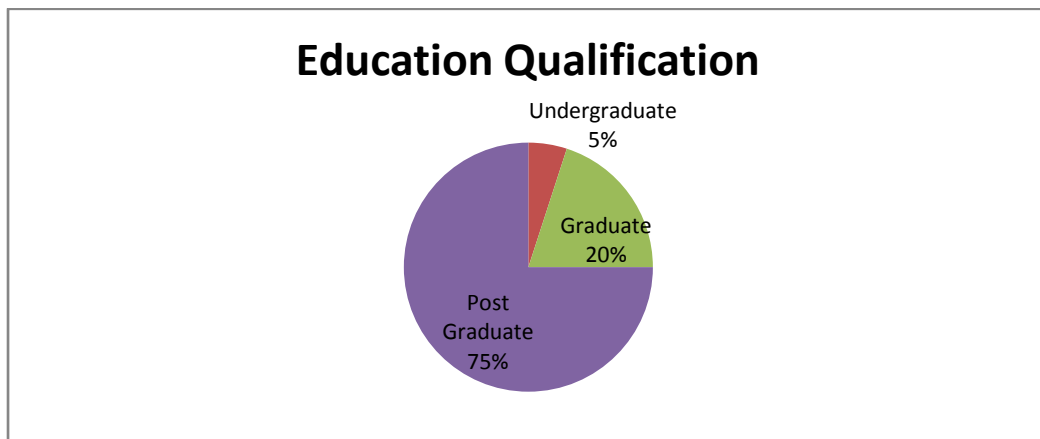


Fig. 1 Education details of respondents

Above Fig. shows education qualification details of respondents. 75% respondents were post graduate and only 5% respondents were undergraduate.

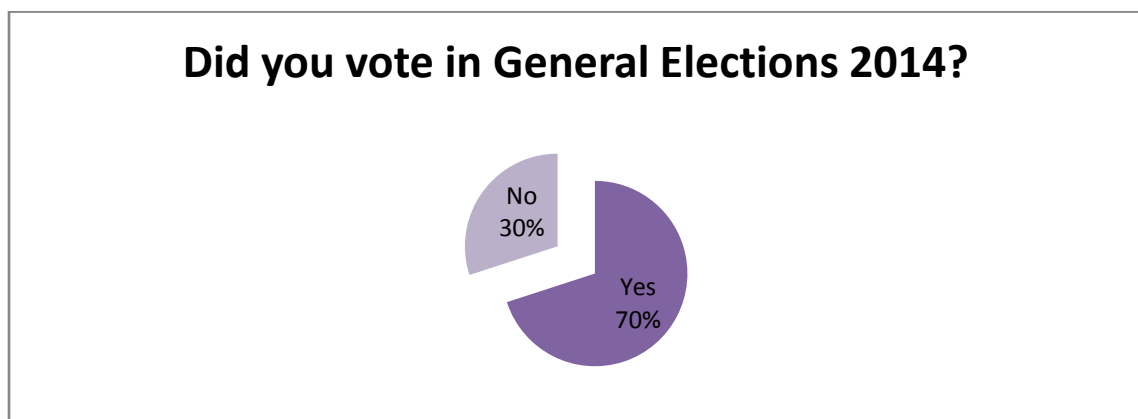


Fig. 2 Respondents who cast their vote in General Elections 2014

Fig. 2 shows that 70 % of the respondents cast their vote in the general elections.

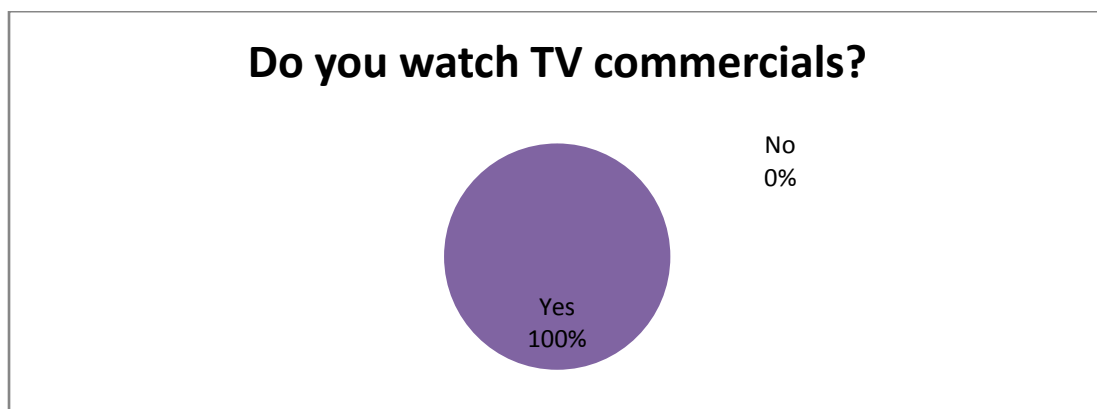


Fig. 3 Respondents who watch TV commercials

Fig. 3 indicates that 100% respondents watch television commercials on regular basis.

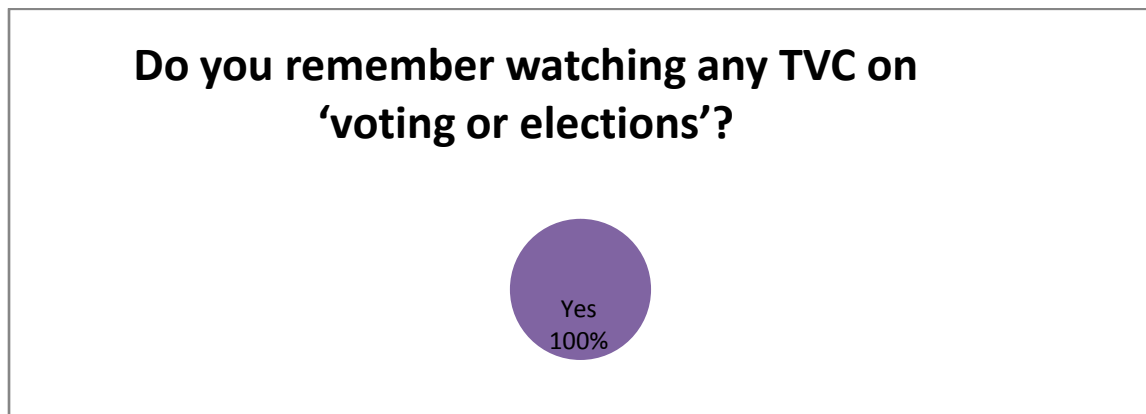


Fig. 4 Respondents remembering watching TVC on 'voting or elections'

Fig. 4 indicates that all respondents i.e. 100% respondents remember watching television commercial with 'voting' or 'elections' as a theme.

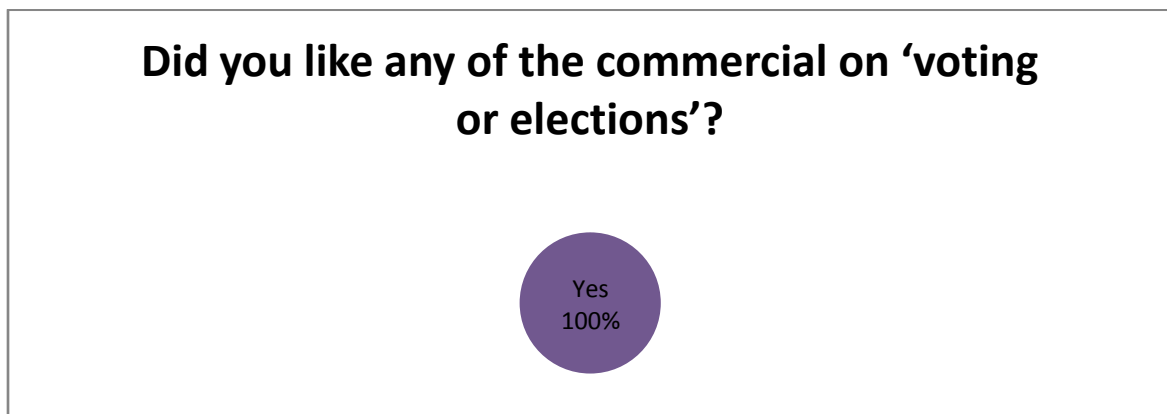


Fig. 5 Respondents like TVC on 'voting' or 'elections'

Fig. 5 indicates that all respondents like TVCs giving social message on 'voting' or 'elections'.

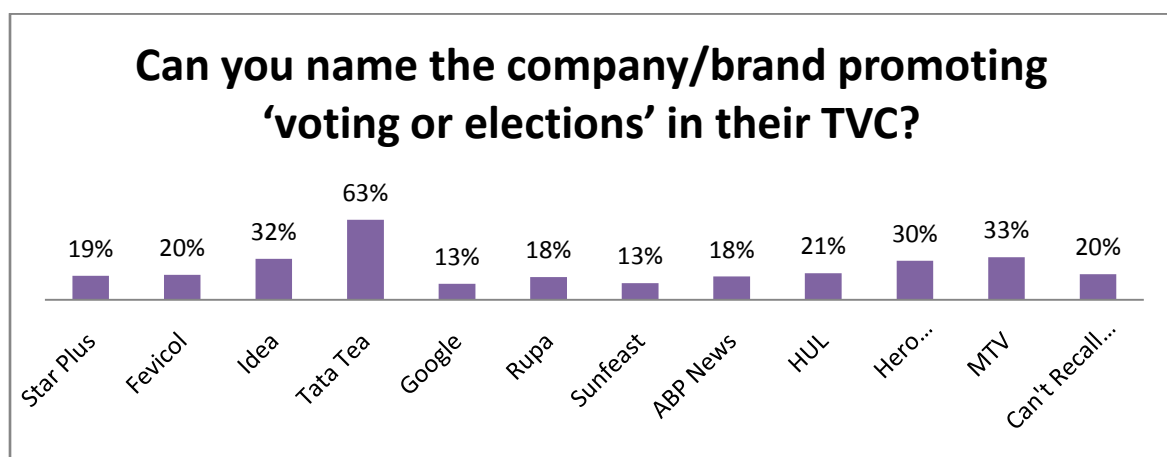


Fig. 6 Respondents' brand recall

Although all respondents remember watching TVC on elections or voting but 20% of them could not recall any brand name. Out of remaining 480 respondents 63% remember watching Tata Tea ad campaign that means maximum brand recall value. 33% remember watching MTV Rock the Vote campaign, 32% remember watching Idea 'no ullu banaoing'

commercial, 30% remember Hero Motocop 'sabse bada talent show'. Some ad campaigns were not recalled by any of the respondent like Vicks, Maruti Wagon R, Havells Fans.

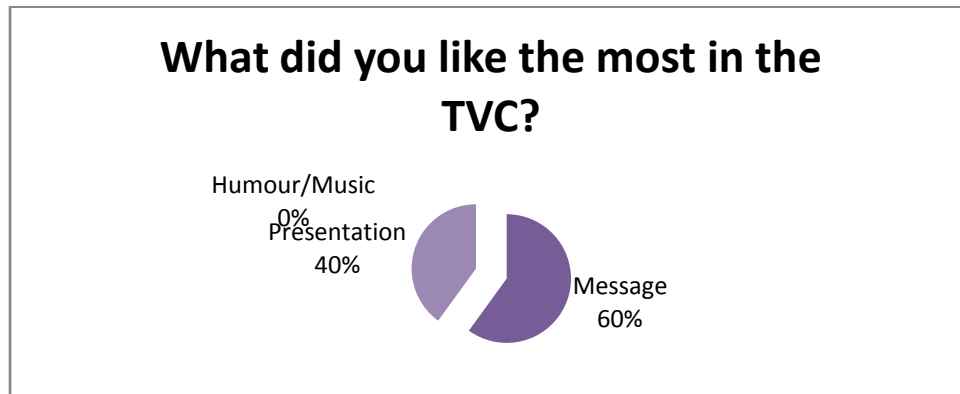


Fig. 7 Reason for liking a television commercial

Fig. 7 shows the reason why respondents liked a particular TVC. 60% said they liked TVC because of the message/content and 40% liked it because of presentation.

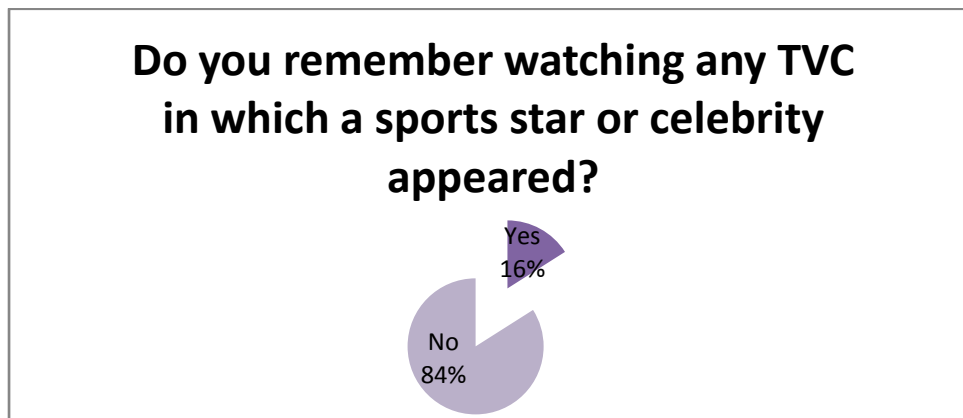


Fig. 8 Respondents who could recall watching any celebrity or sports star in any TVC

Fig. 8 shows that 84% respondents could not recall watching any celebrity or sports star in any of TVC on elections or voting.

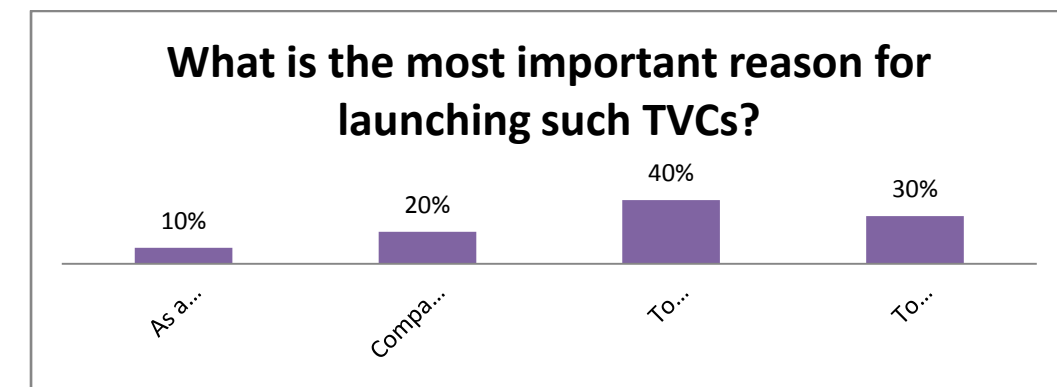


Fig. 9 Reasons for launching such TVCs

Fig. 9 shows reasons why brands launch such advertisements. 40% respondents believe that brands launched ad campaign to encourage electorate to vote. While only 10% believe that brands launched such ad campaign as a CSR initiative.

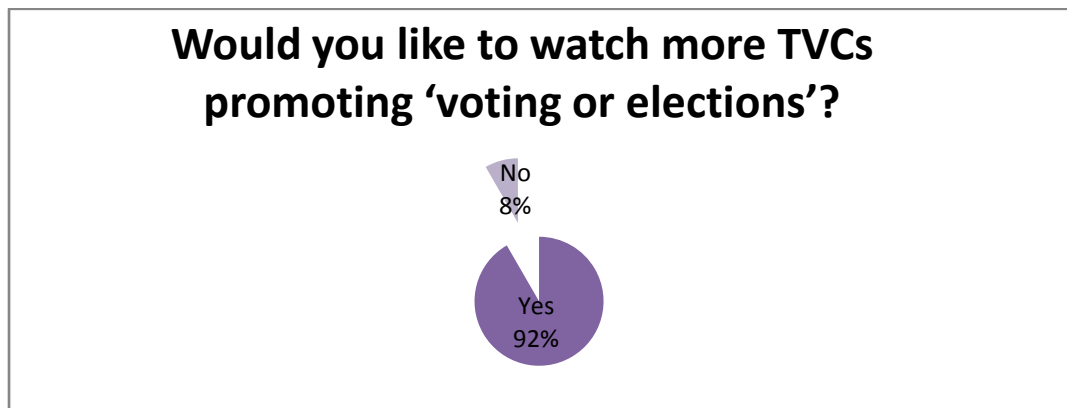


Fig. 10 Respondents would like to watch more social ads

Fig. 10 shows that 92% respondents would like to watch more advertisements giving social message.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings have clearly revealed that social advertising is liked by respondents and advertisements with social message have recall value as well. The data generated in this study shows that television commercials are an important medium used by brands to give social message. TVCs launched by corporate are liked by respondents and have encouraged respondents to cast their vote.

Findings show that television advertisements stimulate quicker recall in respondents.

Respondents can recall brands giving social message in their TVC. This informs that why corporate launch social advertisements. The brand recall is higher for social advertisements but it depends upon the duration of the campaign and repetitiveness of the TVC. For instance, Tata Tea ad has the maximum recall value among the respondents because their campaign was running on television channel for a long time.

Findings also show that using a celebrity in social advertising does not add much value to the brand. In social ad message and presentation becomes more important. A TVC giving social message registers in the mind of the consumers even if a celebrity is not used. It is the message and presentation that motivates the electorate to vote.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Television is the ideal medium for advertising in India. As television commercials are watched by all television viewers. Social Advertising is used by many brands with the aim of encouraging the electorate to vote. It could be concluded that:

1. Social advertising campaigns are liked by viewers
2. TVCs launched by corporate encouraged the electorate to vote
3. TVCs are liked by viewers because of their message and presentation
4. Corporate launch social ads to encourage voters as a part of their CSR initiative.
5. Television advertising is an effective medium to encourage voters to vote.
6. Social advertising adds value to the brand and increases its recall value

The paper recommends that:

1. Brands should use social advertising to attract attention of viewers.
2. Television Commercial launched with the aim of encouraging the electorate to vote has high brand recall.

3. More brands should launch TVC that can inform, educate and create awareness among electorates as a CSR initiative
4. Social Advertising can be used to increase brand recall value

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