



## STICK OUT; DON'T BLEND IN!

FROM THE CHIEF  
CONSULTING  
EDITOR'S DESK

**B**rad Pitt has bagged a new modeling contract, and this time, it's not for any fancy gadget or any car brand or even a men's clothing brand, but for a ladies' perfume – Chanel N° 5.

As expected, this news has got everyone talking about him and the perfume brand. It's also got the cash registers ringing for him, and if all goes well, the cash registers would also be ringing for Chanel. The biggest boost in sales that a brand gets is when people start talking about it, when there is a certain buzz, an excitement around the brand. Ask any marketing expert and he would be ready to give his right arm to find the secret of creating the 'right buzz' around his brand. In fact, the job of advertisements is not necessarily to sell the product, but to get people to notice it; and in the most successful cases, to start talking about it. Chanel N° 5 surely has learnt its lessons well. Decades ago, it had achieved notorious fame, when Marilyn Monroe – on being asked what she wears to bed – had said, "Why, Chanel N° 5 of course!" That, and now this, i.e., getting Brad Pitt as their brand ambassador, has ensured that a lot of people would be talking about the fragrance for a very long time. The brand has managed to beat the clutter and has been able to stand out and get noticed from among the thousands of perfume brands available in the marketplace.

A few years ago, Lux soap decided to do something different to celebrate its 75 years. Known for its advertising strategy of taking Bollywood beauties to endorse its brand, the company decided to stick to the same formula; except that this time, the beauty in the bath tub was not the latest Bollywood heroine, but the latest heartthrob of all the females of the country – Shah Rukh Khan! The strategy worked. People noticed it. Some liked it and some laughed at it, but everybody was talking about it. That is the aim of advertising. As long as I have got you to notice me so that you talk about me, a large part of my work as an advertising man is done.

## STICK OUT, BUT NOT LIKE A SORE THUMB!

Yes, to be noticed, you need to be different, but it needs to be done intelligently. There is a thin line of difference between the acceptable and the unacceptable and one needs to tread the path carefully. A little known airlines named Kulula Airlines (*a South African low cost airline*) has found a way to get noticed. Last month, as the South African president Jacob

Zuma prepared to get married for the fourth time, the airlines too prepared a cheeky promotional ad campaign that claimed, "Fourth wife flies free". Kulula is not the only airlines that has found a way to get noticed. Spirit Airlines has built a unique reputation for itself in coming out with well-timed ads that poke fun at the latest headlines. When news broke out that Arnold Schwarzenegger had fathered a love child 20 years ago because of which his marriage broke, the airlines was quick to come out with an ad stating, "Fares so low, you can take the whole family.. including the half-brother you just met". When Tiger Woods crashed his car into a fire hydrant, the airlines was quick to come out with an 'Eye of the Tiger' sale on its website to promote its low priced fares.

Scandals always get you attention but not necessarily the kind you would like. However, Spirit has used scandals to increase its sales, and nobody is complaining!

Amul Butter has been using the same tactics in India for years now and almost always manages to get our attention with its topical ads. Everybody loves the wit and humor that they bring. The tongue-in-cheek ads are awaited by all. They stand out, and get noticed by all.

In this mad rat-race, standing out has probably become the most important quality for success. Just being good is not enough, you need to be different. However, it's not easy being different. If there is one person in the advertising world who showed the world the power of being different, it was Oliviero Toscani. The ads he created for the clothing giant Benetton changed the way people looked at advertising and acknowledged the tremendous impact an ad was capable of creating. He showed a white and a black child hugging each other and gave the headline, "Angel and Devil". It shocked the world but made Benetton the most talked about fashion label. However, Toscani crossed the line with his, "We on Death Row" series of ads, which featured close ups of 26 US prisoners who had been sentenced to death. There were widespread protests from the individuals, especially from the victims of the families whose loved ones had been killed by these men. Till Toscani used provocative themes like a priest kissing a nun, miners and bakers united by the black of the soot and the white of the flour, a dying AIDS victim with his family, a group of African refugees, *et al*, Benetton could justify the photographs and get away with it; and in the process, also get away with all the attention of the people, as this was the one clothing company



Brands that stick out:  
(Clockwise from far left)  
Brad Pitt, the new brand  
ambassador for Chanel N°  
5; Shah Rukh Khan was  
roped in by Lux for its  
75th anniversary; one of  
the many topical & path  
breaking Amul ads and  
picture of Kullu Airlines,  
which made a cheeky  
reference to South African  
president Jacob Zuma &  
his fourth wife (inset)



There you have it – shock tactics used for a good deed. If you know how not to cross the line, go ahead and follow these brands, for this is a tactic, which, if not used with extreme caution and intelligence, can ruin your brand image forever. If handled well, it can shoot your brand out of obscurity in the shortest possible time and put you ahead of your competitors.

## STICK OUT AND STICK ON!

The aim of a marketing campaign is to make the brand stick out in your memory. Being different, i.e., sticking out, helps in doing that. The golden rule being, do exactly the opposite of what the others are doing. This rule holds true everywhere; the way you dress, the way you apply for a job, the way you advertise and the way you speak. If everyone wears a casual attire to work, wear a suit to stand out. If every competitor of yours is using advertisements with more visuals and less text, do exactly the opposite.

An MBA from Texas desperately wanted to get into the company Accenture, but nothing worked. Ultimately, he decided to do something different. He created a website 'HireMeAccenture.com', which had his flashy photos, his blog and his resume. Yet another job seeker mailed a shoe with his resume stuffed inside it to his potential employer with a note "Just trying to get my foot in the door". One even sent his resume in a pizza box with a note, "Delivering you a great can-

didate". Sometimes, the gimmicks work and sometimes they backfire; but if you have it in you, then a little extra attention goes a long way towards achieving your goal.

So set a goal, a target for yourself, and chase it passionately, while keeping in mind the simple fact that to stick on to people's minds and to be remembered; you need to stick out, and keep thinking of ways of doing things differently from the rest of the world. You will be noticed. Advertisers have been using this trick for decades. Earlier (*even now*), advertisers used beautiful women to sell just about everything. You have a beautiful woman in an ad for a razor, for a shirt, for a men's deo, for a bike, for a car, for just about anything. Now they are using men to sell products used by women!

The rule is simple. If you want to succeed in this highly cluttered and competitive world, then work hard towards not just being good but also towards being different from others, so that you stand out from the crowd. Do not blend in. Make your own rules and you will be noticed. Being noticed is the first step towards success. So while making your strategies, remember, "Stick out, don't blend in!"



(SMS your views with your name  
& topic to +91-9818101234)

whose ads were noticed the most. But the 'death row' series was where it went over the top; Toscani had to resign and Benetton had to apologize. So yes, one needs to stick out, but not like a sore thumb. Shock and scandal are the easiest tools to help one stand out.

Yet another company that has used such shock tactics in its advertising and marketing strategy to stand out is PETA. Its ads have always managed to draw the attention of all. Last year, it even launched its "PETA US triple-X website". It was a provocative idea that immediately caught everyone's attention. Well, that is exactly the purpose of this site – to catch your attention and show you videos of the hideous cruelty being inflicted upon millions of animals in the meat, fur and circus industries. As its manager Mimi Bekhechi says, "Whether through titillation, offense or something in between, PETA will do whatever it takes to draw your attention to animal suffering and create a kinder world for animals."