

SHOCK & SOMBRE

Havells tries to pep up the low-key electrical products category with new ads

Campaign logic • Byravee Iyer



Havells, the Indian electrical products company well known for its "Shock laga" campaign, is at it again. This time, the company has come out with as many as three advertising campaigns in a span of 15 days.

The first of the three features a hangman who feels guilty following an execution. He's visibly upset but hopes to assuage his guilt by turning on the electricity-saving CFL light at his home. The voiceover intones: "Zindagi main hum sabko peap karna padta hai, kuchh to punya kama sakte hai, bijli bachake." (We all commit sins in our lives, but we can also earn blessings by saving electricity).

Where the first ad takes a sombre approach, the second one uses tongue-in-cheek humour. Here, a man is seen trying to switch on a hair dryer but promptly gets a shock. Seeing this, the house maid tries to help him but also ends up getting a jolt. In an effort to separate them, his wife joins in. Finally, the man's son removes the hair dryer with a wooden plank. All this as the famous "Shock laga" plays in the background.

The third and most recent commercial is on Havells' wires. Again, this TVC touches an emotional chord to make its point. It shows a woman lighting candles while her necklace is dangerously close to

catching fire. A domestic help and her son pass by. Upon seeing this, the boy runs and pulls the chain off her neck. He replaces the wire of the chain with a Havells wire and returns it to the woman. The voiceover says: "Wires that don't catch fire."

Getting noticed

For an electrical products company, the advertising barrage is surprising. For one, this is a low-involvement category. On top of that, most people pay little attention to the product and instead, tend to rely on electricians. According to Vijay Narayan, vice-president (marketing and communication), Havells India, that is precisely the kind of behaviour the company wants to change. "We want to make sure consumers know what they are buying; hence we come up with eye-catching advertising that we are sure people will take notice of," he says.

Not surprisingly, the brief given to the company's creative agency, Lowe Lintas, was how to make a boring product interesting. "We decided to take a diametrically different approach and refused to give it a brand personality. That redefined the advertising which is why each ad is so different from the other," explains R Balakrishnan (Balki), chairperson, Lowe Lintas.

But while the company may have the first mover's advantage, competitors like Anchor

are also beginning to advertise on air. To stay ahead of the competition, Havells has kept timing in mind and decided to launch its ad campaign during

the Indian Premier League (IPL). In fact, advertising during IPL has become an unwritten rule at Havells. However, while it was a sponsor in the last two rounds of the series, this time it has opted to merely advertise during matches. "But we stand to benefit as the ad spots are up to 140 seconds from 100 seconds last year," Narayan points out.

The cricket connect

Over the last three years, Havells has strictly come out with ads only during a cricket series. Apart from the IPL, it has run its campaigns during the NatWest series, T20 World Cup as well as the Champions League. And going forward, it intends to follow the same route. "We believe that the nation lives on cricket and it cuts through a lot of people ensuring us high visibility and eyeballs," says Narayan. Balki agrees, "In tournaments like IPL, people don't change channels during breaks because they're keen to know what hap-

pens next."

That said, the company is not ignoring other brand-building exercises. Narayan and his team follow a three-pronged

marketing strategy. Mass communication is tackled through its television campaigns, while micro-marketing is done at the store level as well as through seminars where industry insiders are presented with information

one-on-one. All this hasn't come cheap—the company is shelling out a massive Rs 70 crore this year alone. And it intends to increase that number to Rs 100 crore in the next year.

Further, it is also ramping up its distribution. Havells owns 37 showrooms in the country and intends to add 63 more to take the tally to 100. What is more, it is going to open ten massive Havells Galaxy showrooms too. This is apart from the 30,000 retailers it supplies to.

The hangman ad is produced by Red Ice Films, while the Shock laga film is by Crome Pictures. All three ads are of 45 seconds and will run till the end of IPL, following which the campaign will be revived in upcoming cricket series. 🏏

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