

Environmental Sustainability and Development through Mass Media Campaign

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Abstract

Mass media campaigns for the environmental development are organized by the government alone. Private organizations are not showing enough interest in these types of activities because the expensive is at the higher end. In order to motivate the corporate, government should offer Income Tax exemption to firms that give MMC for environmental friendly activities. This will attract many organizations to enter into environmental safety campaign through mass media. Government should assist in all aspect of the programme to the corporate by asking the local government or organization to support with the corporate in bringing the campaign a success. It is high time we act upon immediately and contain the damage. Organizations should come forward to launch innovative mass media campaigns for environmental development. Let us create a better and cleaner environment for the next generation.

Keywords: Mass Media, campaign, environment, Sustainability, Environmental development

Introduction

Life is a gift and human life is precious gift. A small human brain keeps thinking on innovations and takes the world to a new peak. Mostly, life comes to an end due to accident, natural disaster, chronic and other non-chronic diseases. Among these, most lives are taken by various diseases. Diseases occur to human being even when he/she starts his/her breathe. Over 90% of the diseases occur due to the environmental pollution like air, water, noise etc. We cannot live in pollution less world, except if we live in villages, which is free from air, water and noise pollutions.

In our day to day life, due to the technology advancement, we enormously use the electronic equipments for entertainment and to reduce our work load. Examples are Television, Refrigerator, Microwave Oven, Computers etc. Most of the components in the electronic items are made up of non-recyclable plastics. These plastics, when disposal is not friendly to the environment and create air pollution. Also Freon, the gas that present in the refrigerator will create hole in the ozone layer which leads to passing of the cosmic rays to the atmosphere. These cosmic rays are highly toxic. Microwave Oven also produces toxic gas which is harmful to the environment. During image production, in the film industry, huge amounts of toxic waste are produced. These wastes are not only polluting the environment but also ultimately dangerous to the human life. When producing liquor, waste gases are released in the atmosphere. These gases are highly toxic in nature and affect human beings and plants. For example, the tender coconut in Cuddalore SIPCOT industrial estate is reddish in color due to reaction of chemicals discharged from the chemical industries in that area.

Apart from these, air pollution is the main problem which occurs due to smoke from automobiles. The exhaust carbon from the automobiles pollute the environment and create chronic diseases like asthma. To regulate this, a fuel called Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) has been introduced by the government in New Delhi. In addition to the automobile pollution, some other industries are also polluting both air and water like sugar industries, tanneries, dyeing industries, etc.

One simple way to overcome this problem is keeping the environment green. Plants produce Oxygen that we need and absorb Carbon-di-oxide that we release. So it is better to say "Green plants are our friends". That's why many organizations are following the practice of planting trees along the roadsides and other areas. In India, all metros are strictly following and carrying the caption "Keep the City Clean and Green".

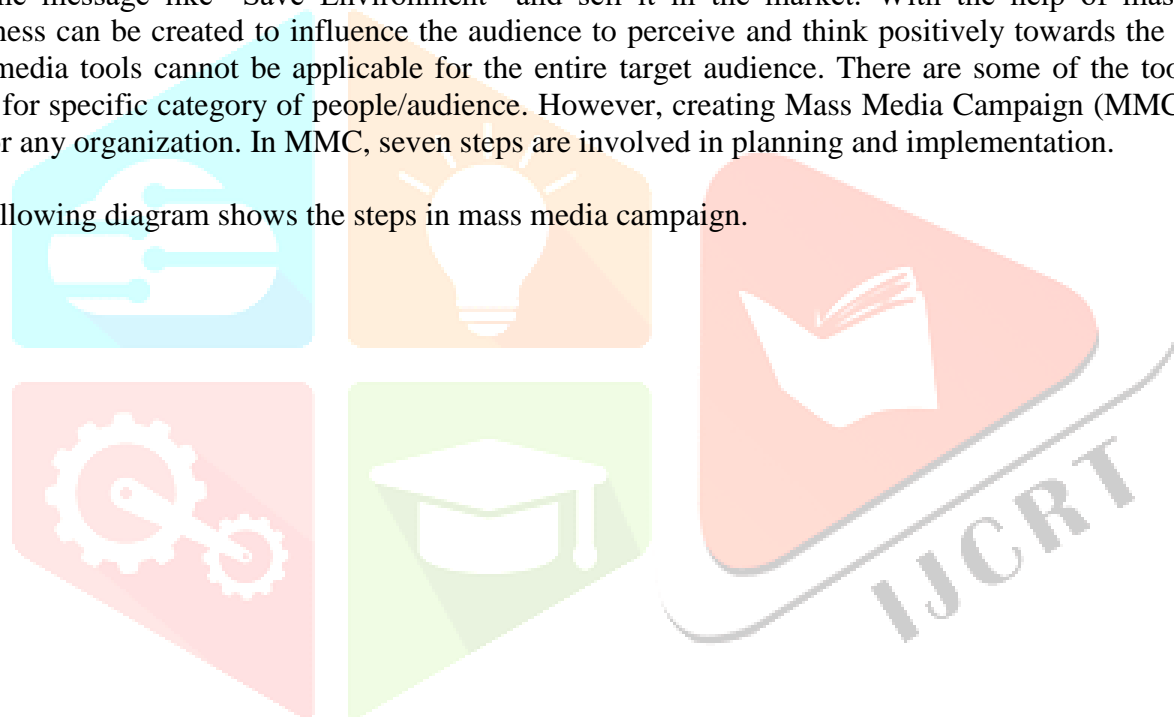
In the past, Government has controlled the environmental safety activities whereas now some private organizations are concentrating on these issues, which makes other private companies to follow. To protect the environment, many ways are followed by the corporate, among which Mass Media is an important means of creating awareness. Mass media can easily penetrate into large audience so that any message conveyed to the public is easily understood.

What is mass media?

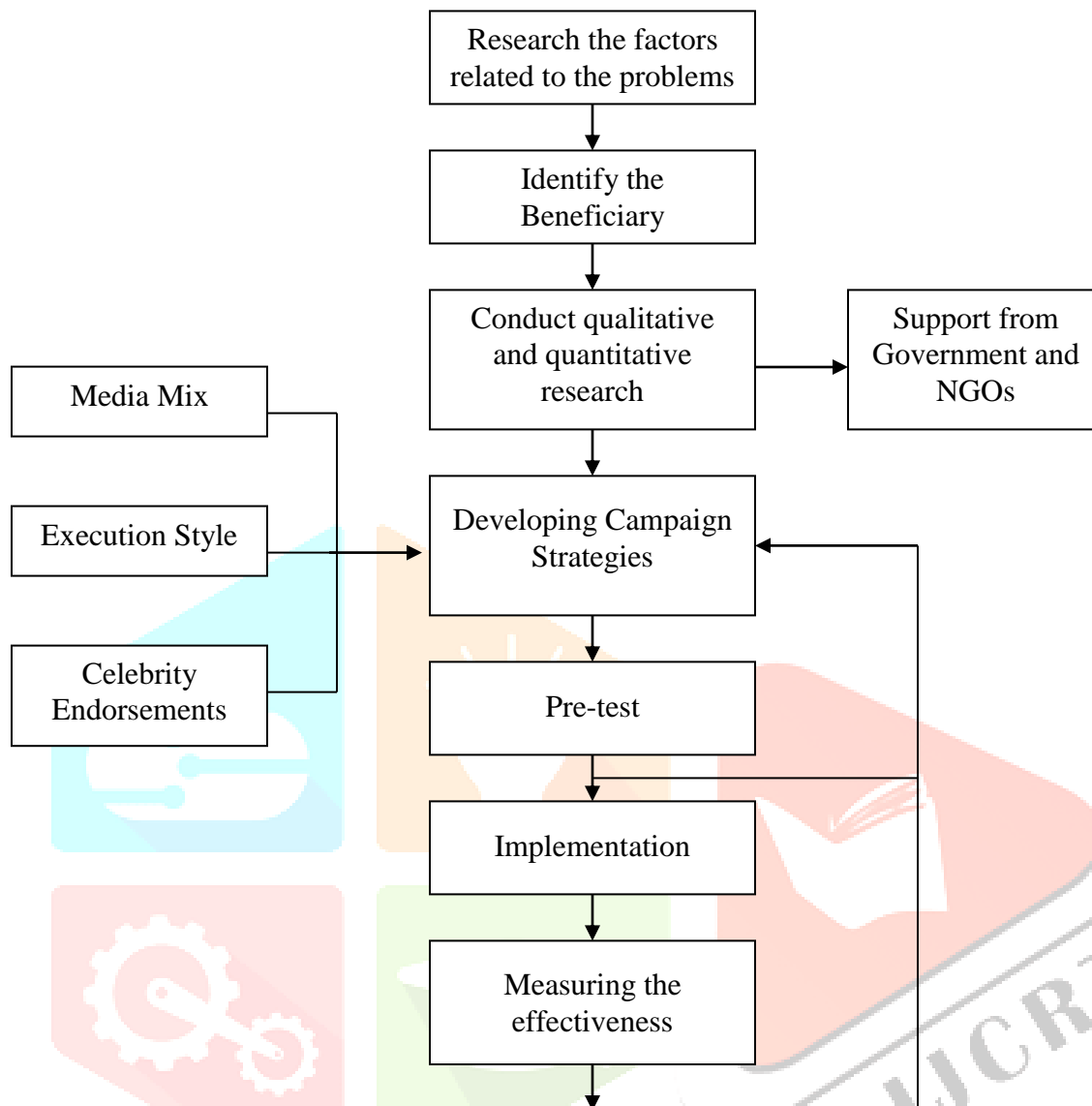
Mass media is the media that carries or conveys the message and information to the target audience. Here, there is no interpersonal communication between the communicator and the audience. Tones (1996) pointed out that mass media campaign have the ability to reach large number of people. He highlighted that there is a wide range of strategies to be considered under the headings of mass media. These include print, electronic, films, leaflets and posters, carrier bags, postage stamps, pens and greeting cards.

This advantage of Mass media can be encashed to use this as one of the best ways of communicating to the target groups about the environmental pollution and problems. To create awareness about the importance of keeping our environment Green, organizations develop drama, skit and telecast in the television or broadcast in the radio. Since sending greeting cards is a growing culture among the educated people, it could be printed with the message like "Save Environment" and sell it in the market. With the help of mass media, the awareness can be created to influence the audience to perceive and think positively towards the message. All mass media tools cannot be applicable for the entire target audience. There are some of the tools which are meant for specific category of people/audience. However, creating Mass Media Campaign (MMC) is a crucial task for any organization. In MMC, seven steps are involved in planning and implementation.

The following diagram shows the steps in mass media campaign.



Steps in Mass Media Campaign for Environmental Development



Steps in MMC Development

1. Research the factors related to the environmental problems

The first and foremost step is identifying the factors related to the environment problem. It is based on the nature of the issues and the campaign meant for that problem. For example if it is a campaign to emphasize not to release the exhaust gas in the atmosphere, then they should identify the causes of this toxic gas, how it is harmful to the environment, public and what are the necessary actions to be taken etc. So identifying the factors is the primary task in any mass media campaign.

2. Identify the target group (Beneficiaries)

Once the factors are identified, then the beneficiaries must be found out, because the campaign is meant for a specific group. For example, in automobile sector, the benefits of using CNG should be informed to the automobile owners and not to the other general public.

3. Conduct qualitative and quantitative research

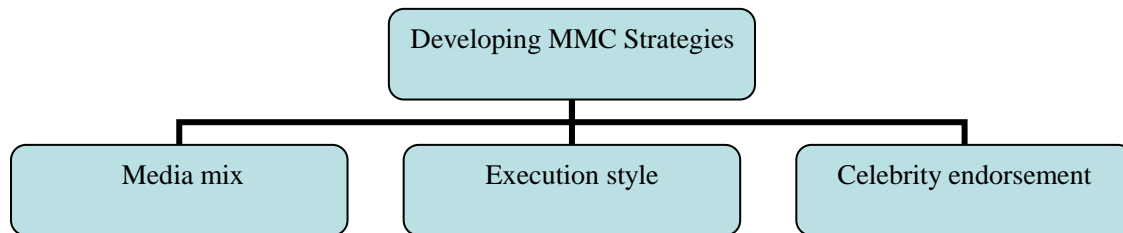
For collecting secondary data both qualitative and quantitative, necessary data may be collected from government department. For example, awareness about environmental pollution in a particular area, number of industries closed mainly due to pollution problem in an area, level of pollution etc. If we need primary data we

can collect by conducting survey. For example people knowledge hold industries pollute environment and that impact on society.

4. Developing campaign strategies related to the environmental problem

This is the crucial task for any organization. The development of campaign strategies is comprised of three components viz Media mix, Execution style and Celebrity endorsements. Each component has its own merits and demerits.

Components in Developing MMC Strategies



Media mix

Four types of media are available, namely electronic, print, outdoor and direct mail. Electronic way of sending messages can easily be understood even by the illiterates and the number of audience for which the message targeted can also be high. Here the cost involved is more. If the message is meant for general public, then electronic media can be preferred. In addition to this if the message is targeted to a specific and small group, compact discs (CDs), or Video cassettes can be prepared and sent to them. Print media has the advantage of low cost and high reach. The only drawback of this print media is it can be understood only by the educated persons. Corporate should prepare the printed message in the form of cartoons, drawings, pictures etc, to have attraction and the illiterate can also understand the concept. In cities and towns, one could see the hoardings highlighting the importance of rain water harvesting, planting trees etc which are coming under the Outdoor media. Companies should come forward to use this media to create awareness about the various environmental problems and issues.

Execution Style

The message executed contributes to the relevance, originality and impact of the campaign. Execution style deals with the kind of appeal the campaign should possess. Organizations can adopt different execution styles like straight forward message, fear appeal, etc.

- i. Straight forward messages: Here the actual message conveys information without any gimmicks, emotions, or special effects
- ii. Fear appeal: Public is informed about the danger or negative effects of particular message.
- iii. Humorous appeal: By seeing the campaign people enjoy and relish which in turn make them to listen and understand the message.

Other execution styles include emotional appeal, utility, slice of life etc.

Celebrity Endorsements

As the corporate found difficult to gain/attract the attention of the audience, they use celebrity endorsements as a strategy to influence people. Celebrities are famous personalities who are known to the public. Because of their fame, celebrities serve not only to create and maintain attention but also to achieve high recall rates of the messages (Croft et al, 1996; Friedman & Friedman, 1979). People love celebrities because the characteristics of the later are liked by them. Studies show that celebrities create positive attitude towards the advertisements or campaign and perceives the message in a positive or highly favorable manner. Social influence theory which includes the source credibility and source attractiveness argues that various characteristics of a perceived communication source may have a beneficial effect on message receptivity (Kelman, 1961). Also the cultural meanings residing in a celebrity go beyond the person and are passed on to the product or campaign (McCracken, 1989). The campaign that uses celebrities will have high impact among the target audience. So, if the organizations want to influence the audience in short period, they could use

celebrities in their campaign. Celebrities should be used based on the nature of the campaign and target audience.

5. Pre-testing

Following the development of MMC strategies, pre-testing must be done. Pre-testing refers to testing the campaign with a small group of target audience or in a particular geographical region. Based on the feedback, any alteration on the campaign, can be carried out prior to finalizing the campaign strategy. In case of planting trees, the format of the campaign can be circulated among similar organizations or with social welfare clubs to seek their views for improving.

6. Implementation

The pre-tested campaign strategy, after modifying the pitfalls, is ready for implementation. While doing so, it is suggested to start implementing from smaller area and extend to larger area. Also the campaign should be monitored whether it has achieved the company's social objective or not.

7. Measuring the Effectiveness

Any campaign must be evaluated to find out the progress of it. In the same way MMC must also be monitored and evaluated regularly. A separate team must be involved in evaluating the campaign. Deviations identified must be bring to the notice of chief campaign officer for incorporating suitable remedial action.

Suggestions

So far mass media campaigns for the environmental development are organized by the government alone. Private organizations are not showing enough interest in these types of activities because the expensive is at the higher end. Since social work is other part of the organizations objective, giving mass media campaigns alone will require huge investment as the advertising agencies extract more amounts which is affordable by few big organization,. Obviously, firm show less interest in these kinds of activities. One way of overcoming this hurdle is both advertisement agencies and media owners need to come forward to offer concessions to the organizations which are imparting MMC related to the environmental safety.

In order to motivate the corporate, government should offer Income Tax exemption to firms that give MMC for environmental friendly activities. This will attract many organizations to enter into environmental safety campaign through mass media. Government should assist in all aspect of the programme to the corporate by asking the local government or organization to support with the corporate in bringing the campaign a success.

In European countries, the private organizations are doing the social activities particularly in environment safety. As in other countries, like India also these programmes should be extended to the private organization. Also, the organizations should allocate some percentage of amounts towards the social activities in their annual budget. This will bring our country a "Green India" in near future.

Conclusion:

Tons of industrial effluent and sludge generated everyday is inflicting permanent damage to our ecosystem. It is equivalent to poisoning ourselves and the future generation. It is high time we act upon immediately and contain the damage. Organizations should come forward to launch innovative mass media campaigns for environmental development. Let us create a better and cleaner environment for the next generation.

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