

Who cares!



Dhaleta Surender Kumar  
Deputy Editor, Pitch  
surender@pitchonnet.com

# Lip service?

*Marketers are moving beyond 'cause' to focus on 'movement marketing'. Yet they fail, when the situation demands them to 'rise'*

The last month or so, saw a lot of similar kind of advertising, which can be dubbed as movement marketing, and if it's a coincidence that they were launched along side the Anna Hazare movement, it's a beautiful coincidence. *Hum mein hai Hero* of the rechristened Hero MotoCorp, *Values are Stronger than Steel* of Tata Steel and *Spark the Rise* of Mahindra. Add to that the TVC for Nokia C-200, which shows an exam question paper being leaked out and the protagonist backing his ethics forcefully.

While, it is the middle class that made Anna the brand, it is also the middle class' wallet share that most of the marketers vie for. Amidst all this, what's disappointing is that none of the brands raised the issue. Save for a subtle, indirect TVC by Lay's. Rather than raising the issue, it tried to piggy ride the fasting wave across the nation. The TVC was totally in bad taste and made small talk of a serious issue. That raises a big question – do brands just pay lip service with their big talk of being a catalyst in shaping the nation.

More than any other brand, what was most disappointing was Tata Tea's deafening silence on the issue, which has been for years now giving a clarion call of *Jaago Re* to root out corruption. The campaign seamlessly fits into the issue.

While I have doubts if Anna's version of legislation can root out corruption, but realistically, charity begins at home and more work has to be done at the grassroots level. Therein, corporate brands like Tata, Mahindra, Godrej, Bharti, Aditya Birla, which are India's face to the world need to stand up and take responsibility of shaping the new India. Some might say that Tata after being found embroiled directly or indirectly in the 2G scam wanted to play it safe and didn't want to sound preachy, it rather took a safer route of talking about values rather taking the bull by the horns. While, I may disagree with much of Anna's ideology, and brands too needn't take any sides, they didn't even support the issue, which not only concerns the middle

class but corporates as well who have to pay crores to Rajas and Kalmadis of the murky world to get a telecom spectrum.

Meanwhile, Erin Schrode, "a young ecoRenaissance woman" and co-founder of US-based Teens Turning Green campaign, has been retweeted thousands of times for asking the question: "Companies know scary amounts about us but what do we know about them?" at the One Young World Summit held in Zurich, Switzerland from September 1-4.

A little more research on Schrode lead me to an interview, where she told Huffington Post, "... we have the power to make ourselves heard; the digital revolution has not only made information instantly available at our fingertips, but has also enabled us to disseminate messages at the drop of a hat. Everyone is connected, yet no one is in control – and that is the decentralisation aspect working to our advantage, empowering the masses of people."

It's time that Indian corporates too came clean and were transparent. They know much about me and have filtered down my spending habits, my likes/dislikes from my may be credit card bills, may be my phone's movement (remember FourSquare), Facebook, Twitter and what not. They know more than what I would have cared to know about my habits. Yet, companies fail to be transparent about the number of customer complaints they get, the type of complaints they get and what they do to resolve the issues, how many dissatisfied customers deserted them and the number of issues resolved eventually.

But eventually who's in control? Was Tata Tea in control? What's Rise all about? And what are Values all about? And yet, no one will be ready to be part of RTI Act, if it is extended to the corporate world. ■

*The views expressed here are of the author alone, and do not necessarily reflect the views of Pitch*

**Companies know much about me and have filtered down my spending habits, my likes/dislikes from my may be credit card bills, may be my phone's movement... They know more than what I would have cared to know about myself**