

Harish Bijoor on Mrigashira

Radha

Hi, Harish, welcome to Mrigashira. It's great to have you with us today and also talk about one of the controversial topics doing rounds, currently.

Harish Bijoor

Thank you. My pleasure being with you.

Radha

The Layer SHOT ad, right, and all the controversy surrounding it. I just wanted to get your thoughts on how do you see this? Is this something where a case of, you know, any publicity is good publicity? Or is it according to you an error of judgement?

Harish Bijoor

Well, I don't think this is as much an error of judgement, as it is a piece of what I typically would call spit and run advertising. The idea simply is, you know, make a piece of advertising that is controversial enough to come into public limelight, to come into editorial limelight, to get into, you know, the television networks, the radio networks get on to Mrigashira as well, as of today, if you look at it, I think it's about creating noise and getting out because they do know that they will be stopped, they will be banned. And I think that's the basic idea.

Radha

But will they not impact their reputation, even if it is in them in the short and mid term if not, in the long term.

Harish Bijoor

You know, there are two markets in India. One is the reputation centric, reputation owning, reputation oriented market. The other is, you know, to hell with it all market, in terms of saying that, you know, as you put it any publicity is good publicity, if I make noise, I will be noticed. Because one of the key aspects of a brand is the fact that it requires awareness, it all starts with awareness. Awareness is the mother, and everything else is a subset of it, you know, the interest that you develop in a brand is a subset of awareness, the desire you create, to own that brand is a subset of that interest you create, and the action of sale, which actually occurs at the marketplace is a subset of that desire you have created. So, if the awareness is really large, you know, the subset will be, you know, monetizable enough, that seems to be the basic idea.

Radha

So, you know, it's almost becoming like a template, right? And it goes on social media, they're a conversation, celebrities have an opinion, they air it, and then it just gets blown out.

Harish Bijoor

Absolutely, you know, it is a template, as you put it, because it's not only traditional media, but it's social media as well, you know, every tom, dick and Harish, I included, have tweeted about it. So if you really look at it, you know, it creates noise, it creates impact, you know, every small tweet adds to its value. So, that is the point, you know, such templates must be stopped. Because, socially speaking, and psychologically speaking, and even from the, from the viewpoint of the psyche of a person, you're helping build in society, it is negative, and therefore, this template surely must be stopped.

Radha

But how do you stop it because you know, there are bodies like ASCI, which has not been able to do much, even in this case, I think ASCI entered much later.

Harish Bijoor

Yeah, bodies such as ASCI are not regulatory are just pure regulatory bodies, you know, they are not judicial bodies, bodies, such as ASCI, do not have teeth enough to stop the creation of new pieces of advertising or legislating against them, etc. Yes, this lies in the domain of the public, a piece of litigation, which which will be fought for years, and then you know, settled and therefore people know that, you know, you can get away with murder rank murder, how can you stop it? If that is the key question? I do believe sterner action, firmer action, decisive action, quick action. And what is that? I do believe stopping or banning the advertising of such a creative is not enough because the task has been done. It's gone viral. That's one way of doing it. The second way of doing it which is phase two, is really to say that you know, I will ban the brand And all together. Okay, now that is decisive. Now, you see, the idea is this, that if a brand has created some kind of societal harm, some kind of psychological harm, some kind of an attitude building in people, which is negative to society, like possibly pieces of this advertising, one needs to be careful and say that, you know, hey, maybe the brand must be pulled out of the market, not the advertising. Now, that is done, it's tough action. Because you know, why is a brand built to ensure that you know, it is able to sell now, if the brand is not available, you will not be able to sell. So that's phase two action. Phase three action is one step beyond. And that is, you know, social rectification. It is to go up to a brand and say that, hey, you're hurt the brand you have hurt the psyche of people, and you have to rectify it with positive advertising. And what is this positive advertising? I think, you know, that positive advertising will need to be funded by you in terms of saying, you know, building your, you know, classes in schools, which will teach how to respect a woman or a girl child, let's say, you know, stuff like that. I think we are still stuck on phase one action, which is not enough. I think at least phase two action is necessary.

Radha

Yeah, but who's going to bell the cat?

Harish Bijoor

Well, governments can take these kinds of decisions. You know, there is the process of registering a brand. Do we have a process of deregistering a brand? You know, that's what I'm talking about. A deregistered brand cannot be sold in a country.

Radha

Yeah. And also, you know, I think category wise perfume brands have always had you know, bordered around what is modest and what is immodest? Right, I mean, and this as a category has always been in that in that zone. And is there any specific reason why perfume ads have been doing this?

Harish Bijoor

Oh, well, perfume is meant to be lifestyle. And you know, when you look at pieces of advertising such as this, it could it could be termed to be you know, building a kind of a lifestyle in a particular part of the market, which is ready to take this kind of a lifestyle. Of course, on a lighter weight, I will say that every brand, as I say, in my brand theories has a brand solid as a brand liquid, and has a brand gas, no perfume category. Ads are really all about the gas. And when you sell a gas, new you're coming communication is also reasonably gassy.

Radha

Yeah, true. And, and do you see more and more of such advertising happening? Is this something that's going to become a norm? Do you see this becoming a norm?

Harish Bijoor

Actually, this will become around norm, if it is allowed to become a no, a simple action, like banning a piece of advertising is actually going to help others think and say, Hey, let me make an ad. Let me air it for six days, by the time all of society wakes up, you know, the task would be done, and I get out, and what's more, I get editorial publicity, which is much more valuable. And you know, let's do it. So I think that's one of the reasons it's not this one brand that has done it. And it's not for that reason that I would recommend stronger action. I would recommend stronger actions basically to dissuade other brands doing the same thing time and again, nudging you know society into a bit of a tizzy.

Radha

Okay, thanks a lot thanks Harish for your time, it was great talking to you