

News monitored for: Pepsi - Brands

EXPRESSNewsline



POOJA PILLAI AND DEBESH BANERJEE

SOME compelling snapshots leap out of an early morning scene at the sprawling vegetable market in Dadar, Mumbai. Men stand in the back of trucks unloading fruits, vegetables and other produce. Baskets change hands with photographic urgency as a chain of quick little actions cuts through the crisp morning air. The latest Pepsi commercial has given the entire country an idea of what this could look like. It has English cricketer Kevin Pietersen being trained in his famous 'switch hit' by a village man. Pietersen does a 'palti hit' by relieving a truck of its watermelons and is rewarded by — yes you guessed it — a drink of Pepsi. At the end of the ad, Pietersen is encouraged by his trainer to do the same on the field while playing for the ICC Cricket World Cup.

This is just one of the many in the funky, earthy, earnest series of advertisements from the soft drink giant that helped unleash the World Cup fever. A small-town man teaches Mahendra Singh Dhoni the 'helicopter shot'; actor Ranbir Kapoor trains Virender Sehwag in his 'upar cut'; a young woman drops her *pallu*, then picks it up to teach Sri Lankan player Tillakaratne Dilshan his famous 'dilscoop', and a hip college student instructs Harbhajan Singh aka Bhajji in bowling the 'doosra'. At a time when 'Go India Go' became the mantra for most of the campaigns around the World Cup, Pepsi's campaign, created by Mumbai-based agency TapRoot India, stands out. It cuts through jingoistic anthems to connect directly with the masses.

"When I first heard the scripts, I knew this campaign would make an instant connection with the public. It celebrates the unorthodoxy that has risen

Changing the FAME

Talk meets the crew behind Pepsi's latest series of commercials that changed the game outside the pitch, making 'doosra' and 'dilscoop' everyday words



THE GAMECHANGERS: MS Dhoni (centre) with the production team during the shoot (above); Ads featuring (top, from left) Harbhajan Singh; Virender Sehwag and Ranbir Kapoor; Kevin Pietersen; and Billy Bowden

in cricket in recent years. It shows that cricket is still a young, growing and relevant game and its innovations need to be recognised," says Praseon Pandey of Corcoise Films, who filmed these ads.

That's precisely what TapRoot was aiming for, says Santosh Padhi, co-founder of the agency. "Everyone re-

members Pepsi's 'Nothing Official About It' campaign when Coca Cola was one of the sponsors of the 1996 World Cup," Padhi says. TapRoot wanted a bold, innovative and youthful campaign. "So, we thought of highlighting the improvisations and innovations that have crept into the game in recent years." To highlight the

game's changing character, the agency even shot an ad with umpire Billy Bowden, known for his quirky signals.

They omitted formats which would show cricketers being above the common people. "The real beauty of the campaign comes from the fact that commoners are using familiar things, to teach these cricketers their highly

unusual style. Who would've thought that Anjala Zaveri would show Dilshan the technique for his 'dilscoop' by dropping her *pallu* and then draping it again," says Padhi.

In fact, all elements — music, styling and locations — had to be just right to ensure the mass connect. While the ads were all shot in Mumbai,

the sets were built to resemble a vegetable market and a village field among others. "We shot in an actual sari shop in Dadar for the Dilshan ad," says Padhi. All the characters in the ads had to look believable. That's why actor Anshuman Jha was dressed street style in a *ganji*, printed shirt and faux aviators. Designer Aki Narula kept the masses in mind even while styling for Ranbir Kapoor. "It's a red and blue checked shirt, cleverly using the brand colours but more importantly, it's a very affordable look," he says.

The music captures the soul of the campaign, affably switching tones. "Each ad film showed a different aspect of the game. So we just played around with the tunes to arrive at something that sounded nice and celebratory," says composer Loy Mendonsa, of Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy. "Since the Kapoor-Sehwag campaign was a choreographed dance number, the music was groovy. In Dhoni's commercial, it had rustic appeal."

The radio campaign and the theme song for the advertisement series, too, celebrate this need for change. Swanand Kirkire and Shantanu Moitra of *3 Idiots* fame composed the track *Bindaas Badlo Yeh Game*. "We created lyrics that were in sync with the nature of the campaign. It is about the youth taking risks and striving for excellence. It isn't just restricted to cricket alone," says Kirkire. He is right. Pepsi ads have changed the face of the advertising industry.