

News monitored for: Pepsi - Brands

# Pepsi soaks in the sun

In a new digital campaign the company blurs the lines between brand pitch and social responsibility, looks to stay relevant with its young consumers



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The film begins in darkness but ends with a Pepsi bottle (unbranded but identifiable by its unique shape), all lit up and brightly dispelling the shadows around a young girl and her grandmother. The digital-only campaign launched by the company tells the story of an initiative between Pepsico and MyShelter Foundation called 'Liter of Light' that has helped over 200 residents in a hamlet near Vadodara in Gujarat light up their homes. For Pepsi, the film and the story are among the many ways it is bringing purpose to the brand and in a way, helping it connect with millennial consumers.

Consumer surveys show that the young and the digitally savvy are looking to associate with socially correct brands, not just consume them. A story like this hits all the right spots with all the people. It also conveys the brand's story says the company. Anshul Khanna, director of marketing-Pepsi, Pepsico India says, "We do several projects like water conservation, waste management etc. under our CSR (corporate social responsibility) programme. This is not a part of conventional CSR. It's more about bringing 'purpose' to the brand."

The film tells the story of a village, about 110 kms from

Vadodara and its residents who have no light in their homes, even during the day. The village is surrounded by water and its 216 residents can reach the mainland only by boats. Their homes have no windows lest snakes and other pests crawl in and hence are dark even during the day. Liter of Light worked on a solution in partnership with Pepsi and used plastic soft drink bottles, water, bleach and small pieces of corrugated metal to make bottle lights. A bottle light produces up to 55 watts of clear light across a 40 square meter room. They require no electricity and are inserted through the roofs of houses and sealed to prevent leaks. A bottle costs around ₹130 to make and can be installed in about 30 minutes by community volunteers with minimal training

Many see this initiative, now being run as a digital campaign 'Sun in a bottle' by PepsiCo, as a way to weave a positive story around the brand when cola drinks are seen as unhealthy. But even they agree that the story is remarkable and despite its use in an ad campaign, the ingenuity of the initiative is striking.

Brand expert and observer, N Chandramouli, CEO of brand intelligence company

## CAMPAIGN TRAIL

- **2015:** A crowdsourcing initiative launched with the IPL called 'Crash the Pepsi'. Pepsi drinkers were asked to make an ad and it involved extensive engagement with YouTube content creators. Helped amplify brand message across digital and social platforms
- **2016:** #PepsiMoji campaign, entailed creating customised content for people, developing an exclusive PepsiMoji keyboard and other assets like a mood vending machine. Created strong digital connect with consumers, the company says
- **2016:** Digital film, 'Sun in a bottle' made by JWT and Fire Cracker Films tells the story of Pepsico's joint initiative with a global NGO. Makes the brand more relevant to millennial consumers, the company believes

TRA says, "The intention here is unquestionable. The campaign seems genuine, it is not as frivolous as using PET bottles for street lighting." What's more striking is that the bottles have no branding, except for one point in the film where the camera zooms in on the bottle cap with a Pepsi logo. At the end of the film the Pepsi logo shares the screen with Liter of Light, but there is no direct reference to the product.

The cola bottle is an intrinsic part of the project says Khanna, pointing out that this

makes the initiative different from conventional CSR projects that the company undertakes. It began in 2011 when PepsiCo Philippines partnered with MyShelter Foundation to install simple, inexpensive and environmentally friendly bottle lights in homes and streets in impoverished communities. The initiative caught on and approximately 1,500 volunteers have installed bottled lights in more than 1,000 houses benefitting more than 5,200 people, the company says. In India over 150 homes in five villages have benefited and Pepsi says that it has managed to initiate over 400 lighting solutions (inclusive of both day and night lighting) around its plants in Bharuch in Gujarat and Mamandur in Tamil Nadu.

Conventional or not, Chandramouli says that CSR done well surely benefits brands. "Such initiatives and campaigns around them create a 'positive cycle' that encourages others to follow. It is also recycling used PET bottles which would otherwise go into landfill." He feels that instead of run-of-the-mill projects, a novel one like this is sure to strike a chord with the target consumer.

Khanna says that the film is not a regular ad campaign either. He says that they have not released it as a TVC as a 30-second slot would have hardly done justice to the concept and the initiative. "We have not ruled out coming up with a TVC at a later date. But, as of now, it would remain as a digital campaign only." He adds that the film does not in any way mark a departure from the core brand communication of PepsiCo which is embedded in pop culture and the youth. It might just be a step in the direction of retelling the brand's story to the millennial generation in a way that makes it more relevant. Increasingly and especially the young consumer wants brands to demonstrate a social conscience. A film like this appeals to their sensibilities.

"PepsiCo's chairman and CEO Indra Nooyi," says Chandramouli, "has recently said that the brand has to become more relevant to current times. And such initiatives might just be a step in the direction."