

**ANEESHA MOTWANI'S VIEWS ON DEBUNKING MYTHS ABOUT PR  
- THE ROLE OF PR IN MARKETING -**

*PR can help change perceptions...*

Role of PR is not limited. Public Relations today has become an essential medium of communication. It is a basic human need. It's an effective tool used by everyone to influence **perceptions**.

E.g.: Saurav Ganguly's current perception is negative among the masses and he certainly needs effective PR to help change and manage his perception. In contrast, Sachin Tendulkar appears to be a winner, courtesy his well-managed PR yielding a positive perception.

Everyone needs PR. Everyone expects to be seen and heard in a desirable way. We need to be seen as better than others.

E.g.: Today, Sania Mirza's persona is built up through her PR. She has a killer attitude and has become an icon for the youth because of her well-managed PR.

***PR is required to change perceptions***

Film stars, celebrities, sport stars, politicians etc. want to present themselves as the best and therefore they need PR.

Even brands need good PR. They need to be talked about, heard as better than their competitor. When the product is right but PR is wrong, it damages the image of the product. E.g. Saurav Ganguly

*PR is essential for brand building. ...*

Highlighting the positive features of a brand will help change its negative perceptions in the eyes of its consumers and increase its demand in the marketplace.

Brands which gained its recognition solely on the strength of PR:

- Windows 95
- Viagra
- Starbucks
- Body Shop
- Red Bull
- Harry Potter
- Google
- Tampax Tampons

*People believe in content much more than advertisements today...*

**PR generates credibility.**

*Advertising is a wind...it blows BUT PR is like the sun...always shining*

PR is **content**. ...Advertising is imposition

PR makes **people take action**...Advertising may not

**PR has the credibility in creating interest and desire on the part of a potential purchaser where advertising lacks that credibility.**

Today PR spends are between one to five per cent. It changes from category and needs of a brand in its lifecycle.

### **Measurement of PR**

Quantitative Reach -the quantitative reach is determined by:

- Number of impressions
- Exposure
- Readership
- Reach

*It is more important to measure PR than advertising, because there is no control on it...*

Qualitative Reach - The qualitative reach is determined by:

- Tone of the article
- Mention of key messages
- Visuals
- Placement of the article

### **Issue**

Chevrolet OPTRA's decline in the sales

### **Strategy**

During the month of April and May the volumes dipped by 50 per cent. There was a perception in the market that Optra provides poor. The existing owners of the car spread the word around that Optra is a great car but gives very poor mileage.

*Chevrolet Optra campaign...*

GM considered running an advertising campaign but realised that marketing alone would not help. There was a gap between the perception and reality. In order to change perceptions, GM voted in favour of using PR. They targeted five select auto journalists and gave them an Optra each to test drive for one week. The reports filed by these journalists in leading auto magazines, gave a good score to the car on all the parameters and significantly mentioned that the product has a mileage of 12.2 km.

An advertising campaign was created subsequent to these media reports and the company used these endorsements of the mileage figure in all its communications to change perceptions. Also consumer contest was developed around the car and announced on NDTV. The winner had to guess what was new with the Optra in order to get the car as a prize.

This helped in changing the perception about the car in the market and helped GM to regain the desired positioning of the car.

*The entire strategy started with PR and ended with PR*

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

*PR communicates the same messages as advertising.*

Aneesha replied that advertising can just give short-term impact but PR is long term. PR manages the personality of the brand. Hence PR is always stronger than advertising.

*How do you justify  
advertising as wind  
and PR as Sun?*

*Did the campaign  
for Optra help the  
company?*

Aneesha said sales did increase as compared to the past records. The increase was not 100 per cent but with time one saw growth.

*(Excerpted from the presentation made by Aneesha Motwani, Director Marketing, General Motors, at PR Pundit's workshop, held in Mumbai on November 30, 2005)*