

## ASHISH MISRA'S VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF PR IN BRAND BUILDING

*Delivering messages to suit various publics...*

Business today consists of persuading crowds. In various markets where Bacardi-Martini operates, the company tries to deliver its messages in consonance with the attitudes of various publics, which include financial institutions, banks, other companies and consumers. The company has a two-pronged function. On one hand it manufactures rum in a bottle, while on the other hand, it organises and markets a number of events. Hence it is important for the company to have a clear understanding of how it wants to project itself and how it synchronises the company's needs & interests and the media's needs with what the consumers or end-users expect.

*Focus of PR campaign is towards congruency of messages towards all its diverse publics....*

The entire PR campaign of Bacardi is focussed towards congruency of messages towards all its diverse publics. The aim of all company communication is to put forth history, heritage, geography, global lineage, passion, colour, and freedom. Bacardi endeavours to position itself as a global innovator and its products as a fruition of processes that have been perfected over centuries. The company is the largest selling international liquor brand in the world.

The product is not about spirits that are put into canisters and bottled to be sold, but encompasses the whole spirit of freedom & fun. The 'bat' on the bottle of Bacardi actually originated when Mr. Bacardi inherited these bats along with his first factory. His wife prompted him to put the bat on the bottle as a symbol of good luck. The theme gets successfully carried onto Bacardi's marketing ventures such as 'Night of the Bat', and 'Batstage with Bacardi.' thereby converting history into potent marketing tools.

*Proactive media initiatives by Bacardi....*

One of the major challenges that Bacardi faces in the marketplace is its image of being predominantly a rum company, whereas it actually manufactures whisky, cognac, gin, vodka, tequila etc. - a complete range that it is not known for. To counter this, the company adopted a strategy where it extensively targetted the business press to share in its corporate plans with the aim of building financial confidence in Bacardi as a company. The company has had several prestigious tie-ups such as a promotional tie-up with William Grant. This was extensively publicised with the aim of building confidence in Bacardi as a business partner.

*Parties typically*

One of Bacardi's major integrated marketing events has been

*form an integral part of Bacardi's public relations exercise....*

the Bacardi Blast. It started of as a consumer related exercise – a music show on Channel V. It has now grown into a series of parties across the country, involving the ministry of sound and also the launch of cassettes and CDs. Each time these music tapes are launched, they are on top of the charts and thus a lot of Bacardi's public relations programmes revolve around it. Parties, typically form an integral part of the company's public relations exercise. The entire effort has been geared towards turning Bacardi into a human entity and then projecting it as a celebrity.

Bacardi created a unique concept where it organised a party and gave a certain number of passes to five celebrities asking them to bring along their friends. This was aimed at getting the 'most happening people' in the city to attend the 'Bacardi' event. This helped tremendously to boost the company image because Bacardi is essentially about people and images. The press was given the opportunity to experience the environment created and this resulted in tremendous press mileage. Bacardi has constantly endeavoured to get the media to its shows rather than invite them to its offices.

*Forging relationships with media to diffuse crisis situations....*

As a liquor manufacturing company, Bacardi has to worry about situations like drunken driving or a bug found in one of its bottles. The company's public relations channels have been built with the aim that should such a situation arise, media informs the company immediately. Thus when the story is published, it has substantially incorporated the company's point of view on the matter. Also, as part of its media strategy, Bacardi does not depute more than 2 people as company spokespersons to share information with the media. This ensures that confusion in messages given out is avoided.

## **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

*Do clippings on Page 3 of city supplements help the brand because the same people are seen at parties sponsored by competitors?*

Ashish Misra replied that white spirits as a category is just 2% of the market. The company is endeavouring to grow the market and wants to be associated with events that are fun, enjoyable, vibrant and colourful. 'Page 3' kind of focus helps to position Bacardi products as enjoyable party drinks and this has been successfully established in the brand tracking exercise conducted by IMRB. Bacardi's events are deliberate consumer oriented events.

*Comment on the taboo against liquor and Bacardi's strategy to*

Ashish Misra stated that Bacardi is pegged to be a lifestyle product rather than just liquor. Market studies reveal that Bacardi is not being consumed to get drunk, it is an option to enjoy and have fun. But certain sets of dictates are followed, like not directing any communication to under-age people or

*counter it.*            undertaking any advertising before 9 p.m. (when the option of advertising was available).

*(Excerpted from the presentation made by Ashish Misra, Marketing Controller, Bacardi-Martini India Ltd., at PR Pundit's workshop, held in New Delhi on November 2, 2000)*