

**‘BE NICE TO SMOKERS’**

(A Creative Concept done by Sonal Dabral against Smoking)

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**ABSTRACT:** As we know that art refers to the medium to express our emotions, thoughts or ideas to the people. If we talk about advertising that is the part of arts, then basically it can be explained as the way to promote our brand or a service so that the prospective consumer can know about it. But advertising is not limited to that point only; rather it also deals with the exchange of messages or ideology that is beneficial for the society as a whole. For example, it can be a message regarding violence, awareness about the rights of the people or to educate about their health issues like sanitation etc. In the same league, Cancer Patients Aid Association (CPAA) took an initiative to create awareness among the general public against smoking.

Cancer Patients Aid Association (CPAA) is one such association of India with its headquarters in Mumbai that is continuously working in addressing early detection of cancer, awareness against it, providing treatment support, counselling, guidance and rehabilitation of patients suffering from it. The association was established in the year 1969 by Founder Chairman and CEO Mr. Y.K. Sapru. As it is widely known that cancer is called to be a ‘King of all maladies’ because it has so much of adverse effects that psychologically a person ingrained with so much of fear and miseries that he/she loses confidence and hope for life. So to make awareness on this serious issue of the society especially targeting the Tobacco consumers, Sonal Dabral (Ex Vice Chairman and Chief Creative Officer, Ogilvy South East Asia) through CPAA came up with a brilliant idea through a TVC that primarily focuses on about how smoking can be dangerous for a person and for his family too. The story crafted by him was a mega-hit and changed the perspective of the youngsters who thought that they were too young to die and only old men can have cancer and die from it.

**Keywords:** Cancer Patients Aid Association (CPAA), Cancer, Anti-smoking, TVC’s, Ex Vice Chairman and Chief Creative Officer, Ogilvy.

## **INTRODUCTION**

As it is widely known that art is the way to communicate our thoughts, ideas, messages, intuitions, expressions or feelings to others. It conveys our thoughts and ideologies to the mass audience and viewers in a creative manner including those messages that cannot be fully portrayed through words alone. The word 'art' is not limited to drawing and sketching, rather it is much more than that. If we talk about the various forms of art, then it covers various streams like painting, sculpture, architecture, dance, music, poetry and advertising etc.

Advertising now-a-days has become an essential part of our life. We all are surrounded by one or the other form of advertising in our daily schedule. Advertising is not limited only up to the main objective of revenue generation, rather it also focuses on conveying the message, information and to create awareness about a product, service or for a social cause to the general public. Now one cannot even think of a world without advertising. We can observe and experience great evolution in advertising right from the time it started.

In ancient times, advertising basically started in the form of wall paintings, promotion of a product or service through beating a drum or by singing a jingle by the street vendors. With the passage of time, as printing machines got invented the advertising rise to the next level. Newspapers, pamphlets, journals, magazines and books etc. became the popular way to advertise the product or service and even to communicate any social message to the mass readers and consumers. It provides a detailed information about the product or the service to the consumers and also allows the advertisers for precise geographic targeting.

Then in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the innovation of radios led to the radical change not only to the society but also to the advertisers as now the information/message could be shared to the audience through voice medium. It became a very popular as it provides an opportunity to the advertisers to transmit their messages in the form of slogans, jingles and catchy slogans with a large number of audience at the same time without much cost and effort.

Then in late 1950's, cable television came into the market and captured the whole of it due to the reason that it conveys messages or ideas to the prospective consumers in both audio and visual form. It now offers the advertiser to have a wide reach to the consumer in a very short span of time. Advertising done through the televisions are commonly called as

Television Commercials (TVC's) gained popularity in the last three decades due to the basic reason that most of the households in rural and urban areas are having televisions in their home.

TVC's plays a crucial role in imparting a social message to the public. For example: During Covid-19 times, when the whole world was losing hope, then Government of India and various other Non-Profit Organizations took an initiative to spread the ray of hope and positivity to the common public. They conveyed the message of safety, precautions to be taken and other measures to be cared on through various TVC's and channels. Similarly, many campaigns have been done in the past that directly or indirectly awakened the public about the particular social cause prevailing in the society. In the same league, Cancer Patients Aid Association (CPAA) took an initiative to create awareness among the general people about the adverse effects of smoking especially targeting the youth generation of the society.



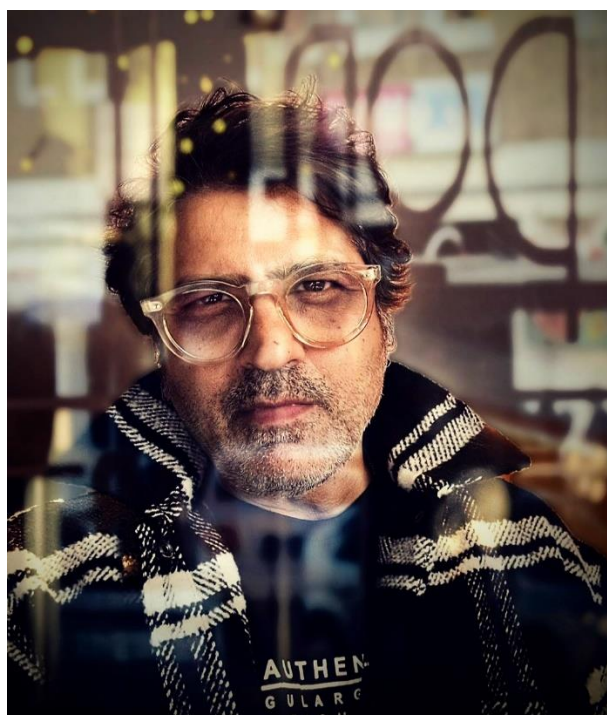
**Figure 1.1** (Photo of Y.K. Sapru, Founder Chairman & CEO of Cancer Patients Aid Association)

Cancer Patients Aid Association (CPAA) is basically a non-profit organization that was founded in the year 1969 by its Founder Chairman & CEO, Mr. Y. K. Sapru. The main ideology behind its establishment is that it deals cancer with a unique philosophy of 'Total Management of Cancer'. Besides it, Cancer Patients Aid Association (CPAA) also focuses on the activities like Early Detection of Cancer, Guidance and Proper Counseling of Patients diagnosed and suffering from it, Rehabilitation of such patients, Research studies and Advocacy. It also takes care of those patients who do not have any access and can't even afford the cost for the treatment of cancer. With over five decades of its services in managing cancer patients, it now

provides its mentorship services across different services in India including Pune, Mumbai and New Delhi.

The mission was started with a group of few friends who took an initiative to provide a financial support to the child who was severely suffering from this deadly disease which slowly and gradually became the Mammoth Mission of ‘Total Management of Cancer’. As it is better known to all of us that Cancer is widely known as the ‘King of all Maladies’ because of the very strong reason that its fear spread through each and every individual. It basically breaks down the patient as well as their caretakers on physical, emotional, mental and even on financial level.

According to the reports, it is found that each year almost 4,00,000 children got affected with Cancer and it is one of the major cause of death accounting nearly about 10 million deaths in 2020. In 2022, approximately 8,08,558 deaths happened due to Cancer, which was around 7,89,202 in 2021. As there is no single cause for Cancer, rather there are many factors including genetic, environmental or the habits of the individual. Among all the factors, Smoking is one of the main cause of this disease as it can develop cancer anywhere in the body.



**Figure 1.2** (Photo of Sonal Dabral, Ex Vice Chairman and Chief Creative Officer, Ogilvy South East Asia)

Sonal Dabral (Ex Vice Chairman and Chief Creative Officer, Ogilvy South East Asia) one of the leading personality of advertising came up with a brilliant idea against smoking that was developed in the form of Television Commercial (TVC) marked a remarkable impact on the minds of the viewers. The TVC was actually crafted in the year 2000, when Sonal was serving in Ogilvy & Mather Malaysia as the Managing Director/Executive Creative Director. He was promoted and transferred from Ogilvy & Mather India where he was working as Group Creative Director. Around this time, Neil French, the then Executive Creative Director of Ogilvy & Mather Singapore asked him to join Malaysian team as it needed a head for its functioning. Sonal accepted the proposal and joined there, where he assembled a creative team under his mentorship.

### **CREATIVE THINKING: BEHIND THE SCENE**

It was a very hot day in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and there was a lot of workload pressure on Sonal and his team. Sonal with one of his colleague/partner was going for a meeting with a client. As there was already a lot of pressure and Sonal in his mind was expecting a very rough and tough meeting with the client, so he wanted to lit a cigarette. But his colleague purchased a brand new luxurious car just a week ago so Sonal didn't feel comfortable to smoke in his car. While Sonal and his partner were driving towards their destination, it was quite chilled in the car as the air-conditioner was in full swing but inspite of that Sonal and his partner were sweating a lot due to the stress of the meeting.

During those days, Sonal was a chain-smoker and to calm down his palpitations for the meeting, he finally decided to ask his colleague whether he could light a cigarette in his car. His partner who was a die-hard non-smoker person gave Sonal a very weird look, indirectly saying a 'Big No' to Sonal's request to smoke in his car. He shouted on Sonal and said 'No way at all'.

Sonal who was very desperate for having just one cigarette again requested his partner in a very polite manner "Just one!" His partner gave him a disgusting look and said in a very angry manner "You smokers! Okay! Let me be nice to you!". Then he rolled down the glasses of the car, switched off the air-conditioner and allowed him to smoke in his car.

Sonal got happy as he got the permission and he put out a pack of cigarettes from his pocket, lighten up one out of that and getting himself prepared for the meeting. During all this,



something was stuck and hitting in his mind again and again. He thought that if I am polluting his partner's brand new car, then why he is being too nice to me? This thought was striking too hardly in his head that he literally forgot about the meeting with the client and on his whole journey to the client's office he was continuously thinking on all those odd thoughts. While the car was moving towards the destination and Sonal looking out from a window further thought that 'If smokers are a danger to the society and for the health of the people, then why they should be treated with a great love by the other people? Because smoker in a way is polluting the environment or harming the society. This controversial thought which created a drama and conflict in his mind increased his curiosity to know the best answer to all the questions.

By the time they both reached the client's office, Sonal already came across all the answers to his questions that were shaking in his mind throughout the journey and from there he cracked a brilliant idea. It is how a creative story for a 50 seconds Television Commercial (TVC) was crafted by Sonal.

### **THE PROCESS & ITS FUNCTIONALITY**

Sonal drafted the whole story of the TVC especially targeting the chain smokers and the young generation of the society. As Sonal and his team had already signed a big deal for a reputed cigarette brand on behalf of Ogilvy and Mather Malaysia so they couldn't direct and telecast a film that is purely based on anti-smoking as it would be a controversial act for their agency. So Sonal finally shared the whole idea with his mentor and colleague Piyush Pandey (Chief Creative Officer Worldwide and Executive Chairman India, Ogilvy) who was heading the agency Ogilvy and Mather in India. He liked the concept and they both decided to create that TVC in India for Cancer Patients Aid Association (CPAA).

As now the TVC was to be telecasted in India so while shooting a film, Sonal and Piyush both had minutely observed the target audience. In India, people from various cultures and traditions lives that are further bifurcated on the basis of their income groups: Highly rich & elite class, Middle class and Poor class. As we know that a large group of the India's population travels mostly travels through public transport like bus, train, taxi etc. So to connect the idea and its concept with the target audience the scene was set up in a bus.

The TVC starts with an old dusty bus interior scene with some people sitting on their seats

while others are standing as there is a lot of rush in it. The story primarily revolves around the two old men who were sitting on their seats and one young guy who was standing beside them. As the bus starts, the young guy who was holding a bag on his shoulder, took out a pack of cigarette, put one out of it and lighten it up. The old men who were sitting suddenly gave a strange and mysterious look to that youngster.

After a second, one of that old man got up from his seat and offered the young guy to sit on his place. He said to the young guy “Bhai sahab aap baith jaiye” for which the boy at first declined the offer to sit on his seat. Then after the old man continuous request, the guy was finally convinced and sat on his seat while the young man stood beside him.

The TVC finally ended up with a voice over message- “Study showed that a person loses seven minutes of his life every time he smokes a cigarette. Be nice to smokers. They don’t have much time left.”



**Figure 1.3** (Photo of Scene 1 from the TVC: Two old men sitting while  
The young guy was standing beside them)



**Figure 1.4** (Photo of Scene 2 from the TVC: The young guy lighting up the cigarette)



**Figure 1.5** (Photo of Scene 3 from the TVC: The old men sitting on their seats Giving a disgusting look to the boy)



**Figure 1.6** (Photo of Scene 4 from the TVC: The old men finally gave his seat to the boy)



## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of the study is to know and present the ideology behind this creative TVC, how Sonal cracked the idea, how he crafted and compressed the whole story on this serious cause in a short form of Television Commercial (TVC) of 50 seconds duration. It also focuses on how deeply the roots of the Indian culture has been minutely showcased through the TVC, the models selected are purely from a poor and middle class so as to connect it more with the general public.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher has prepared this research paper by collecting information from the Primary source in the form of Personal interview of Mr. Sonal Dabral through an online interview. Apart from it, the researcher also collected the information from the secondary sources that includes: Web Links, YouTube links and web articles.

## **CONCLUSION**

As we all know that smoking is one of the major cause of Cancer and its's a very serious and big issue as most of the youngsters are dying due to this cause. The TVC especially targets the chain smokers and the youth generation who are driven by the misconception that they are too young to die.

The TVC aims to convey the message of adverse effects of smoking through impactful and indirect approach using purely Indian roots in its showcasing. As soon the TVC's shoot was finally completed and the day it was telecasted on televisions through various channels, it left a mind-blowing impact on the viewers' mind. The persons from various sectors including medical and health services appreciated the story and the way the whole message was presented. The TVC got nominated and received many awards and recognition throughout the region. Media Awards, now called Spikes Asia, gave it the prestigious Best of Show recognizing it as the best piece of work in Asia, across all categories, that year. Apart from this, the recognition gave Sonal and his team a positive hope that even a small office of Malaysia could win a big award like Spikes Asia. Sonal concluded that 'one should always keep the windows of the mind wide open so that the great ideas may enter into our mind'.

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