

ShowCase

Will Balbir Pasha Get AIDs?

Topic: Sexual health

Organisation: Population Services International (PSI)

Location: Mumbai (India)

Dates: 2001 to 2005

Budget: Approximately US \$2.5 million

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Overview

The 'Will Balbir Pasha Get AIDS?' campaign formed part of PSI India's Operation Lighthouse, an HIV/AIDS prevention programme implemented in 12 major port communities in India. The programme aimed to reduce rates of unsafe sex by motivating people to consistently use condoms, call the confidential HIV/AIDS hotline, and use the Voluntary Counselling and Treatment services.

The campaign was built around a fictional character called Balbir Pasha. It used a storyboard to place him in various high-risk sexual situations, with unknown outcomes. This provided a realistic behavioural model for urban men living in Mumbai. Using a mixture of outdoor communications, television and radio messaging, and comprehensive newspaper exposure, the campaign succeeded in personalising HIV risk and bringing the topic of HIV/AIDS into the public sphere.

Results:

- Increase in proportion of individuals reporting last-time condom usage with commercial sex workers from 87 per cent to 92 per cent
- Threefold increase in retail sales of condoms in the red light district
- Increase in Voluntary Counselling and Treatment services usage

1. BEHAVIOUR

- Motivate people to access HIV/AIDS helpline and VCT services
- Generate discussion about HIV/AIDS and target populations and opinion leaders

2. CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

- Review of research around high-risk audiences and unprotected sex with commercial sex workers
- Lifestyle research to establish patterns of behaviour: one-to-one interviews and focus groups with clients in red light districts
- Stakeholder interviews
- Qualitative study with media professionals to understand what campaigns had previously worked with the target group
- Pretesting of campaign themes with sexually active males from low socioeconomic groups

3. THEORY

- **Social Learning Theory (Bandura):** People learn to adopt behaviours by observing the consequences of behaviours of others

4. INSIGHT

- Misconceptions about HIV transmission
- Poor personal risk assessment
- Belief that HIV infected people look ill
- Alcohol impairs judgement
- Negative attitudes towards condom use

5. EXCHANGE

Barriers:

- Lack of awareness of helpline or VCT services
- Inaccessibility or inconvenience of using services
- Financial costs of using helpline or visiting VCT services
- Fear and stigma attached to positive HIV test
- Fear that helpline and VCT services are not confidential
- Taboo associated with discussing HIV/AIDS and sex-related matters

Solutions:

- Enhanced service provision
- Campaign created new social norm and legitimised discussion of HIV

6. COMPETITION

- Apathy of target audience towards public health campaigns – Social interest in the human story of Balbir Pasha took over health element of the campaign
- Media-dense environment of Mumbai – Campaign materials were bold, controversial and eye-catching

7. SEGMENTATION

- Men aged 18 to 40
- Clients of sex workers
- Lower socioeconomic groups
- Living in Mumbai

8. METHODS MIX

- 5-stage mass media campaign, centred around a fictional character (Balbir Pasha) in high-risk sex situations
- Each stage builds intrigue and 'gossip value', like soap opera plots
- Saadhan telephone hotline providing HIV/AIDS information and counselling
- Signposting to VCT services
- Interpersonal Communication Workers educating commercial sex workers and their clients about HIV risk behaviours in and around brothels