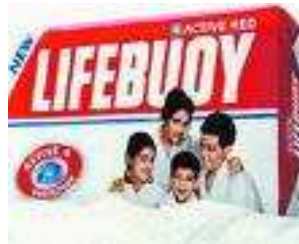


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**On:**

**Content Analysis of Lifebuoy Soap Television Advertisements in the Post  
Liberalization Era**



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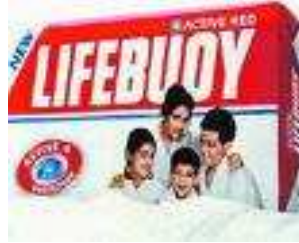
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## *Content Analysis of Lifebuoy Soap Television Advertisements in the Post*

### *Liberalization Era*

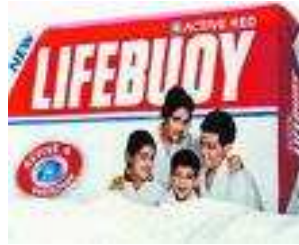


#### **Summary:**

Marketing environment in India has undergone sea changes since 1991 when economic reforms were announced. Post liberalization, competition has hit each and every category and therefore brands had to redefine the norms of existence. Brand communication had to respond to the changes taking place in the product category and the marketing environment and thus, it would be interesting to study the content of lifebuoy commercials and analyze how and in which way the communication has changed for the brand. The researcher will do a qualitative content analysis taking narrative analysis and case study method and will do triangulation by doing an in-depth interview with the advertising expert who has worked on the brand.

## *Content Analysis of Lifebuoy Soap Television Advertisements in the Post*

### *Liberalization Era*



#### **Introduction:**

The paper focuses on content analysis of commercials of Lifebuoy brand over a period of last ten years within the context of changes in the marketing environment post liberalization. The researcher has used narrative analysis and the case study method to conduct a qualitative content analysis of television commercials of “Lifebuoy” and has done triangulation by in-depth interview of a senior management employee from the advertising agency who worked on the brand to get an expert view.

#### **Introduction to the Category and the Brand – Lifebuoy:**

The soap industry in India is classified into premium, popular and carbolic brand of soaps. Premium constituted of Lux International, Mysore sandal, Pears and some international brands. Popular brands were Cinthol, Hamam, and Lux and carbolic were brands like Lifebuoy and Nirma bath. In the mid-1990s, this structure altered a bit when vegetable oil prices slid 40 to 50 per cent, giving manufacturers a huge cost advantage. The result of this was the creation of the "discount segment", which offered soaps 10 to 15 per cent cheaper than the popular segment. Popular segment has witnessed maximum growth within toilet soaps and it is the category driver. Consumers down grade from the premium segment as and when they see better value in the popular category; at the same time consumer's upgrade from the economy segment due to increased aspirations & affordability (Shahra, 2006)<sup>1</sup>. Hindustan Lever Ltd, Wipro Ltd, Godrej Soaps Ltd, Nirma, Procter & Gamble are the major players in the Rs.4800 crore toilet soap industry. Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) has a strong presence in the toilet soap category with

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.indiainfoline.com/commodities/showleader.asp?storyId=174&lmn=3>

brands like Lux, Lifebuoy, Pears, Liril, Hamam, Breeze, Dove, and Rexona. All brands are targeted at different segments of consumers and therefore accordingly positioned. With the major power branding exercise being undertaken by HUL to manage its product portfolio, many brands were repositioned and portfolios were restructured (Singh, 2003). While the Liril brand saw variants and a drastic change in its advertising strategy, Lux celebrated its 75 years of existence through innovative flavours and celebrities.

Launched in 1895, Lifebuoy, for over 100 years has been synonymous with health and value. The brick red soap, with its perfume and popular Lifebuoy jingle, has carried the Lifebuoy message of health across the length and breadth of the country, making it the largest selling soap brand in the world. Lifebuoy one of the power brands of HUL, is being used by about 600 million consumers, with about 2 million tablets sold every day<sup>2</sup>. HUL's 107-year-old brand, Lifebuoy, was re-launched with a new formulation as a milled toilet soap and a completely new positioning as a family health soap. The strategy, to maintain the leadership of India's largest selling soap and extend its health equity beyond its 60 crore existing consumers restored the growth of Lifebuoy<sup>3</sup>. The 100 plus years old brand Lifebuoy, which was positioned purely as a health soap targeted at a male population, has now got rid of its carbolic nature, smells different and is positioned as a family soap. This was a conscious move from HUL in 2002 to do away with the carbolic soap. In order to launch the new Lifebuoy soap in rural markets, HUL had a massive social marketing program called "Lifebuoy Swasthya Chetna"<sup>4</sup>, a consumer contact program to spread the health and hygiene awareness and make a dent into the rural markets (Business Standard, 2002). The repositioning exercise resulted in Lifebuoy featuring as a family soap but managed to keep the core of the brand intact. Right from those days when it addressed the macho Indian male, in the form of a bright red chunky soap cake, until early 2000, when it started targeting the Indian woman as a soap that would help her family fight germs and keep illnesses at bay, its core positioning has always been health and hygiene. Advertising and brand gurus say it is this consistency in

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<sup>2</sup> Source: [http://www.hll.com/mediacentre/release.asp?fl=2002/PR\\_HLL\\_021202.htm](http://www.hll.com/mediacentre/release.asp?fl=2002/PR_HLL_021202.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Source: Analysts Meet of Hindustan Unilever Limited. Address by Mr. M.S.Banga retrieved from [http://myiris.com/shares/company/reportShow.php?url=AMServer%2F2003%2F01%2FHINLEVER\\_2003\\_0129.htm](http://myiris.com/shares/company/reportShow.php?url=AMServer%2F2003%2F01%2FHINLEVER_2003_0129.htm)

<sup>4</sup> A health and hygiene awareness program which focused on use of soap to kill germs in daily life of people.

the core positioning that has helped the brand retain its glory and given it the status of a heritage brand (Shashidhar and Srinivasan, 2002).

Only 30 percent of the total sales volume of Lifebuoy comes from urban markets and that's a challenge for the brand. The new look and shape, variants, shift in the protagonist in ads and many other such changes have been made in order to penetrate further in the urban markets and among premium segment households (Shatrujeet and Shukla, 2005).

Lifebuoy has a rich heritage. With changing marketing environment, the brand has responded through various initiatives like new product variants, repositioning, rechristened advertising content, targeting rural markets and so on and so forth.

### **Methodology:**

The paper is based on qualitative research approach. Television commercials have been drawn from the last ten years to understand the post liberalization era and its effects on the brand communication. Each television commercial has been studied using narrative analysis as a tool in context of the history of the brand, changing marketing environment, category competition and consumer. The case study method has been used to build a case on the brand and see how it has evolved over the years. Qualitative research of this kind is often criticized for researcher's bias and therefore triangulation has been done by an in-depth interview of an expert from LOWE-Lintas, the advertising agency working on the brand. The context, narrative analysis and experts opinion has been used to arrive at a final analysis.

- **Research Objective**

- To analyze the change in the advertising content of print and television advertisements, in the post liberalization era

- **Research Questions:**

- How has the advertising message and appeals changed post liberalization?
- What are the forces shaping and reshaping the advertising message and content?

## **Literature Review:**

The researcher has reviewed articles, views, research work published by various researchers, writers and thinkers on liberalization of Indian economy, marketing environmental changes post liberalization in India, television advertising and content analysis.

### **▪ Liberalization of Indian Economy**

Before the 1990s, India's economic model was dominated by a large public sector, which favored protections for domestic industry. There was distrust of the private sector and suspicion of foreign investment, with extremely high taxation levels on imported goods and a difficult business environment for foreign business interests (Baweja, 2003)<sup>5</sup>. The liberalization, globalization and privatization of Indian economy happened in the year 1991. Merchants from Harappa and Mohenjodaro were trading with Sumeria as early as 2300 BC (Gopalakrishnan, 2001). However, some measures to liberalize the trade policies were made by the government in mid 1980s (Williamson, 2006)<sup>6</sup>. Towards the end of 1980s, balance of payment crisis and budget deficit was on a rise, both of which led to economic reforms in 1991 and marked the historic moment in the history of India (Williamson, 2006). Thus began the era of deregulation, disinvestment and free trade. The Indian economy thus opened to multinationals and marked the slow death of the "license raj" regime. Justice Bhagwati views economic globalization as the "integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, direct foreign investment (by corporations and multinationals), short-term capital flows, international flows of workers and humanity generally, and flows of technology" (Goossen, 2004). Globalization would come with its own set of rewards and penalties for any economy. Anti-capitalists, criticize globalization as a move towards profiteering and capitalism. Globalisation has brought in new opportunities to developing countries like greater access to developed country markets and technology transfer hold out promise improved productivity and higher living standard. But globalisation has also thrown up new challenges like growing inequality across and within nations, volatility in financial

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<sup>5</sup> A review of talk given by Montek Singh Ahluwalia on September 8, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> A talk given by the keynote speaker retrieved from [www.americandiplomacy.org](http://www.americandiplomacy.org) on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2007.

market and environmental deteriorations. Another negative aspect of globalisation is that a great majority of developing countries remain removed from the process (Balakrishnan, 2004).

With privatization and the government allowing FDI in most industry sectors, private sector found autonomy, new avenues of business and competition from around the globe. India and business houses awakened to this new spirit of globalization, liberalization and privatization. To succeed in the new environment, companies are required to bring new insights into understanding the customer; the ability to design, develop and produce new and more customer-friendly products of better quality; skills to develop exclusive positions in the minds of the consumer; new processes, techniques and technologies to ensure that costs are being continuously reduced; ways to restructure organizations so that trained and talented people stay on to give their best efforts; and considerable funds to invest in marketing and building brand franchises (Naik, 2001). Over the last few years, India has been one of the fastest-growing Asian economies, with its 1999 GDP surpassing those of Korea and Australia. India's GDP in terms of purchasing power is already the fourth largest in the world, after China, the U.S. and Japan (Dua and Banerji, 2001). From 1995-2000, India's GDP clocked a compound annual growth rate of 5.8 percent, which increased to 6.8 percent from 2000-2005 and current estimates are that India's GDP grew at 9 percent in 2005 and this has made India one of the fastest growing economies of the world (McKinsey Report, 2007).

#### ▪ **Changes in the Marketing Environment**

Opening up of the Indian economy brought with it lots of changes, challenges and competition. The pace of change that India and its people are experiencing in their socio-cultural milieu is mind-boggling (Ashok, 2007)<sup>7</sup>. Government allowed foreign direct investment in many areas including media, insurance and banking which opened up the sector for private players to enter into areas which were earlier restricted. India realized in the post liberalization era that if it has to create the best practice in economics of knowledge then it will have to carefully move beyond 'making' or 'buying' and it will have to believe in 'buying to make better', 'making to buy-better' and 'making it together'

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<sup>7</sup> Paper presented at the International Conference on Marketing and Society at IIM-K, April 2007.

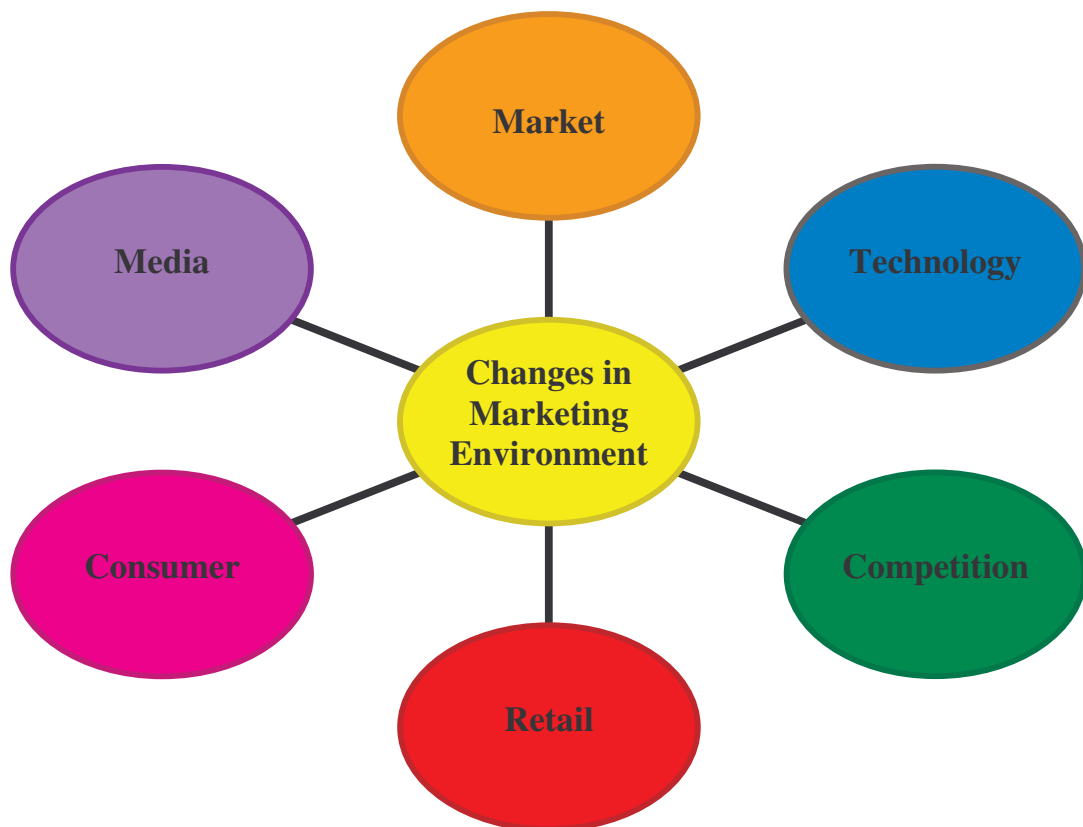
(Mashelkar, 1999)<sup>8</sup>. Thus, India witnessed a plethora of collaborative business activities in the form of technology transfer, franchising, mergers and acquisitions and so on and so forth. While it is possible to get some estimates of the macro changes taking place in India in terms of per capita or product categories and industrial sectors, it is impossible to get any accurate measures of the subjective experiences that proceed, accompany or follow such changes (Ashok, 2007). However, the fact remains that the profile of the Indian market is vastly different from what it was earlier. Although these changes are difficult to measure at the micro level, nevertheless, they have been of great significance to marketers. Any marketer is keen in closely monitoring the changes in terms of numbers and specially keeping regular track of the changing pattern of consumers' aspirations and competitive actions (Ashok, 2007). The post-liberalization generation is coming of age. There are around 100 million, 17-21 year-olds in India, and six out of 10 households have a liberalization child. This is a generation which has grown up with no guilt about consumption (Bijapurkar, 2003). The marketing environment has become true to the saying that the only thing permanent is change. It has also been observed that in response to these emerging opportunities and threats, a large majority of firms aimed for higher growth and return; increased the scale of operation; diversified into new products and business lines; expanded the geographical base in domestic and international markets; offered a wider range of products to their customers, catered to many new and diverse customer segments; introduced foreign technology and emphasized modernization of plants and equipment, and increased the sharing of resources across departments, divisions, and business units within the firm (Ray and Dixit, 2000; Ray, 2004). The Indian market is turning into a goldmine for marketers. Consumer India is at the point where there is a multiplicative effect of income growth, aspiration to consume and a changed consumption friendly ideology / social discourse – across the income board, and especially in urban India (Bijapurkar, 2000).

However, the most visible and distinct forces of change in the Indian marketing environment that have significantly impacted the branding, advertising and marketing strategies of companies are:

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<sup>8</sup> Views expressed as a republic day feature, retrieved from <http://pib.nic.in/feature/fe1299/f2112991.html> on 14/12/2007





### **Content Analysis:**

Communication is greatly impacted by the culture of a country. Content analysis has been used by many researchers to study the difference in content of advertisements across cultures. Content analysis has proved to be an effective method of inquiry in advertising research to understand the impact of a country's culture on the communication content.

An interesting research study (Mindy, McNeal, James, 2001) used content analysis to understand the differences in children's television commercials in US and China. Commercials on kids channel across eighteen months were analyzed and cultural context was provided. Another study (Browne, 1998) used content analysis to examine sex role stereotyping in television commercials aimed at children in the US and Australia. Advertisements were recorded during cartoon programs. In a comparative study (Oh, Cho, Leckenby, 1999) of Korean and U.S. Web Advertising, the web advertising was compared on the basis of information cues, creative strategy and level of technology across these two countries. . A study (Graham, John, Kamins, Michael, 1996) that aimed

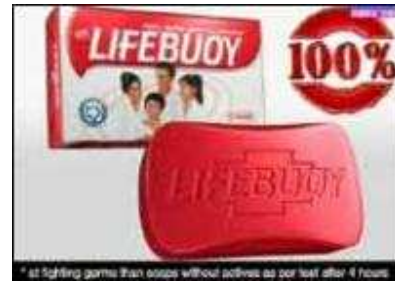
at seeing the influence of home country culture in foreign markets, studied ads appearing in Indonesia, Spain and USA print media. The research was motivated due to the debate of adaptation versus standardization in context of globally marketed products.

Content analysis has been used widely for comparison of advertising content. One such study (Turley, L.W., Kelley, Scott, 1997) compared business to business versus consumer services half and full page ads in highly circulated magazines. Comparison of services versus products in print ads was done in a research (Cutler, Bob, Javalgi, Rajshekhar, 1993) that used content analysis as a method. In a further research (Naccarato and Neuendorf, 1998), content analysis was used to predict the advertising effectiveness of business to business print advertising. Form variables like headline, colour, illustration placement and content variables like use of humour, subject matter, use of fear appeals on recall, readership, and evaluations in the context of business to business print advertisements were analyzed in terms of content. A study (Huhmann, Bruce, Brotherton, Timothy, 1997) used content analysis to study guilt appeals in ads in popular magazines. Magazines with highest circulation were selected and ads with more than one third page size were short listed for content analysis. Jagdish N. Sheth and Barbara L. Gross published their study on content analysis of time oriented advertising wherein the period of study was 1890 to 1988. The research was planned with the thought that as urbanization/industrialization advances, time becomes a major concern for consumers and therefore advertising will have time oriented benefits as its primary appeal. A study (John, Voli, Honeycutt, Susan, 1998) that takes content analysis to a new level is focused on studying the gender role stereotypes in Japanese magazine ads. The role portrayal information was collected for the central figure of the ad which was limited to two figures. Nine variables identified by Ito (1978) and Williams and Best (1990) were used to examine the gender role portrayal in the selected ads. Chi square test was applied to the data coded. The analysis found significant difference between male and female depictions, gender depiction in Japanese magazine ads were counter stereotypical meaning that women were shown in a positive manner, women were associated with high priced products and were shown to be younger than male counterparts, women were used more as product users and demonstrators than as product authorities as compared to men.

### **Content Analysis of Lifebuoy Commercials:**

The researcher has described the television advertisements; a narrative content analysis along with the insights derived from the in-depth interview of expert has been done. Triangulation has been done by integrating the views of experts in the researcher's analysis of content. In order to establish the context, an analysis has been done of how the competitive environment for the brand and category has changed post liberalization.

### **Lifebuoy Advertisements:**



#### *Commercial 1: "Football Match – Champion" – 40 Seconds*

The ad starts on a football match where one particular team with red clothes is cheered by a kid whistling the lifebuoy jingle "*tandoorusti ki raksha karta hai lifebuoy...lifebuoy hai jahan tandoorusti hai wahan*" to which the entire crowd joins in. The player, motivated by the spirit of the viewers hits a goal and wins. The camera zooms on the Lifebuoy pack and the red coloured brick soap which the sportsman is bathing with. The crowd becomes jubilant as the leader accepts the trophy and the ad ends with a voiceover saying "Champion".

*Commercial 2: “Football Coaching” – 50 Seconds*

The ad starts on a football team exercising. The coach asks them to attack on the goal post. While doing so, the player falls and goes to take bath. He is shown taking out “Lifebuoy” wherein the camera focuses on “for health” and “trophy” on the pack. He comes out and hits the goal so strongly that the wall breaks. Same performance is repeated in the actual match and the winner is declared as “champion” with the Lifebuoy jingle playing in the background.

*Commercial 3: “Injecting a Soap” – 40 Seconds*

The ad shows a man injecting pink colour soap with anti-germ injection. The fluid does not get injected to which a voiceover says that any ordinary soap won’t protect you from germs and introduces Lifebuoy with Active B in three flavours – orange, active red and extra strong. The new Lifebuoy protects from germs better than ordinary soaps. The plus sign is used to signify protection. The popular Lifebuoy jingle plays in the background.

*Commercial 4: “Lifebuoy Gold” – 40 Seconds*

The ad starts on a teenage girl entering the house, surprised when she sees “Lifebuoy” soap with a silver pack and shows resistance to her mom asking her as to what will happen to her complexion and smoothness of her skin if she uses Lifebuoy? Her mom repeats that this is Lifebuoy Gold and it will improve your skin. The girl bathes with the new Lifebuoy when the ad shows the picture window emphasizing that the new white bar with a new shape of Lifebuoy Gold and the voiceover says that it has anti bacterial and skin moisturizing elements. After noticing her improved skin the girl proudly calls her mom a “genius”. The ad ends with the girl asking about her Lifebuoy Gold to which the family replies that it not only “your” Lifebuoy it is “our” Lifebuoy.

*Commercial 5 – “Lifebuoy Plus” – 30 Seconds*

The ad shows two collegians/roommates. One of them is getting ready to ask a girl out for a date. The roommate complements him for his smart looks. Confidently the boy asks the girl for a date. The girl refuses to go out due to bad odour. Hurt, he comes back to his room and throws the shirt on his roommate. The roommate smells and tells him that his shirt is stinking due to perspiration. He then throws “Lifebuoy Plus” to the boy who is still shocked. The ad then shifts to the boy bathing wherein a comparison between normal soaps and Lifebuoy Plus is shown and the voiceover says that a daily usage can protect

the body from bad odour for the entire day, three times more than a normal soap. The Plus sign is used to symbolize protection. The ad ends on a happy note.

*Commercial 6: "Girl scared of pimples" – 30 Seconds*

The ad shows a teenage girl getting up with anxiety, worry and tension when she faces a mirror scared of getting a pimple. She frantically prays to God as she sees her face in the mirror. The shot cuts to a doctor who says that pimples are a problem and the solution is "Lifebuoy International Plus", which removes extra oil from skin and prevents pimples. The shot returns to the girl who breaks into a dance jig to celebrate absence of pimples. The last shot shows the happy girl enjoying with her boyfriend when the doctor asks "Pimples? What's that?"

*Commercial 7: "Eye Infection" – 40 Seconds*

The ad starts on a doctor spotting a boy wearing black glasses and calls him "style bhai" and gets to know that the boy is at home due to eye infection. The doctor goes inside and explains to the worried mother that eye infection can happen due to bacteria in hand. After examining the boy he goes to the wash area and instantly replaces the ordinary soap with Lifebuoy and confidently tells the mom that now the boy is safe from germs. The product shows the soap and the plus sign when the voiceover talks about the germ fighting quality of Lifebuoy with Active B.

*Commercial 8: "Neem Tulsi" – 30 Seconds*

The ad introduces the green coloured Neem-Tulsi soap with a new shape. The ad shows a grandma with her grandson putting neem leaves in water for the kid to take bath which the kid doesn't like. Grandma explains the benefits of neem to which doctor daughter in law agrees. Mother in law is pleased as in this one thing her daughter in law has agreed with her. The moment grandma leaves the bathroom; the kid is shocked as his mom takes the neem leaves out of the bucket. The mom then hands over Lifebuoy "Neem and Tulsi" and voiceover mentions the superior germ fighting ability as against ordinary soap. The ad ends with the kid happily running out and showing the Lifebuoy Neem-Tulsi soap to her grandma asking "aaj neem tulsi se nahaye kya?"

*Commercial 9: "Little Gandhi" – 45 Seconds*

The shot is on a boy who wakes up and the voiceover says "Kabhi kabhi sirf ek insaan," Getting up he takes hold of a broom. Voiceover continues: "ek soch, ek irada, duniya

*badal sakta hai*". Fully equipped he looks around the dirty street and starts cleaning garbage and is soon joined by a friend. The proud mom reassures her maid "koi darr nahin". Soon many more boys join him and they all together clean up the street and then enjoy a Lifebuoy bath. The voiceover says that only those can change the world who don't have to worry about their own self. Lifebuoy gives 100 percent germ protection and the ad ends with the boys going to school saying "koi darr nahin".

*Commercial 10: "Boys cleaning cricket stadium" – 45 Seconds*

The ad starts with a family watching television where the anchor announces that there is water logging in the cricket stadium and India needs 80 runs to win. The boy quickly picks up the phone and decides something. Before he goes out the mom asks him to take bath. Boy with his friends on cycles reaches the cricket ground armed with utilities for drainage. The crowd is amazed to see the enthusiasm with which the boys start helping the team to clean the ground. The grandma sees this on television and gets worried seeing the boy cleaning dirty water to which the mother reassures her by saying that he has taken his bath before going and so "koi darr nahin". The product window shows the new Lifebuoy and the voiceover talks about the germ protection ability even after hours of bathing. Finally the match restarts and the camera zoom on to the audience where the boys are sitting and they smile jubilantly for the camera.

**Analysis of Ads and In-depth Interviews:**

The early ads of Lifebuoy are all very masculine in nature and usually have a sportsman as a protagonist. The hairy chest and muscles are specially shown to denote power and strength. The leadership of Lifebuoy is established in ads by showing the person using Lifebuoy winning the game. The red colour, brand name, brick shape and the jingle is quite vocal in all ads. The ad shows Lifebuoy as the "champion" and in one the ads the word "attack" and the visual of "trophy" are used to signify its market presence and leadership. In all these ads health and germ fighting ability has been emphasized in such a way that the soap looks medicinal. The third ad introduces new orange and red Lifebuoy with Active B wherein the beauty soap shape is shown but the original red brick shape Lifebuoy is retained as Extra Strong. In all these ads, the target group is men or athletes. The jingle is sung on a very high pitch and it almost dominates the ad. The VP of Lowe

said that till 2000 the target segment for Lifebuoy was white collar workers who would spend considerable time outside and therefore germ protection and health were the benefits on which the brand was positioned.

The ads launching Lifebuoy Gold, Lifebuoy Plus and Lifebuoy International Gold however take the brand to the family and specially the youth. The female protagonist shows the prevalent consumer mindset through the resistance that she shows towards using Lifebuoy as it was perceived to be a men's soap. Obsession with pimple free skin, the dating culture, complexion etc. highlighted in ads is an effort to take the communication closer to the new target audience and that is the youth. The new feminine shape is portrayed well and the fashionable germ protection portrayal projects the brand as different than beauty soaps but definitely not medicinal. The ambience of the bedroom, satin night dress, fur slippers, décor, tech savvy doctor etc. in the ad of Lifebuoy International Gold clearly denotes the target audience as the high income group. The launch ad of Neem-Tulsi shows a lady doctor and her mother in law denoting a shift in the brand focus. The in-depth interview revealed that post liberalization; there were plethora of beauty soap brands which were "Poor cousins" of Lux. There were brands that harped on the beauty aspect but were low priced and were "discount" soaps but were perceived as premium due to high imagery. All this had hit Lifebuoy badly as it was a medicinal soap and had a non-glamorous avatar. All these beauty soaps talked to the housewife and colour and fragrance attributes were a success. Therefore, HUL decided to change the entire look and feel of the product as well as the communication. The makeover resulted into appealing shapes, fragrances, and thus, Lifebuoy got rid of its carbolic soap image. New ads of Lifebuoy talked to the housewife and positioned the brand as family health soap. The advent of foreign brands and rise in disposable incomes was making the consumer demanding and the society was progressing. Indulgence all of a sudden became a necessity and therefore new flavours of Lifebuoy were launched with a visually appealing and informative packaging. The respondent gave the example of consumers using Lux for beauty, Dove for good skin and Dettol to fight germs when further probed about "indulgence".

From male oriented the brand moves towards the female audiences and family. The "Plus" sign appears as a mark of protection. In all these ads, the new flavours and new

shape are unveiled and interestingly the jingle plays as a background tune. Interestingly, the kids shown bathing with Lifebuoy are shown humming the jingle, emphasizing that the new avatar of Lifebuoy is as strong as the old one. The ads portray the new rejuvenated brand but somewhere tries to borrow the legacy of the brand by the using the age old jingle. The respondent from Lowe was of the view that multi packs/discounts and visual imagery are results of the development of the retail sector. Thus, pack of Lifebuoy has been made very colourful, high on information and represents an up market imagery. The breakthrough in communication for Lifebuoy came in the year 2006 when the “koi darr nahin” theme was seen in ads that played high on the prevention aspect. The interview with the expert revealed that in the category all soaps were functionally oriented. Nobody had articulated “don’t worry” theme into ads and therefore Lifebuoy was the pioneer in making an attempt to strike an emotional chord by showing the mother-kid relationship. Situations were created wherein the kid would be exposed to all kinds of dirt and the Lifebuoy soap was portrayed as one which would allow the kid to enjoy in any given situation as it protects him/her from germs even after hours of bath. This helped the brand move to a positive territory and got an emotional connect with mothers and higher SEC. The “Little Gandhi” film is very aspirational and projects the brand as socially concerned. The LOWE respondent said that it was observed that “Everyone is concerned about cleanliness of their houses but not about their surroundings and thus, this ad shows the kid actively cleaning the society and this takes the brand to a broader spectrum”. Even the “cricket stadium” film shows that mothers are relieved if their kids have had bath with Lifebuoy and it allows kids to just “be”. The ads clearly show that the Lifebuoy brand has moved from the economy segment to the premium segment.

### **Competitive Environment Reference:**

#### ***The Category Competition***

Post liberalization the toilet soaps category has seen competition like never before. The brands, variants, price points and discounts increased giving a tougher time to age old brands who had earlier ruled the Indian market. Out of the three segments i.e. economy, popular and premium there is a mad rush of marketers in the last two segments. The



competition has dramatically increased in the popular segment due to the burgeoning middle class and increasing consciousness towards self grooming led to increased acceptance of more and more brands in the premium segment. More than 35% of Indians are under the age of 30 and have purchasing power, and they don't mind buying different brands for unique purposes and benefits. For e.g. Dove for skin moisturizing, Dettol for killing germs, Lifebuoy for better protection after bath, Lux for beauty, Santoor for younger looking skin and the list continues. Such a maddening pace of brand launches and brand extensions in this segment has made "differentiation" difficult and therefore brands treat advertising and communications as a strategic outlet to distinguish them from the crowd.

### ***The Family***

The family system in India has also undergone a makeover since 1991. Job mobility has led to people spending their lives out of their native/home towns. Rise of nuclear families with one or maximum two kids and therefore in almost all brands smaller SKUs and multiple packs have been introduced. More women have started working and therefore the concept of "double income" and "indulgence". The level of education has also increased among both genders. Kids have become aware of everything and anything due to proximity to internet and other media. With limited attention of parents, pester power is also on a rise. Therefore, ads today portray smaller families, smart kids, and maids as the sole support, educated housewives and working women. For e.g. current Lifebuoy ads show the lady of the house as a doctor which is an acceptable norm in the society today.

### ***Retail Sector:***

The advent of shopping malls like "Big Bazaar" has changed the grocery shopping behaviour of Indians. Retail sector has affected all product categories but the major impact is seen on FMCG brands. Toilet soap purchase is usually done once a month and forms to be a part of the monthly grocery purchase. The cost of toilet soaps is a small part of the total grocery budget as planned per month. From the small grocery shops the venue has changed to these malls. The entire category is displayed in a part of the mall which makes all brands fall into the awareness set of consumers. Since the buyer is aware of most brands, it becomes a real challenge as retail store gives a ground to him/her to compare and contrast. Visual merchandizing is today taken as an art to talk to the

consumer inside the retail environment and that's why the banners, posters, danglers, packaging etc. have undergone a massive change as compared to old "kirana<sup>9</sup>" days. In order to pull the consumers, soap brands have invented multiple and combo packs which are sold at a discounted price. This change in consumer behaviour due to emergence of retail format stores has greatly impacted the marketing and advertising of toilet soap brands.

**Conclusion:**

A content analysis of Lifebuoy commercials revealed that a lot has changed in the communication strategy and has sharply changed the positioning of the soap with the target audience. Content analysis has proved that as the context change, so will the communication. As the marketing environment saw a sea change, one could see the reflections on the category and competition. Brands have reacted and responded to these changes happening in their business, consumer and cultural context by changing their audience and communication focus along with sharp changes in the other P's of the marketing mix.

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<sup>9</sup> A small grocery store in a nearby area selling all grocery, toiletries and related items.

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