

# Shakespeare-The Brand

Praveen.S.V

MBA, National Institute of Technology, Trichy, Tiruchirappalli,  
Tamil Nadu, India

## Abstract-

**W**illiam Shakespeare is known to the world as one of the greatest dramatist in the history of English Literature. It is unusual to attribute either Shakespeare or his works in the world of marketing, yet it is the fact that, even after 450 years, Shakespeare is still a recognizable and powerful brand in the world of today. Shakespearean festival was still being celebrated all over the world. Royal Society of Shakespeare still performs Shakespearean dramas every year, in more than twenty languages. It shows the brand image of Shakespeare, having in the world today. Aristotle, a Greek Philosopher, in his attempt to understand poetry and drama, expressed his view in his famous work Poetics that, both drama and poetry appeals to the emotions of a reader and spectators. The success of a drama, depends on the extent to which, a dramatist can able to capture the emotions of the audience. It is necessary for writers to have a unique brand personality to market their art. Every writer has their own set of target audience and follows various strategies to satisfy them. This paper deals with, how Shakespeare employed different strategies to create his own brand image, that helped him positioning his art among his target audience, thus ending up creating one of the greatest and powerful brand image in the History.

**Keywords-** Shakespeare, Brand image, Target Audience, Marketing, positioning.

## I. INTRODUCTION

To understand the Unique strategy followed by Shakespeare, in pitching his product to his target audience, it is important to understand the history of the English language, before his arrival. It will help us to understand, what differs Shakespeare from his contemporaries. The history of the English language of any period is deeply rooted with the political scenarios happen at the time. One should note that, before 300 years of the birth of Shakespeare, the language of English was on the verge of getting extinct. English, being a Teutonic language, was fighting for its survival at that time. According to the words of the English author, W. H. Hudson, 'From the Norman Conquest to the beginning of the thirteenth century, there was a great struggle in maintaining English as a written language, due to political scenarios happened at the time'. It was during the reign of King, John and the famous incident of the [MAGNA-CARTAMagna Carta](#) (1215), that led to the development of nationalism, the language of English began to revive.

## II. ENGLISH LANGUAGE BEFORE 100 YEARS OF BIRTH OF SHAKESPEARE

It was only in the latter half of the 14th century, Geoffrey Chaucer, the genius writer of that time, who was popularly known as the father of English literature, laid the foundation of Modern English. In one of the passages, in his famous work, *The Canterbury tales*, he wrote,

'That thee is sent receye in buxomnesse  
The wrastling of this world asketh a fal.'

One can understand that, many words from the above passage were still in use. After Chaucer laid a good foundation, we enter the long barren time in the English literature. W. H. Hudson quotes, 'With Chaucer made a brilliant beginning, but it was only a beginning and after his death, we enter upon a long barren period in the history of English literature'. After the death of Chaucer in 1400, his predecessors failed to carry his legacy forward. They lacked innovation and all they did try was to imitate the literary style of Chaucer. The lack of innovation is the main reason, why the 15<sup>th</sup> century writers cannot able to succeed like Chaucer. Even the best-known writers of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, such as Thomas Occleve or John Lydgate didn't try to innovate and simply followed the Chaucer's style. The best example is the *governail of princes*, a long poem, written by Thomas Occleve. Occleve followed the exact style of 7-line stanza and the rhyme ababbcc of Chaucer. They lacked the capability to deliver to the expectations of the audience of their time.

## III. THE AGE OF SHAKESPEARE

The latter part of the 15th century mark the beginning of Elizabethan era also called as the Age of Shakespeare. It is important for us to understand the political and cultural scenario at that time to understand the literature of the time. When Queen Elizabeth ascended to the throne, there was peace prevailed during the time. It was the time of the Renaissance. Translations of Greek classics were available in modern English and it helped the people of all grounds to enjoy the taste of Literature

#### IV. HOW SHAKESPEARE DEVELOPED HIS BRAND

After the death of Chaucer in 1400, for more than 150 years, the language of English lacked innovation and further improvement. The writers cannot able to comprehend the needs of the audience at the time. Shakespeare used this opportunity wisely to seal his place in the history. Let us now look into unique strategies followed by Shakespeare.

##### **A. Finding the correct platform**

With peace prevailing during the time of Elizabethan era, the queen Elizabeth focused on the development of the kingdom. Queen Elizabeth especially mainly focused on the development of London. It was the age of Drama and London were a land of opportunity at the time. It was a wise decision of Shakespeare to leave his birthplace, Stratford-on-Avon to start his writing career in London. It gave him a wonderful platform and opportunity to exhibit his potential to the fullest.

##### **B. Utilizing the Opportunity**

At the time of the Elizabethan era, the popularity of the Drama begins to grow, through the works of University wits. In the beginning, the drama was in the hand of clergy people. Mostly priests or clergy people will be the actors and most of the drama were focused on Religious themes.

As like Greek classical dramas, the English dramas were too enacted only in the festive seasons or in the important occasions. Only during the Elizabethan era, Full-time theatres were built in London to entertain people. Because of the newly built, full-time theatres to entertain the wide range of people, there was a need for various themes, apart from a religious one. Shakespeare utilized this opportunity perfectly. Shakespeare entered the field of drama, first as an actor, before becoming a playwright. It helped him to gain a little fame among the audience, that he utilized in the later part of his life. As a playwright, Shakespeare wrote all kinds of plays including, Tragedies, Comedies and Historical plays to satisfy the needs of the time.

##### **C. Setting a Wide range of Target Audience**

One of the important aspect, that differed Shakespeare from his contemporaries is his strategy of expanding the range of Target audience. From Chaucer to John Lily, one among the university wits, most of the English writers focused their writing only on the upper-class society and learned scholars. As per the words of W.H.Hudson, Neither Chaucer nor any of the university wits, can be called as the people's poet. It was Shakespeare, who first focused his writings on for the delight of the people. He focused his writings to satisfy the Laymen (Common citizens). It was very much evident from the fact that, in the yearly literary career of Shakespeare (1588-1593), Shakespeare mostly wrote Comedies. It includes the dramas like *Love's labor lost*, *The two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *a Midsummer-night's dream*. Laymen, after working hard all the day, will always love to watch comedy with a good ending for to hope for better tomorrow. Shakespeare by writing comedies developed his brand among the common people.

After gaining the fame of common men, Shakespeare in his later part of career (1601-1608) focused on the tragedies, thus by gaining popularity among upper class aristocratic people. In those years, Shakespeare also began to write Historical plays and sonnets, and it helped him to gain popularity among the learned people. Shakespeare, with his writings managed to gain reputation from people of various status and as a result, it made him, one of the most popular brand of all time.

##### **D. Perfect Usage of Modern English**

We should understand that the Old English or Anglo-Saxon English of 10<sup>th</sup> century is very different from the Shakespearean English of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Anglo-Saxon poem, 'Beowulf' is the best example to prove this case. The prologue of Beowulf in the Old English (Anglo-Saxon) goes on like this,

*Hwæt! We Gar-Dena in gear-dagum  
þeod-cyninga, þrym gefrunon,  
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon!*

*Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena preatum*

(Translation of the above passage in Modern English)

*LO !, praise of the prowess of people-kings  
of spear-armed Danes, in days long sped,  
we have heard, and what honor the athelings won!  
Oft Scyld the Scefing from squadroned foes.*

Most of the Anglo-Saxon poets, devout their art to clergy and learned people and it is evident from the complexity of the language they employed in their art. Any modern English reader needs to master the Anglo-Saxon English to understand the poetry of that time, but at the same time they can easily understand Shakespearean English without much difficulty. Literature at that time of Anglo-Saxon period, was meant for a tiny subset of learned people. Some linguists argue that the English at the time of Shakespeare will be much different from Old Anglo-Saxon English to the extent it was different from the English of Twentieth century. This shows the rapid pace of change in the structure of the English language in the age of Shakespeare. Shakespeare used casual slang or cockney dialect of their time brilliantly in his writings to make his art, relevant to common citizens.

### **E. Innovation**

Innovation is the key to success in achieving a good brand image. Unlike the writers of the previous century, who simply followed the literary style of their predecessor Chaucer, Shakespeare believed in Innovation. Shakespeare mastered the art of Neologism. It was estimated that Shakespeare invented more than 1700 words, that we still use today. Shakespeare creatively devised many new words from the slang (Cockney Dialect) of the time. It helped laymen to understand his works very easily, thus by, he strengthened his brand among them.

### **F. Breaking the Convention and Out of Box Thinking**

Another important aspect, that helped Shakespeare in achieving his brand image is, his courage in breaking the existing convention of classical unities of Drama. He innovated the literary style of his predecessors by **breaking the long-standing rules of Classical Drama**.

Classical Drama is supposed to follow the rules of Classical Unites, that were devised from the attic writers of Tragedy and the Greek Critic Aristotle. Some of the important rules of Classical drama are,

- a.) A classic drama should rigorously adhere to the unity of subject and tone. As a result, it kept the spheres of tragedy and comedy entirely separate. A tragedy should be a tragedy from beginning to end and a comedy should be comedy from beginning to end. No humorous episodes are permissible in classical tragedy and no tragic element was permitted in classical comedy.

It was Shakespeare, who first used a variety of theme and tone in his drama. He often blended tragic and comic incidents and characters in the same piece.

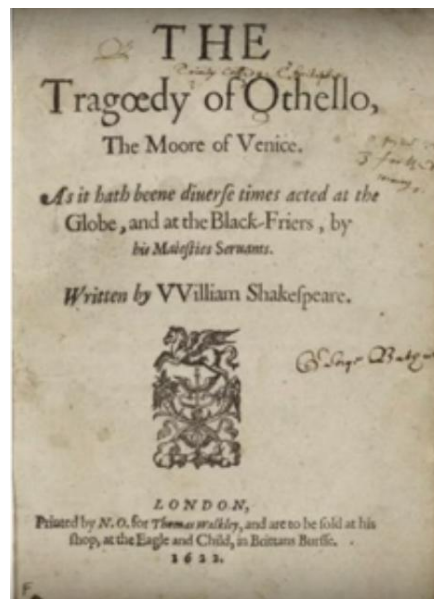
- b.) A classic drama should have a little or no Dramatic action  
Shakespeare in his drama, employed both action and narrative in carrying on a plot as it is essential for a drama of action to represent on the stage.
- c.) In a classic drama, the entire story of a play should be confined to a single day and there should not be any subplots. The entire theme of the drama should be confined to a single place.

On the other hand, Shakespeare, broke the tradition of three classical unities. He allowed his story to extend over months and years. He changed the scene as often as it is necessary, sometimes from one town or country to another. He also employed subplots and minor episodes in connection with its central projects.

Breaking these conventions helped Shakespeare to invent a new art of writing that in later, helped him achieve the greatest brand image.

### **G. Advertising Strategy.**

Generally, During the Elizabethan era, before the arrival of Shakespeare, in the advertising Pamphlet of a drama, mostly the name of the actors will be featured to attract the crowd. The Below Image is the, advertisement Pamphlet of Shakespeare Drama, 'Othello'.



As we can see in the above image, the advertising pamphlet of Shakespearean drama features the name of Shakespeare, instead of the lead actor of the play. This strategy of advertising, helped Shakespeare to improve his popularity among the audience.

### **H. First Mover Advantage**

Breaking the existing convention helped Shakespeare in earning First mover advantage. Since Shakespeare was one among the first few early writers to reject the rules of Classical unities, it allowed him to form his own set of rules for his art. It helped him to use his potential to maximum level.

**I. Investing Strategy**

Once Shakespeare gained a little popularity and fame, he becomes a shareholder in two of the leading theatres, The Globe and Black Friars. He also purchased many properties in Stratford and London. This helped him to become a known person in London, and it also increased his popularity and brand image.

**J. Societal Morals**

Shakespeare in his plays, spoke against many of the existing many cultural and societal norms of that time. He voiced against Primogeniture benefits in his play, 'As you like it'. He also stressed on revolutionary themes of equality, as like we witness in the play Romeo and Juliet, where a lover and love from different societal background fall in love with each other. This helped Shakespeare earn the image of Revolutionary writer, that made him favourite among his audience.

**V. CONCLUSIONS**

According to Philip Kotler, An American marketing author, the success of a brand, depends on how it was being pitched to its target customer successfully. This theory can be applied, also in the field of art. As per the Greek Critic Aristotle, an art, always appeals to the emotion of the audience. For any artist, their art is their product and an emotion is a vehicle to market their product. It is important for any artist to understand the needs of their target audience to market their product successfully. Shakespeare had a great knowledge of what his audience, expected from him and he delivered it to his utmost potential. It helped him to earn one the greatest brand image in the history.

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