The Candy Market Metamorphosis
Decoding the growth drivers that toiled in the favour of Indian Candy Market’s consistent and booming sales

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To a First and Lasting Impression...

Let me begin with welcoming you all to the first edition of the youngest trade magazine with an all new approach towards our celebrated A&M industry - The 2.0 Marketer. I am really proud and exuberant to acclaim that my team and I are ready with all new hopes and hues to bring out this first issue, aimed at giving its readers the most comprehensive and insightful look of the A&M industry.

Our Focus? Meaningful & interesting in depth content!
Our motivation behind this launch is to break the existing content clutter and bring on the table what was long lost- strong opinions and point of views. Using the lens of a marketer, The 2.0 Marketer will serve as a melting pot of relevant content, analysis and insights that intends to reinvent the reportage system.

Along with the launch of our first fortnightly magazine, this month has been particularly momentous as Agency Reporter completes one year of being a head turner for marketers and agencies who constantly yearn for valuable content. With purposeful content being our driving force, like the cover story which tries to decode the growth of Indian Candy market in this issue, the year marked some great accomplishments and surely unfolded the unraveled world of the most unforgettable and precious moments.

I am hoping to receive the same appreciation for this new endeavor and assure you an excellent space of beneficial knowledge-sharing.

Rahul Puri
(Editor in Chief)
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Two's Company, Three's a Crowd? Implications of Oodles of Video OTT Players

The OTT juggernaut is rolling on real quick! And it is quite evident from the fierce competition amongst telecom companies, cable service provider, content studios and mobile companies wanting to have a slice of the OTT entertainment pie. What is now dominated by some of the independent platforms like Amazon Prime, Netflix, Hotstar, Eros Now, SonyLIV and a few more, the OTT space is all set to witness entrants like The Walt Disney Company (with Disney+) and Apple (with Apple TV+) joining the bandwagon. Behemoths like BBC, NBC, and HBO also have plans to venture into this business in the coming years. In a report by FICCI, the number of players in the OTT market has grown from 9 in 2012 to 32 in 2018.

Now, the big question raises- With the competition intensifying, what will be the implications on the OTT industry? Will it stand at an advantageous end or experience a nosedive? Here’s looking at all possible perspectives..

How is the Video OTT Industry Performing Currently?

In fiscal 2018, the OTT market stood at Rs. 2,150 crores, while it currently stands at Rs. 3,500 crores. As per a report published by Indian Express, India has 371 million internet users and 1.3 million OTT subscribers as of June 2018, of which 66 million are identified as unique video viewers. With big broadcasters and content producers being an active part of the OTT ecosystem and novices entering the business (Watcho, MXPlayer, ShemarooMe, etc.), the OTT market is growing at a CAGR of 10.1%, says a study by ASSOCHAM & PWC. In fact, by 2022, the industry is expected to record Rs. 5363 crores.

Lloyd Mathias, Business and Marketing Strategist and former Asia-Pacific Marketing head of HP Inc. expresses his observations on the current OTT scenario in India. He says, “The OTT market in India is in its early stage with about 40 players today, but given the huge increase of broadband coverage and India’s data pricing being the cheapest in the world, this is set to grow exponentially in the days to come. OTT users in India will reach 500 million by 2020, making India the second biggest market after the US.” We see an overall change in the media and entertainment landscape today, which has managed to evolve beautifully and empowered the consumer by many folds. While TV continues to be a people’s favorite, OTT is slyly making its way to the Indian audience, enhancing the content consumption and creation ecosystem. Having said that, the lines between media and technology companies is blurring due to their convergence. The coming times will witness brilliant content offerings and equally powerful and state of the art consumption platforms.

Aggregators like Vodafone, Tata Sky, Airtel, etc. are another key participants of the OTT ecosystem and can be seen as active participants too. While OTT platforms came up with originals and offer complete content, these aggregators hold limited content rights only. Several OTT providers today are piggy riding on partnerships with these telcos to acquire their viewership base, assuring them of minimum guarantee of a subscriber base. This works on a revenue-based model, where the OTT players gain better penetration and reach in return.

The aggregator model is fairly new but is sure to be the next big thing in the OTT space. With Reliance entering as an aggregator itself, it is expected that telecom will give a tough fight to the existing OTT players and will look after the content in future.
Rulers of the Chart

Here’s looking at some of the top players in the game and analyzing their position in the market today. Their strengths are based on a dipstick survey done internally.

|---------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| 2013          | Sony Pictures Networks | - | 3.08m | • Pioneer in the OTT space  
• Its library consists of 18 years of content from the Sony Entertainment Network Channels in India  
• Has Animax that broadcasts a wide range of anime |
| 2015          | Netflix Inc. | 56% | 15m | • Opened the door to binge watch among youth  
• Diverse content  
• Good interface |
| 2015          | Sony Pictures, Warner Bros., and Singtel | - | 660k | • Strong focus on Hollywood content |
| 2015          | Eros Digital | 17% | 3.04m | • Highest International plc content among the OTT players in India  
• Leverage from movies and the kind of production values allows them to work with a similar talent base  
• Eros Now Quickie - for commute viewership |
| 2015          | Star India | 50% | 11.3m | • Live streaming of cricket is the biggest USP  
• Top subscribed OTT platform of India |
| 2015          | UDigital | 2018 | - | • Documentaries and Doodles are its biggest USP |
| 2016          | Viacom 18 | 28% | 4.07m | • Popular for regional content |
| 2016          | Amazon | 72% | 7m | • Content from individual / upcoming artists available  
• Highly localized  
• Only service that provides 3-in-one service of online video, music and free 1 day delivery |
| 2017          | Balaji Telefilms | 13% | 860k | • Content for all ages  
• Variety of regional content |
| 2018          | Times Internet | - | 10m | • Abundance of lifestyle shows |
| 2018          | Zee Entertainment Enterprises | - | 3.1m | • Huge collection of movies  
• International shows dubbed in Hindi |

Content-The King!

You’ll be surprised to know that the total amount of fresh original content created for OTT platforms in 2018 is estimated to be 1,200 hours, says a report by EY. While Zee tops the chart of announcing a planned spend of INR 25-30 billion in exclusive content, Hotstar plans about INR 1.2 billion on originals. Amazon and Netflix collectively are expected to spend over INR 10 billion a year in India.

The Indian market, newly exposed to OTT, is hungry for newer forms of content. And as a natural consequence, demand for content has increased significantly. These platforms have encouraged content creators to experiment and do different things.

Speaking on the same lines, Ali Hussein, COO, Eros Digital comments, “The beauty of the digital medium and the on-demand nature of the OTT service is that ability to “pull” content as per one’s individual choice and discretion. This gives the ability to both creators, performers and various contributors to reach a much larger audience. We have also seen the OTT platform enables creators to expand their genres and experiment with storytelling as well as techniques which are restricted in the traditional media.”

Hussein also shares his thoughts on how OTT players are at an edge these days, owing to their great content. He says, “What happens is there are different kind of content strategies. There are different objectives, different story narratives, different psychographic and demographic of audiences that we are targeting. So, unlike the broadcaster’s, which is controlled in terms of the time slots and programming, this allows for even some of the relatively smaller OTT players to have an opportunity to produce a show or launch a show that might actually get consumer traction.”
The Price Factor

In a bid to increase their subscriber base, OTT platforms in India are making offers that are easy on the consumer pockets. The strategy is two-pronged: offer packages for shorter durations and also, allow consumers to buy subscriptions to select content.

Talking about the top players, Netflix has come up with weekly and monthly 'mobile-only' plans, starting at INR 65 & INR 250 respectively. The new monthly plan is 50% cheaper than its current basic plan of Rs. 500, but still expensive when compared to its rivals — Amazon Prime Video costs Rs. 129 per month across screens while Hotstar Premium, which has global studio content, is available for subscribers at Rs. 199 per month.

Here’s a chart depicting the OTT revenue model

The price race is inevitable and never-ending. By 2021, it is expected that 30-35 million subscribers will pay for OTT platforms [and a further 350+ million subscribers accessing bundled OTT services from telcos], however, consolidation will be needed for the platform profitability, says a report by EY.

Call for Self-censorship

Today’s audience wants to see the content in an unadulterated and uncensored form. They want to appreciate an artist’s work in its purest form. However, with questions being raised, all major players (Netflix, Eros Now, Hotstar, SonyLIV, Jio, Amazon Prime, etc.) agreed on a self-imposed censorship code that prohibits them from showing banned content on their platform. This has been drafted by The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), along with a redressal mechanism for customer complaints.

Commenting on the same, Uday Sodhi, Head of Digital Business at Sony Pictures Networks says, “OTT platforms have agreed to self-regulation of content. This means we will be rating the content being shown on OTT platforms and to provide better information to users about what to expect from the show. Besides this, content that is illegal and harmful as per the current laws of the land will not be available on OTT platforms. There is also a mechanism to ensure consumers can report any content that they believe is not as per guidelines.”

Hussein being associated with the OTT sector directly expresses that little or no regulation helps bring out the best of this medium. He says, “The regulatory design is yet to be determined here. Currently, a lot of the regulations that are being considered and talked about have been from a regulatory standpoint. They are more in terms of messenger apps and voice calling apps. On the video side, that clarity has not yet been made available yet from a regulatory standpoint. Though we are governed in general by the larger kind of information under IT Act, I think self-regulation as a premise is a great concept to have because it’s kind of promotes overall growth of the ecosystem, where there is a freedom given to the creators to be also responsible for the kind of content they create and publish.”

Mathias adds here, “Presently, the popular OTT apps such as Netflix, Star’s Hotstar, Amazon’s Prime Video, Zee5, SonyLIV, ATL Balaji, and Times Group’s MX Player are governed by regulations under the IT Act. So they really have no obligation to follow the guidelines and mandates by the Information & Broadcasting Ministry which governs traditional broadcasters and DTH providers.

The registered broadcasters – who pay a license fee and carriage charges – now have a cost disadvantage over the OTT players, who do not pay any license charges or undergo minimal censorship. These cost saving can be channelized into producing and sourcing better content, thus enticing better audiences and attracting advertisers.”

Content forms the premise of these OTT platforms. It is the first thing that draws the audience here. In my opinion, self-censorship and self-regulation don’t stem from societal ethics but are motivated by fear (of state, authority and self-appointed defenders of morality). As of now, with just about no censorship intervention, players are raking in the viewerships. OTT is emerging to be a medium with an “A” certification as opposed to television which is meant for all. I do believe this is going to be short-lived as censorship and government control will hit the medium later than sooner.
Devices and Internet Making Way for OTT

Companies now have it easier to reach out to a broader audience, especially to regional markets and smaller towns, with the increased availability of 4G services in India. Additionally, we see a great data war in telecom operators after Jio has entered with VoLTE in India, and the merger of Vodafone & Idea, aiming for an improved quality of data. In a report by Kantar IMRB, it says that India’s internet market is expected to register 627 million by the end of 2019, owing to its rapid growth in rural areas.

To grab the attention of this set of audience, localization and differentiated content is becoming crucial for these OTT platforms to offer. We have also witnessed the global streaming platforms in the previous years investing in local content and originals as they look to gain scale. This calls for a great opportunity of content creators, who are seeing both global and local streaming services invest in greater volumes of content with larger budgets.

The above trends have sequentially doubled the paid video subscribers in 2018 on these OTT platforms, says a report the EY. The video subscription revenues grew almost four times in 2018 to reach INR13.4 billion. The foremost reasons behind this is the influx of plenty of video streaming platforms, OTT pricing closer to TV pricing, the spread of affordable broadband, greater penetration of smartphones, regional language content, live streaming of major sports, etc. If the same growth trend follows, we might just witness 30-35 million paying OTT subscribers by 2021.

Effect on Advertising

With the raging success of OTT, advertising and subscriptions are deemed to grow too. The methodology of monetization will become stronger and there will be an increase in the number of advertisers and subscribers. While advertisers generally look for a brand-safe, high-quality and an addressable environment, OTT platforms are in the league to provide the same, just as TV.

Hussein shares his views on OTT Advertising. He says, “Now that the audience is moving to digital, advertisers will also start going to digital in that regard. I think the interesting thing is the kind of change that will happen down the line where there is enough critical mass of both quality of users as well as the quantum of viewership happening frequently and that frequency can be defined as daily, weekly, monthly.

I think the way India is currently structured, the mass market on the TV side will grow for another two to three years, while a lot of the niche channels will start shifting and have already started shifting to digital and that trend will continue. So, even if you see a lot of analysts’ reports, the growth of the digital advertising businesses and the digital video business in specific has almost been threefold on that of the traditional kind of TV advertising business.”

Change of Release Windows

The rise of OTT players will eventually result in a billion screens. Indian cinema will see a parallel release of movies in theatres as well as on pay OTT platforms in the coming years. This will come in the form of direct-on-OTT films and a pre-theatrical premium digital window, helping creators reach a wider base.

In the Foreseeable Future

Survival of the Fittest

The rapidly increasing over the top (OTT) space is likely to see consolidation over the next five years, says a report by FICCI. The number of players in the digital space will shrink, where just the top 7-8 will survive in the coming years. This is so because a consumer would not need 100 apps. He will ultimately settle down with top players in the market, like on television.

If we look at the trajectory of OTT space in India, it is evolving just as the television did—from state-owned to private to exclusive channels to international channels. OTT started out with generic and is now on its route to specialization.

Will OTT be the New TV?

“OTT has upped the ante on quality. Production values of content on offer is stupendous. For folks tired of low production quality and content on television networks with low budgets, are bound to gravitate to OTT. OTT is going to gradually eat into TV networks and their offerings.” says Harish Bijoor, Founder, Harish Bijoor Consults Inc.

With the impact of the TRAI Tariff Order, implications on total viewership, free television uptake, channel MRP rates, and advertising revenues are expected to be seen. However, with the increased parity between television and OTT content choices and costs, the OTT platforms are sure to benefit from it. The attractiveness of TV is bound to get affected since large broadcasters have removed their content from FreeDish. And given the convenience factor, the impact on traditional TV viewership is bound to occur.

In my view, there’s so much that OTT space is witnessing and is yet to witness. The game is getting stronger each day, giving a tough fight to the viewership numbers of TV channels. It is very likely that the popularity of TV channels will plummet, owing to the growing demand for OTT content.

However, Romil Ramgarhia, COO, BARC India expresses that the consumption of TV isn’t diminishing. He says, “In India, TV viewership continues to grow alongside digital video consumption. The availability of high-speed internet, a plethora of OTT platforms, and a vast array of regional and original content have made the digital video ecosystem extremely ripe. Parallelly, audiences are also engaging more with their television sets and we see new channels being launched year on year catering to various audiences with a brand name content line up. In 2018 alone, 75 new TV channels were launched of which 52 channels were catering to regional audiences. The Indian consumer today has access to all kinds of content, and the same content is also available across screens.

Let’s see how the future of TV & OTT platforms unfolds in the coming years and if the latter one successfully supplants the former! All eyes on it!

Concluding Thoughts

India has been an incredible video industry (TV & films), running successfully for decades. That being said, alternative forms of content creation and curation have emerged and will possibly grow faster than their speed today. In most parts of the world, including India, OTT will be an and not an or, in my view. To say that OTT technologies have disrupted the Indian Entertainment sector would be an understatement. Although there is a long way to go, I am sure the OTT space is here to make some big wins!
Awaiting to See How Marketers will Divide their Dollars Between Print & Digital

-Sanjay Sindhwani, CEO, The Indian Express (Digital)

Q. First of all, very many congratulations for your new role as the CEO of Digital Business at the Indian Express. What made you make this move and how does it feel to be on the new chair?

A. Thank you. I was looking for new challenges at this stage of my career. The Indian Express brand has a strong legacy and credibility. It has grown in all aspects in the past couple of years. I think there is a lot more that can be done to take it to greater heights. With the scourge of fake news, I think a credible brand like Express has its role cut out for it. I definitely think good times are ahead and you will hear about a lot of our new initiatives in the months to come. I am really excited about the future.

Q. You have spent 20 years of your 25-year career in digital news. What is that one thing that you will inherit from your celebrated journey to Indian Express?

A. In digital, everyday is a new beginning. You learn, unlearn and relearn to grow in this industry. You will see a lot of new products being launched, lots of experimentation happening as we try our hands at new products and services.

Q. As per IRS 2019 Q1, English dailies saw an additional 0.3 crore readers since IRS 2017. With print industry being questioned each day, do you think it is indicative of print and digital media consumption growing hand-in-hand in the foreseeable future? What will be the foremost drivers?

A. India is a developing market. Literacy levels are going up. A young population with high aspirations will consume more of, both Print and Digital Media, in the foreseeable future. But digital growth will be much faster than print. The foremost reason for this is the increasing internet penetration rate in India. The ease of access. It will be interesting to see how marketers divide their dollars between the two media channels, while trying to engage with these aspiring Bharat residents.

Q. In the same survey, The Times of India retained its number one position among all English Daily Newspapers, while The Indian Express stood fifth. What will it take for you to reach the same stature in terms of readership figures?

A. We at Indian Express are not about Quantity. We are always about Quality. For us, every story and every reader is important. We always strive for unbiased and credible journalism. Having said that, we believe that on digital we have expanded our reach to become the No.2 English Newspaper media site and this reiterates the fact that I mentioned earlier, that we produce great and distinct content which has enabled us to expand our footprint in the digital world much faster, in-spite of greater competition.

Q. With the online publishing industry built on the back of advertising, do you think it will sustain for long?

A. While Advertising continue to have a dominant share of the overall revenue pie of the digital publishing industry, the share will start coming down soon. New revenue lines will be added to the list. Even within advertising, there will be diversification of the revenue options from Display, Native, Videos, Keywords, CPD, CPL to many more. As the industry matures and experiments with opportunities, alternate revenue streams will come into play. Media organisations are experimenting with Subscriptions, Content Commerce, Content Syndication, Events, Trainings, Consumer Research and many more business ideas. Some of these are getting very good traction. I strongly believe that 4-5 years down the line, non-advertising revenues will account for 30% - 40% of the total revenues of most media companies, who will still be around.
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Q. You have well-established your identity as a millennial publisher in the market where you aimed at young, diverse, and inclusive generation. Now that you have captured the moment, what next big thing are you looking forward to?

A. We are looking at expanding into multilingual content. We are already doing great in Hindi with ScoopWhoop Hindi. A substantial part of our user base in Hindi belongs to tier-2 and tier-3 towns. We are also present on new age platforms like Helo and Sharechat. Apart from this, we continue focusing on our non-fiction video programming with ok Tested (new age experiences, trials etc.) and Unscripted (new age vox pops, interviews with actors and politicians - Townhall & Off The Record - fresh take on interviews for discerning millennials). Lastly, we have increased focusing on beats like tech, gaming, health and fitness through video channel as well.

Q. In a way, it was ScoopWhoop that started the listicle trend in India which the other contemporaries followed too later. However, it’s not always easy to tell what sets the publishers apart from one another. How are you innovating differently to set apart yourself in the already jam-packed market?

A. At the core of ScoopWhoop is discovery. People have always used ScoopWhoop to find the most exciting pop culture stories and content both created and curated by us. Over the years, we became so good at knowing what’s trendworthy that young people now think of us less as an entertaining ‘listing’ site and more as a brand that discovers and defines what’s cool and what’s uncool.”

“In a recent conversation between ScoopWhoop's Sattvik Mishra and The 2.0 Marketer's Ojasvi Nath, we assimilated the success story of the millennial publisher. Mishra speaks about the journey from being informative and entertaining to influential at a scale. Excerpts:

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- Sattvik Mishra, Co-Founder & CEO of ScoopWhoop
We are not just informative or entertaining, we are influential at scale - ScoopWhoop has a weekly organic reach of over 20 Mn people and the network spans 30+ social communities across Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Whatsapp, Helo, ShareChat, Snapchat, Instagram and more. Today, we are the only media platform that can confidently claim – 'if it’s on ScoopWhoop its trending'.

Q. Of course, everyone has their set of challenges and crises. There is no harm in accepting the shortcomings and working on it like a true entrepreneur. We would really like to know where did ScoopWhoop fail and how exactly the company tackled the failure, worked on it quite well, and came forward as a winner?

A. We dabbled in news but realized that we should be doing stories that resonate more with the young audience. We then came up with focussed channels like ScoopWhoop Unscripted. It is engaging, and this format is how we look at current affairs and political memes. This has not only been received positively but is very impactful at the same time.

“*Our approach is to make the brand story relevant and engaging with our audience*”

Q. Moving on, please tell us what sort of audience-centric brand solutions you provide to the advertisers considering innovation, differentiation, and ROI all at the same time.

A. Our approach is to make the brand story relevant and engaging with our audience. For instance, the non-fiction short form videos on our platform are produced with audience engagement in mind. This includes the content presentation, length, and current relevance. These videos have brand story as the content but are unique in the sense that the story is interesting on its own rather than looking like mundane advertising vehicle. Also, we do smarticle to tell a brand’s story effectively. Here we turn the product message to content but keep an interactive layer which helps the audience (prospective product user) understand the value provided by product at a much deeper level.

Q. Also, what do you think about native advertising that sync well with web content these days? Why most of the brands still haven’t taken native advertising seriously and how should one practice it ethically without paying heed to too much of brand presence throughout?

A. Before associating with brand, we ensure:
1. There must be a synergy in terms of the audience, it wouldn’t make sense for us or for the brand to use our platform to talk to a totally different audience than the one we cater to.
2. Editorially we have a strong voice and space, and we ensure that brands that work with us fit with that space.
3. Whatever we create whether for ourselves or for brands needs to meet editorial standards, because that’s when we know the content will work on our platform.

Q. With even Indian publishers increasing use of technology-enabled approach for smart publishing, how is ScoopWhoop looking at implementation of automation technology? For those who embrace technology enabled services can look up to lower cost and turnaround time. Agree?

A. Yes, automation can help companies to eliminate human errors, can look for faster turnaround time and lower the cost of productivity.

Q. Despite being quick with every trend, ScoopWhoop entered the video section a little late but still managed to excel. How exactly that happened? When can we see your separate OTT app, or you will continue to ride on the popularity of other OTT platforms like Netflix in India?

A. We have a unique approach to content creation across formats. We believe because we were late, it helped us in maintaining the uniqueness as we did not want to copy or follow existing content trends. We had to innovate, and we did something different with the new formats like Unscripted and Ok Tested etc.

OK Tested - A channel where ScoopWhoop people take on all sorts of challenges and try different new experiences.

ScoopWhoop Unscripted - A Non-fiction channel where we do everything from edgy documentaries to explainers to celebrity town-halls. We are already in talks with OTT platforms to be part of their channels. Our focus is to build India’s most popular and influential youth content brand and being freely accessible to all is an important part of this vision.

“We are already in talks with OTT platforms to be part of their channels. Our focus is to build India’s most popular and influential youth content brand and being freely accessible to all is an important part of this vision”

Q. Facebook recently deleted the account of a famous publisher from Insta and Facebook both. Do you think the dependency on such platforms have grown a lot? How is ScoopWhoop taking care of these issues and become a little extra cautious?

A. Our approach is to recognize what the platform user wants, and we tailor the content according to it. We have a symbiotic relationship with the platform. They provide us reach and we add the value to the platform. We will continue with this simple approach. If our content is good and engaging, we will remain relevant on any platform.
OPEN Strategy & Design: Started Lean, Emerged Convincing

OPEN Strategy & Design, a brand design company, commenced operations in the year 2011 to facilitate the growth of brands and businesses and recently bagged Design Agency of the Year award, 2018 at ABBY’s, Goafest 2019. Initiated by the founders – Rahul Kaloti and Mangesh Rane, the agency has managed executing the desire to leverage big-brand thinking to drive business growth with both startups and legacy brands. In a recent conversation with Ojasvi Nath, both the founders apprised the journey so far and briefed us about their modus operandi.

Successful Hike on a Rough Terrain

The year started on a good note for OPEN Strategy & Design with the company winning big as Design Agency of the Year, 2018 at ABBY’s. “Yes, we have been winning big and consistently at both ABBY’s and Kyoorius Design Yatra over the past couple of years, ever since we started entering these awards. What is more heartening is that, all the work that has won was created for the market and not just to push creative possibilities,” the much elated Rahul Kaloti speaks.

“This, in fact, when we started off, we bet on the coming together of two strong forces - strategy - sharp, with-its-nose-on-the-ground, big-opportunity-grabbing-idea kind of thinking married to design, which can envision and deliver the brand as both a system and a desirable world. The two combined give you the power to build big business opportunities,” he adds.

This starting belief has only gotten stronger with time. The desire was to leverage big-brand thinking to drive business growth. And the company have managed to do that with both startups and legacy brands. “There is beauty in a media-agnostic approach where the focus is on delivering the brand in its most potent form across different platforms. Today, our team comes from diverse backgrounds - allowing us a more robust perspective on brands - marrying cultural truths to retail intelligence and so on,” Kaloti further elaborates.

“We work with entrepreneurs, private equity companies and established brands. But we are trying to bring in the big-picture brand perspective, even if we are tackling just one part of the problem.”
A Series of Astute Stratagems

While there are many things that company is proud of, they still assume themselves to be 'work-in-progress'. "What is exciting to us is the approach. There are two parts to our approach - one, create brands that are remarkable. This might sound simple and obvious, but it is at the heart of most of marketing woes. Brands need to be designed with distinctiveness at their core. And looking around you realise that not enough brands are conceived to be remarkable," Mangesh Rane explains.

The second part - is about building the brand from the inside out. Branding not as an artificial top layer, but something that is built from within. Starting with internal culture, to product, to packaging, to retail experience, and all the way to communication, all the layers building a single cohesive, desirable world.

Rane believes that the joys come from the shifts they engineer. Whether it is birthing a new brand and getting it quick traction or revitalising a legacy brand and setting it on a new growth orbit. "We have, since we started in 2011, addressed such a wide variety of challenges - From re-vitalising a 100-years old retail brand (Nilgiris for Future Group) to building India’s most prestigious journalism awards (RedINK Awards for Mumbai Press Club) and from creating one the buzziest new diamond brands in the world (ALTR) to creating a highly effective social good programme (Main Pragati for CRISIL Foundation). We have also worked with homegrown brands like MeeMee (babycare), Opium (eyewear) and Imaginarium (3D Printing) and helped put them on a different growth trajectory," Rane shares.

"We had a strong initial core team and then the work helped us attract talent. We do not need to fill massive teams, so we get to be selective about who we take in."

Having said that, the industry as a whole does face the unique challenge of attracting talent from next generation to work with them. "There does exist a talent crisis in the industry. While there are many aspects to the problem, the solution is straightforward - the work. Stellar, impactful work that captures people’s imagination was always the best recruitment ads we put out as an industry. Maybe we aren’t doing enough of that. We solve that and the rest of it will take care of itself," he points out.

Digital Needs Brand Thinking and Good Design

As per the common belief, the advent of digital media has caused creative carnage in the designing part of advertising. However Rane believes, "Looking at digital from the media-end is not going to work. It can only be leveraged by brand thinking. Right now, there is not enough conceptual thinking that one gets to see. When we were working on designing the e-commerce experience for MeeMee, we imagined an exhausted, sleep-deprived mother who gets on to the website at midnight and we asked ourselves what should be the experience be like? Fundamental thinking opens new doors. Creates fresh, compelling experiences."

"The other big drawback is design. Digital is a great place to build experiences - and quality design sensibilities is so critical there. We believe that when you put brand thinking and design with digital, you get work that’s worth people’s time," he speaks.

Synergy Between Brands and Agencies

There is this entrepreneurial spirit that the company believes it needs to adopt. Kaloti thinks it’s optimism, energy, and big-thinking what OPEN Strategy & Design needs as an agency. "We need to build brands with the kind of zeal and contextual awareness that today’s entrepreneurs have. One of our closest relationships, is with this amazing Indian group with whom we are together building opportunities across the globe. It is this symbiotic kind of relationship which has helped us become sharper at building businesses and them getting more brand intuitive in their internal thinking. It is with these kinds of associations that the new agency model is finding shape."
Style of Creativity – Not Easy but Powerful

The power of a brand lies in its ability to deliver non-linear growth for businesses. And that only happens when there is a brand that is designed to engage. “On our credential book, there is a quote from the American Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel - ‘the opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference’. If we have to fight indifference of the consumer, we have to be remarkable - engaging at every possible opportunity, whether it’s the product or retail or communication. It is not easy, but it is powerful. It creates moments of bias. That is what we aim for, whether working with a startup or an established brand. Having our eye on the business task all the time is our biggest edge,” Rane apprises.

Past, Present, and Future

The agency seems quite satisfied with the amount and quality of work it is delivering to the brands and other clients. Taking pride in contemplating the framework and having a sharp point of view in any category is what gives them an edge over other contemporary new players. “It gives us a real sense of satisfaction when we get to put out a sharp point of view in any category. One such current assignment was for Zivame, which operates in the Indian lingerie market and has leveraged e-commerce powerfully to create an inviting interface for women. To unlock the next phase of growth, the brand needed a promise, language and a vocabulary of its own. We defined its codes, built the world and created the operating system of the brand, setting directions for everything - from retail to e-commerce to communication, Kaloti shares. Then there is this precious gifting brand called Unsaid Library, which the agency just launched in Belgium. It translates emotions into beautiful gifts, creating the perfect gift. “We have led the conceptualisation, product design philosophy, testing it across the globe, brand design, retail experience design (both online and offline) and communication. It’s now in the process of a European roll-out.”

Another brand which the agency is very excited about, is the New York-based lab-grown diamond brand ALTR. “When the whole industry was looking at lab grown as the ethical/cheaper other, we took a contra stand. We realised that the lab-grown diamond could actually deliver both higher quality and bigger size. So, we built it like a modern luxury brand. ALTR is already amongst the biggest lab-grown companies in the world.”

“Honestly, we don’t know what box we belong in. So, we do not really have a reference point in terms of competition, etc. We are a brand design company, here to do strong work that delivers business growth and the future for that, we believe, will always be bright,” Kaloti concludes.

OPEN STRATEGY & DESIGN WAS AWARDED DESIGN AGENCY OF THE YEAR, 2018 AT ABBYS
In Conversation With

Karthik Raman
CMO and Head – Products, IDBI Federal Life Insurance

One of the leading Life Insurance companies of India, IDBI Federal Life Insurance, has been an active player in evolving the industry. In our conversation with Karthik Raman, he explains the brand’s marketing ploys, especially playing intelligently with sport-marketing. – By Soumya Sehgal

Q. Your journey with IDBI Federal spans over 11 years. How has the insurance sector reinvented itself during these years and how instrumental has IDBI Federal been in that change?
A. My journey of 11 years at IDBI Federal has flown by in a jiffy and has been both, super exciting and incredibly challenging. I started off in Bancassurance sales and set up the entire distribution channel for the organization. Despite the ups and downs, I managed to drive Bank to one of the top producers in the PSU segment. Then, after 22 years in sales, I decided to head in a different direction and moved to my current role in November 2015 as the Head of Marketing and Products. The life insurance industry has evolved tremendously since opening up to private players in 2000. However, life insurance penetration is still very low in India and there is a need for greater awareness and education about its importance, which is something the industry is trying to tackle. Marketing of life insurance is also undergoing a change, moving from an earlier positioning of fear and tax-saving to trying to tackle. Marketing of life insurance is also undergoing a change, moving from an earlier positioning of fear and tax-saving to

Q. How do you utilize various platforms (Print/Radio/OOH) for advertising? How does your ad spend look like?
A. Over the years, we have seen that digital helps us reach our desired audience, is far more sustainable and is the most cost effective medium of communication. Keeping this in mind, we now focus primarily on digital with most of our latest campaigns like #KeepMoving, Term Insurance videos, ‘Double Delights’ – Tax Saving Campaign and Child Plan campaign being run solely on digital platforms such as social media, through both our own pages and category influencers, microsites, blogs and GDN banner ads. Close to 60% of our budget is allocated to digital, however, around the time of our marathons, we do some targeted print, outdoor and radio advertising in the respective cities.

Q. Talking about Sachin Tendulkar as your brand ambassador, he has been a face for other prominent brands too. Do you think it will weaken the top-of-mind recall for your brand? What was your rationale behind choosing him?
A. We have had a great association with Sachin Tendulkar right from 2016 when he came onboard as the Face of our Marathons and now, as our Brand Ambassador. After a truly legendary cricketing career, Sachin has been very active in spreading his message of health and fitness. We believe this resonates closely with our purpose of empowering people to create the life and lifestyle of their choice. Our association with Sachin has always been tremendously positive and this can be seen in our marathons in Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata and Kochi where he has inspired thousands of runners to put on their running shoes and begin their journey towards a fitter future. We also hold a pre-marathon chat show with Sachin in each city called ‘Run To Sachin’ where registered runners are invited to participate in a contest and win a chance to interact with the Master Blaster. Over the years, the response has been overwhelming with thousands vying for this exclusive opportunity.

Q. Insurance marketing is generally received as boring. How is IDBI Federal Life Insurance doing it intelligently to break the clutter? What is the biggest challenge when it comes to advertising in the insurance sector?
A. The life insurance industry in India is one of the most competitive with 23 players targeting the same set of audiences. The biggest challenge is being heard as most of the players end up talking the same language when selling their products. They either attempt to instil the fear of death in consumers, or position their products as tax-saving instruments.

At IDBI Federal Life Insurance, we have taken a conscious call to move away from this negative space and have endeavoured to change this mindset by repositioning life insurance as an important tool for enhancing one’s financial security and well-being. In many of our campaigns, we have used humour as a medium to convey this message in an appealing and non-threatening manner. We have also used our marathons, our grassroots level badminton programme and our other sports initiatives as mediums to convey positivity and encourage Indians to lead a fitter and healthier life.

IDBI Federal Life Insurance

IDBI Federal Life Insurance Co Ltd

In association with Agents

In Conversation With

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Upscale Your Marketing Game With Native Ads

Digital advertising these days has become so prevalent that people are becoming blind to it. The phenomenon – known as “banner blindness” – causes people to overlook ads when they’re presented in an obvious or overbearing way. To fight banner blindness, marketers these days are opting for the relevancy factor in their brand communication.

Native advertising is one such solution. Ads that blend into content so they don’t appear like ads, have been growing in popularity over the years. With the huge rafting of digitally active, continuously growing generation, the present-day dynamic is actually what moving programmatic native advertising from being a niche to becoming mainline.

With 35% growth between 2017 and 2018 itself, native advertising has been the fastest-growing advertising segment. In fact, native ads have proven to receive 53% more views than traditional display ads and increase the purchase intent by 18%. But that’s possible only when you have a robust native advertising strategy.

However, Native Ads are only successful when marketers choose the right placement for them. This doesn’t just mean shortlisting and approaching all the ad networks and publishers that ‘seem’ to have the target audience you want to reach out to. Rather marketers have to spend some time digging up their actual demographic to understand the potential success on their platform. For instance, Colombia, the platform that is one of the largest publisher-owned ad networks in APAC, serving 500 million impressions per day. But to help marketers run successful native ads, it also enables them to distinguish audience buckets based on their interests and passions.

At Ease

With a focus on providing native advertising solutions, Colombia helps ease the buying and selling process of native ads for publishers and advertisers on websites, mobile web, and apps. Also, the most attractive bonus the tool is providing – helping brands to engage with India’s topmost publications – Times properties like Times of India, ET, NBT, and so many others along with more than 80 additional publishers.

The process of creating a campaign on a platform like Colombia feels uninterrupted. To create the campaign, marketers can choose the right advertising objective – driving traffic to the brand website, increasing brand awareness, or driving app installs. The campaign pricing that works as a bidding option for the ad is Cost-per-click (CPC) or Cost-per-thousand-impressions.

The brands, while fabricating the entire campaign, choose either of the options, depending on the maximum amount they intend to pay. Further, Colombia offers two different ad formats; Single Image Ad and Carousel Ad. The Single Image Ad format is for desktop and mobile both. While Carousel on the other hand a format specifically for mobile.

A Panacea for Brands

For marketers, performance metrics are essential and native advertising campaigns generally offer higher viewing rates, greater conversions, and more engagement than almost any display advertisement. The more a brand can engage with the audience through tools like Colombia, the more they will be able to access greater opportunities in order to develop a relationship with their target audience.

In Total Control

There are great marketers out there who struggle to get their writing in front of the right people. Talk to any marketing department and awareness always lands somewhere near the top of their priority list. And to achieve this, the marketer needs to be in control of the campaign.

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Disrupting Influencer Marketing
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Despite low marketing and advertising around this simple confectionery segment in comparison to other consumer-packaged goods, the sales are colossal in number. India’s Candy Market continues to flourish and grow at a CAGR of over 9% during 2016-2021 as per Nielsen India. But what possibly are the growth drivers that toiled in the favour of its consistent and booming sales? Is it the changing consumption habits or the breakthrough innovations with flavour and texture combinations? Or the riveting avant-garde manoeuvre of candy to gradually replace R and become the new normal can be identified as one of the prominent explanations in the growing sales?

Ojasvi Nath, through this article and combined efforts from the industry experts, tried to decipher the answers of these questions.

The Candy Market Metamorphosis

Of late, the visibility of candy as a crucial product has been overshadowed by other alternatives like chocolates, bakery products, biscuits, and much more which can be seen through the diminishing curve of the advertising around the product. However, there hasn’t been any loss when it comes to sales. Overall confectionery can be broken in hard-boiled candy, chocolate candy, mints, gums, and so on. More than 50% of the market is still dominated by HBC, while chocolate-candies (Eclairs) and mints/gums are fast growing. While HBC is predominantly driven by kids, mints and gums get a strong source of their business from youth and adults. In mints/gums, large pocket-packs are increasingly driving adoption and usage.

Sugar confectionery, also known as sweets, toffees, candies or lollies, heedless of attracting attention, has become an inseparable part of a consumer’s life, mirroring the consumption habits of the Indian market that has given a latent yet gigantic platform to the candy market in the country. A robust growth this particular confy segment has been registered during the last five years and is expected to grow at a double-digit CAGR during the next five years. However, the consumption of candies is becoming inversely proportional to the marketing or advertising involved. Even though there are multiple channels to reach children and adolescents targeted as a major market force in the commercials of intense and specialised food marketing and advertising efforts, we see an altogether different story that worked in the favour of growing consumption pattern and popularity of candy in India.

"The future looks bright for confectionery manufacturers. While reformulation will continue to dominate new product launches over the coming years, the market’s flexibility and willingness to take risks will ensure that the confectionery sector retains its growth and innovation potential in the foreseeable future."
Avnish Tripathi, CEO Lactalis Anik, who has worked extensively in the confectionery category with prior experience in Mondelez/Cadbury explains the current scenario of this confectionery segment. "The confectionery market is a distribution-driven market. Despite being $1.5 Bn, the market is still growing at a CAGR of 9-10% across different segments. As an impulse category, where the consumer behaviour is variety-seeking, the growth in the market is being driven by innovation which is also helping in driving premiumization.” The confectionery market in India is still in its evolving stage – with the per capita consumption in India at a measly under $15 as compared to several European economies where the consumption is >$300. "No surprises, that the market grows at double digits as compared to mature markets which are sluggish at 2-3% growth,” Tripathi adds.

The global confectionery industry is going strong. Although the shift towards ‘better-for-you’ products and clean labels has increased the pressure on manufacturers to reformulate, consumer demand for sweet snacks shows no signs of slowing down. In fact, India is one of the under-consumed countries. The per capita consumption is much lower in comparison to other nations where the per capita consumption is anywhere upwards to 1.5 Kg per annum. And here, we are still under the range of 250 Gm. The size of the country and potential that India holds for confectionery is vast and phenomenal. The future looks bright for confectionery manufacturers. While reformulation will continue to dominate new product launches over the coming years, the market’s flexibility and willingness to take risks will ensure that the confectionery sector retains its growth and innovation potential in the foreseeable future.

"Consumers were habitual of buying naked candies. Gradually, the pioneers in confectionery like Parle changed the game and came up with packaged and hygienic confectionery complying with the Indian standards."

Krishnarao S Buddha, Sr. Category Head - Marketing at Parle Products Pvt. Ltd. says, "India has largely been a mono-packaged market for many decades. A few decades ago, confectionery was largely sold loose in jars without any wrappers. Consumers were habitual of buying naked candies. Gradually, the pioneers in confectionery like Parle changed the game and came up with packaged and hygienic confectionery complying with the Indian standards. Besides, we also came up with a lot of innovations and unique product offerings which shows how these products have evolved over time. To begin with, we started the orange candy and Kismi. These were the most unique products available when we launched them first.”

Innovations & Disruptions

In the year 2015, DS Group- manufacturer of brands such as Rajnigandha Pan Masala, Baba Tobacco, and Catch Spices gained access to the candy section and launched HBC (hard boiled candy) – Pulse. After reaching to the pinnacle of success by being the category disruptor, DS Group launched the first television commercial in the year 2017 for Pulse candy. The candy (Pulse) brought back the candy marketing into the limelight at least in terms of visibility.

What worked in the favour, explains Shashank Surana, VP, New Product Development, DS Group, “Pulse, which is a fruit flavoured candy with a tangy twist offers a ‘Unique experience’ and unique flavour combination that makes it stand out from the clutter. It is an innovation in the HBC (Hard Boiled Category) that is highly appreciated by the consumer. Initially the brand was driven through word of mouth and PR which was well supported by digital and BTL media. Now, we are also using ATL and digital media to drive the communication and will continue to come up with newer content that keeps the viewer engaged and surprised. Also, we are providing tactical support by other medium in the ecosystem like POSMs, BTL Activations, outdoor for consumer acquisition and retention.”
Price-point upgradation is happening continuously with the 50p price point giving way to Re 1 price point. Several products are now available at 2-3/- Multi-unit packs are available at higher price points. A very strong proportion of sales is driven by indirect distribution (wholesale) which is helping expansion both in rural and urban geographies. “In the last three years, market have completely moved towards Re.1 confectionery. There is now a continuous movement which is very advantageous to us as well as the marketers where candy is being used as a currency in general stores, modern retail, toll plazas, restaurant, and so many places. If a toll comes to Rs. 31.50, it becomes difficult to return 50 paise which is no more in circulation now. This exasperates the consumer, who in a way opts to forgo the remaining amount. However, a lot of consumers demands change. The only option with the toll guy remains is giving back the confectionery of the equivalent amount. Even with the various Modern Trade Markets (supermarkets, hypermarkets) or even a small retailer, there is a lot of rounding off in the bill value that happens, which leaves the retailer with the choice of giving back confectionery (candy) of the remaining amount,” Buddha asserts.

The market is slowly and steadily evolving now. To change the mono pack consumption in the market, Parle started coming up with candy bags ranging from Rs.30-50. With the advent of Modern Trade in the last two decades, confectionery presence has grown significantly across markets not just in Modern Trade, even in general trade. “From most of the shops, consumers are willing to buy the bag directly for various purpose and usages. Also, for self-consumption consumers are buying in bulk and storing at home. Even the senior citizens who are low on sugar prefer consuming candies to satiate the sweet tooth. Also, women carry candies in their handbags. Thus, the consumption pattern of candies has changed slowly and steadily from a loose to packaged; from mono-packed to multi and smaller packs. The depth of consumption is slowly and steadily in the country with a fantastic growth story of the confectionery market,” Buddha adds.

**1 Candy=₹1**

While this is more prevalent across Pan shops, where mints/candies are easily accepted for their complimentary (post-smoking) usage, its being observed across chemists and grocers too. However, Tripathi also believes, “With increasing adoption of non-cash payments, (Credit card/Digital payments etc.), it is expected to get moderated. Recently there has been a TV campaign by Paytm mocking the use of confy as change.”

Further, Parihar comments, “One of the biggest changes witnessed in this category is the emergence of Re 1 price point as the new entry point. After a long haul of the 50 paisa regime in the confectionery space, companies have methodically moved to the Re 1 price point quite successfully, and this cuts across geographies and POP strata. The other new trend is the emergence of ethnic Indian flavours. Dabur has been the pioneer in this category with its Hajmola Candy and recent years have seen emergence of new players offering traditional Indian flavours in this space.”
Marketing Vs Forced Consumption

Which Pattern Boosted the Candy Sales?

With big brands and their presence across various platforms in the form of advertising, the question still is the same. Has the pattern of forced consumption surpassed the efforts of marketing? “We, at Parle, at least have been doing a lot of marketing around the brands like Mango Bite, Kaccha Mango Bite, and other products. For most of our brands, we are doing a lot of advertising and received a good response as well. Even competitors in confectionery have been advertising too. Also, there are lots of marketing efforts like consumer promotions and other attractive offers that we do. There have been marketing around but not just marketing, there is a huge distribution game.”

If there is candy lying on the deck of my car, I will eat it. I will keep gulping. But if it is not there, it doesn’t matter. It’s a great opportunity for the marketers like us to promote the sales of candy in the market. A fantastic trend which we at Parle would definitely want to encourage,” Buddha avows.

While speaking to few of the consumers about how actually they buy a candy or a candy, one of the consumers respond, “Buying a candy for me is a no brainer thing. I either buy it based on loyalty to the older taste or recommendation from a friend or shopkeeper.” On asking about the recent candy/candy advertisement they have come across – “Honestly, more than the advertisement the traditional medium of word-of-mouth worked for me in buying a candy. Other than this, the unwilling buying from the retailer has further played the role. But I don’t personally think candy is something that I would buy based on its marketing or advertising.” Even the other consumers share the same belief of buying candy out of forced consumption or through the word-of-mouth.

“15-20% of confectionery sales come as currency exchange.”

HAS TOFFEE BECOME THE NEW CURRENCY?

“There are even people who oppose confectionary, but those are far and few cases. However, it’s rightly pointed out that confectionary has become the new currency in the market. At Re. 1, it becomes a tender way of exchanging goods and services. The overall confectionary category is further maturing well,” Krishnarao S Buddha.

“Giving products in lieu of change has been part of this eco-system for decades. It has not only helped brands to drive the consumption but has also generated trials for them,” Shashank Verma, DS Group.

“15-20% of confectionery sales comes as currency exchange,” Avnish Tripathi, Industry Expert.

“Toffee has, in fact, always been viewed a currency in the market and consumers have had no major objections to it. For marketers, this becomes a good opportunity to drive trials,” Ajay Singh Parihar, Dabur.
Superdry Depicts an Attitude Rather than an Age
- Cereno Simoes, Marketing Head, Superdry India

In our interaction with Cereno Simoes, he tells us how Superdry is a loud and bold brand that is not afraid to make its presence known, anywhere it goes.
- By Soumya Sehgal

Q. Superdry entered India in 2012, placing itself in the premium segment. What insights did you have and how has the response been from the Indian market?
A. Superdry has been present in the market for 6 years and has only been growing stronger as a brand. Even though the target audience is 25-35 years, we see customers of all ages boldly wear our products in India. Our products depict an attitude rather than an age. We have a very specific customer base who love their individuality and are confident in who they are, which they reflect by what they wear. Superdry is a loud and bold brand that is not afraid to make its presence known. In India, we have managed to attract customers who fit the brand perfectly.

Q. You have recently launched the Superdry Sports stores in India. What are your observations on the athleisure apparel segment witnessing strong traction in the country? What was the rationale behind venturing into this segment?
A. Athleisure has become a growing trend in India and every individual is very keen on fitness and self-improvement by leading a healthier lifestyle. Therefore, it is the best time for us to have introduced Superdry Sport standalone stores in India. We already have a sport section in our Superdry stores but we feel the standalone stores will have a better impact and very specific audience, introducing more customers outside our target group. We have seen that more women prefer to wear Superdry Sport over Superdry casual wear. Being an 80% menswear brand, it has been amazing to see the response that Superdry Sport has got from women and men in India.

Q. Besides apparel, these sports stores will also offer personal-care items. How does the brand intend to compete against the already existing sports giants like Adidas, Nike, etc.?
A. We will be launching Superdry Fragrances in India this year. It is a very exciting journey for us. There is a lot of scope for personal care products in India as most people are very dedicated to taking care of themselves. We aren’t worried about the competition at this point. This is a new avenue for us and we believe our loyal customers will gravitate to it naturally, as the product truly speaks for itself.

“ We feel the standalone stores will have a better impact and very specific audience, introducing more customers outside our target group ”
Q. You are a popular name amongst Gen Y & Z. How are you capitalizing on your youth-centric marketing approach?
A. As mentioned previously, our products are not limited to an age group, it is not just a product but a personality. You will see all generations wearing Superdry. A major chunk of our marketing happens through digital platforms as that is where our target group is most present these days. Additionally, we associate with a large number of music festivals and live gigs across major Indian cities.

Q. The brand has never done TV ads. However, it has really grown up organically with its digital presence and limited outdoor campaigns. What’s the current marketing strategy for Superdry? Also, what is the rationale behind not choosing a brand ambassador?
A. Internationally, we do not wish to have a brand ambassador as we feel the brand should be an independent entity. In India, we follow the same but do occasionally bring on board celebrities to launch a specific season collection or product category. Digital media is growing at a fast pace and will continue to be an important point of marketing for Superdry. In addition to this, we are always open to associate with cool events happening across the city that we feel connects with the brand.

Q. Not just Tier 1 cities, but Superdry is present in smaller cities like Guwahati, Surat, Vadodara, etc. as well. What are your expansion plans and how do you see 2019 shaping up for you?
A. In 6 years, we have over 60 stores counting EBO’s and SIS shops. We are pretty much present and key cities across India and will continue to expand to smaller cities as well. This year, we plan to launch more Superdry stores as well as Superdry Sport stores. We will also be launching Superdry Fragrances. Currently, we are present across popular e-commerce websites but this year we will be launching the official Superdry.in website for customers to have direct access to the brand.
Q. Your association with Kotak goes back to nearly 15 years. How has Kotak reinvented itself in all these years?

A. Kotak is constantly reinventing itself every day, every year. In fact, that is one of the reasons Kotak continues to occupy a leadership position in an aggressive marketplace comprising not just banks, but NBFCs and wallets as well.

We were among the first movers on digital, we have one of the most highly rated mobile banking apps in India, and we reinvented it altogether with Kotak 811, India’s first downloadable digital bank account. Last year, we launched our #IndiaInvited campaign featuring the bank’s brand ambassador, Ranveer Singh. The campaign champions inclusive banking so that banking services are made accessible to every Indian.

We realise that reinvention is not about waiting for the future to happen and then reacting to it, it’s about thinking about our business from a future lens and reimagining what customers’ expectations are from a bank. At a deeper level, it is about reinventing every customer’s relationship with the bank with the changing times.

Q. Kotak today has garnered significant popularity and trust. How does its current market position look like? Do you consider it to be at a leadership or challenger position in the market?

A. The current market position is easily answered by the numbers. Our aim is to be a leader but with the mindset of a challenger brand.

As a leader, we have some of the best minds in the industry that truly focus on the fundamentals, which has helped us weather many a storm, and build the popularity and trust synonymous with Kotak.

However, we approach our work with the drive and agility of a challenger and never let even the slightest hint of complacency creep in.
Q. Your last campaign, #IndiaInvited was quite a hit, especially over the social media. It has been nearly one year since then. Why haven’t we seen you come out actively this year? Which touch point do you intend to focus this year in terms of marketing and advertising?

A. #IndiaInvited released last year in June and still has a long way to go. Considering the large portfolio of financial products and the diverse audience profile for each, we tend to follow a very product specific communication and media strategy. For example: Silk, our banking program for women, thrives on content marketing. We follow a topical approach of creating content every year to present a unique point of view with respect to money and women to help women on their journey towards financial independence.

On the other hand, loan products for us do well on-ground where we optimise our owned media of a 1,500 pan-India branch network. We focused last year on the festive season and we saw excellent business traction with our property ‘Loan Festival’, where customers could avail various offers across our loan products. Our cards portfolio is driven by offers and considering its digitally fulfilled nature we follow an email marketing approach for debit and credit cards.

While, for 811, we need to drive consideration and owing to the competitive nature of the category and the need for being top of mind we use TV and digital as mediums as and when needed.

In summary, the choice of the touch point is dynamic in nature and completely dependent on the type of product and audience we need to reach out to. More importantly, the business objective of the campaign – whether it is customer acquisition, usage or retention.

Q. How do you strategize your advertising plans for all platforms (Print/Digital/Radio/OOH)? How does your ad spend for 2019 look like?

A. The choice of the advertising platform is dependent on our communication and business objective. For e.g. for the launch of the limited edition Ranveer Singh debit card, the task was to drive awareness and acquisition. Hence, we used OOH extensively with our ‘Card Mila Kya’ campaign.

The medium was highly visible, while the content was topical and aroused the interest of our target audience. For products in which we need to drive consideration and are digitally fulfilled in nature, we use digital channels and with the help of analytics and optimised audience targeting methods, we provide relevant offers that can be redeemed online. So, it’s a seamless online journey from communication to consumption on digital.

Our brand campaigns are integrated across mediums. We tend to predominantly use TV and social, with OOH and Radio as support mediums. Print is used for new launches in our media mix. This combination has worked well for us.

On the ad spend front, money is a high involvement category but banking is not. Hence, being top of mind is important for us. Our ad spends are at the average of the standard category norm.

Q. You have experimented with different advertisement platforms. What has worked best for Kotak?

A. Our strategy of experimentation is not restricted only to media channels or advertising platforms. A couple of the initiatives that we conducted last year are as follows:

Debit Card as a category is inconspicuous in nature. It lacks the glamour of a credit card. To address this, we created a ‘wallet to wallet’ strategy, which is a category first. We brought in a critically acclaimed artist to design Kotak debit cards. We launched this initiative with PareshMaity, a Padma Shri awardee and following the overwhelming response from our customers, we have now collaborated with SeemaKohli, a renowned contemporary Indian artist, to design debit cards for our Silk portfolio.

We also did the #BenchOfUnity as an extension of the #IndiaInvited campaign. It is an organically formed digital community of over 2.5 lakh Indians who believe that they can be the change our society needs to inculcate a sense of inclusion. We have also dabbled with Augmented Reality (AR) on-ground and on Facebook as part of the #IndiaInvited campaign.

Q. With the influx of mobile wallet companies, what changes have you observed in retail banking? Why hasn’t Kotak ventured into creating a separate mobile wallet for itself?

A. Our digital banking product 811 offers customers an entire banking ecosystem on the app. In addition to helping customers transact similar to a mobile wallet, 811 offers access to a number of other features such as managing investments – investing in a SIP, applying for an RD/FD and even buying insurance. It’s a one stop shop for all the financial needs of a customer. In addition to this, customers earn an interest of up to 6% on their savings account balances.

While bank branches continue to remain very relevant, the format and size of our branches is undergoing a change. At Kotak, we are following a phygital approach where digital branches are combined with e-lobbies. Offering 24x7 smart banking complements our traditional branch banking network. This helps us cater to customers who now prefer to complete their banking transaction in a self-service and non-intrusive environment and at a time that is convenient to them.
Within a span of two years, the print readership has seen a 4.4% jump bringing in a torrent of exuberance within publishers, who heralded the crumbling spirit of the medium with the dawn of the internet. Buoyant growth in the print medium consumption has however left advertisers unaffected irrespective of the sharp increase in the number of readers and a glistening future. Ojasvi Nath analyses the IRS report and tries to decode its effect on the advertisers.

With the rapid penetration and influence of the internet, print’s quiddity went in question leaving the publishing industry in a tract of insecurity. The notion that the digital transformation radically altered print with the emergence of eBooks, audiobooks, snackable content, and quick reporting – left critics stubborn view of ‘print’s tough survival’ in vain. To substantiate the point of print’s favourable future, the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) Q1 2019 data, released by Media Research Users Council (MRUC), has shown the sharpest growth of print, countermanding the speculations of print dying and taking an upward trajectory. The dailies have added 1.8 Cr additional readers since IRS 2017, while magazines added 90 lakh readers. Surprisingly, the Hindi dailies alone have added 10 million readers.

IRS report, which was launched in the year 1995 with an objective of setting an industry standard for readership and other media measurement uses a huge annual sample size of 2.56 lakh (256,000 respondents). The prime objective of the study is to collect readership information from a cross-section of individuals, in great detail, so as to present a true and unbiased picture of their readership habits. Ashish Bhasin, Chairman MRUC (Media Research Users Council) and Chairman and CEO, Dentsu Aegis Networks well anticipated the findings of 2019 data, which is in favour of print, and also indicated towards the release of report on every quarter from now onwards.

“IRS is the gold standard for readership research study in India. Anybody who is associated with print, be it a publisher or an agency or an advertiser, the report is of extreme importance to them. It’s probably the richest database of this kind anywhere in the world. The sample size taken is extremely huge and the study of this kind and scale is not done anywhere in the world. Besides, the publication readership data, a huge amount of product data is produced, which is of significant use particularly to brand management and agencies,” Bhasin spoke.

“The IRS report hadn’t come out for three to four years in the recent past. However, we are pleased to have brought it out last year and again this year. Now the intent is to release it every quarter on a rolling quarterly basis. So, every quarter a new quarter of research gets added on, making it continuous research because in today’s changing world with the impact of digital and so on, the more frequent the research, the better it would be for consumption by the readers,” he added.
**Publisher’s Take**

Before the release of IRS 219 report, broadcasting giant, Network18, on early this year adjoined print to its assemblage of news medium platforms. Network18 launched Firstpost, a 20-page weekly broadsheet, which is sought to be circulated every Saturday. Even though the brand already has its presence online, the move from digital to the rudimentary media looked more than just formatting the idea of being present as a newspaper. As it is deciphered from Firstpost’s print debut, it’s a unique sign of the vagaries of India’s social media marketplace which pushed the readership of print. Irrespective of digital media platforms witnessing exponential growth in the last few years, spurt in literacy levels in India in the last two decades, rising disposable income, and the perceived credibility of written words are some of the reasons why this has happened.

Contrary to the belief about the traditional media, Network 18 chose to enter the print industry from a digital platform. Amit Seth, Vice President Sales & Marketing, Network18 Publishing responds, “Our belief is that in a world of mass newspapers there is a need for an offering for the discerning reader or as we would like to call them ‘The Power Set’. They are serious about their news and are looking for an intelligent opinionated read. The IRS report has put a positive effect on revenue of publishers so far. It’s a very positive development which allows publishers to reassert the relevance and role of print as content creators which consumers trust. On translating into revenue, a lot of will depend as to how publishers are able to use this positive development and the role media agencies to translate this into sizeable revenue upside.”

However, Basant Rathore, Senior VP – Strategy, Business Development & Brand, Jagran Prakashan believes, “Across every media, there is a lag between revenues following peaks in viewership/readership. It’s consistency of performance that matters more than one round of good numbers. Rathore also believes that print is robust and growing. Both the circulation numbers and the readership numbers over the recent years are a testimony to that.

While on the other hand, Girish Agarwaal - Promoter Director-Dainik Bhaskar Group said, “The report has certainly created a very positive environment for the print advertisement among the agencies and clients and we are very confident about the way forward.

**‘Dying Print’ can be Taken as a Myth?**

The points that account for print’s superiority, particularly the newspaper, is an amazingly sophisticated technology for showing you what’s important and showing you a lot of it. The traditional media cannot die, it can just evolve as being deciphered. “This survey has clearly shown, print with its well-researched approach is a credible source of information which consumers prefer. This report serves as a clear wake-up call to all doubters to rethink, added Seth.

Further, Rathore opinionated – “No medium has ever died. Every medium is on its own evolutionary path. The print has the unique ability to localize and customize along with mass reach – and that’s what makes it an important part of the media mix. The print has its innate core strength that marks its relevance. There is an impact, there is a reach, there is this ability to customize, the ability to communicate detail. Print gives the ability to the reader to select – the reader can choose to give his attention to a piece of communication or reject it, unlike TV which intrudes, and the ‘time’ is not in the viewer’s control. Print’s time of access - the morning is a crucial period of our cognitive senses.”

“It was always a myth and misconception borrowed from the western world. Indian Print market has been consistently growing and as per all fundamentals, like yearly population growth, literacy level growth as well as currently available huge headroom gap between people who can read vs. people who are currently reading newspapers which is currently around 30% only. Further, 90% population of India who resides in smaller towns of tier II and III, have enough around 2-3 hours in the morning to read the newspaper; I due
to less commuting time and office timing around 10-10.30 AM), which cost around $1.5 dollar per month and distribution cost is zero, while in western world, newspaper cost around $1.25 dollar per day and distribution cost is extra. The last two reports of IRS as well a circulation figures certified by Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) have successfully shattered this myth. As per recent ABC reports and release, Newspapers of India, including English have registered around 5% CAGR growth in circulation in the last 10 years, while Hindi Newspapers have registered around 9% CAGR growth in circulation in the last 10 years,” Agarwaal explained.

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### But, Does the Report have Any Effect on the Advertisers?

Advertising on a traditional medium like print retains many of the advantages for a marketer who is seeking credibility, repetition, and a closer connection with their target buyers. Reports like the IRS just substantiate the premises of such claims. The advertisers may, however, see the rise in print consumption as differently. Traditional advertisers like Dollar would invest in print advertising irrespective of the report. Since print is a closer connection with their target buyers. Reports like the IRS just substantiate the premises of such claims. The advertisers may, however, see the rise in print consumption as differently. Traditional advertisers like Dollar would invest in print advertising irrespective of the report.

Bidyut Nath, Head of Marketing & Communications, India & Asia, Dollar Industries said, “We primarily advertise in print during our peak season. In our industry, the peak season is summer, festive, and probably winter. We also advertise for attracting our dealers, distributors, and retailers. Seasons are very important for us. We go 360-degree marketing during seasons, particularly summers. Akshay Kumar is the brand ambassador of Dollar Big Boss. We try to push it well on print during this season. Apart from the other marketing vehicles that we have, print is mainly the medium that gives us spike during peak seasons. It is extremely important for us to include print as a medium.”

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### Amit Tiwari, Vice President Marketing, Havells India

Havells India found the trend of increased print consumption to be very positive. “If you see in terms of increasing print consumption because print as a support system plays a vital role among the group of mediums that we actually talk about. This also gives us an indication of the consumption pattern of the medium. If you see from first to the last mile or in terms of detailing out anything that you want to do, print is the best medium to utilize.”

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### Utkarsh Thakur, Marketing Head - Sonata & SF at Titan Company Limited

Explained the continuous movement of increasing print consumption in India. “Most of the growth is coming from regional publications. It’s a complete reflection of where the consumer is moving in those markets. For example, if you look at UP and Bihar or the entire Hindi belt, there is a clear movement of people wanting to be much aware; the literacy levels are rising and newspapers and other print media is seen as a sign of being a more educated or informed medium, or else being able to make a perspective on things. So, people gravitate towards it and they see it as one of the tools to progress. Hence, print as an option.”

India is one of the very few markets globally where the print readership is growing. I work with Sonata which has a strong brand presence across India. In lots of our regional markets, we see that print is improving. Thus, we use print heavily in our advertising because it gives great results in terms of immediacy especially when need to do brand promotions or announce new collections. Besides, it has a significant amount of credibility in the age of social...
Will the Increase in Print Consumption Lead to an Increase in Ad Expenditure?

"Every year there is an increase in our ad expenditure in print irrespective of any report. Earlier, we used to spend Rs. 3-4 crores and with the reception of the good response, we slowly increased the budget which is now up to Rs. 14 crores," Nath added.

"We don’t think to increase our budget on print as we are already spending quite heavy in print advertising. It depends upon the objective that you want to achieve by every medium and the role of the medium in that activity. We are anyway using print in a well-balanced way and putting good concentrated efforts on print," Tiwari quoted.

Utkarsh said, "Increase in ad expenditure is irrespective of that because print is a good medium for advertising and a lot of people are consuming print. So, it makes a stronger case for print though it depends on a campaign to campaign. Whenever you have a new collection, print is the best medium to look up to. A lot of our business stakeholders look towards print. But I also think the choice of the medium is often the function of what the campaign is. If a campaign requires to deliver emotion then television works best; if it’s about immediacy then radio and print do well; if it’s about education, again print does well. With the increase in readership, the medium will continue to grow, and we will keep looking at it with greater attention as a way to invest."

"Driving engagement and sustaining conversations is where print medium is weak, and which is where social and digital play a significant role in our overall media strategy. This medium also lends itself to much sharper and more targeted communication and so both media platforms complement each other. Each has its obvious role to play and we choose platforms basis the individual objectives we are driving," Kumar voiced.

Karan Kumar, Chief Brand, and Marketing Officer, Fabindia, spoke about the greater use of print by the company. "We use a lot of print to announce our new collections from time to time. We combine the print plan with tactical campaigns on OOH and cinema. But in terms of the absolute reach of announcements, print works the best," hence people gravitate towards this medium.”

Dinesh Menon, Global Chief Marketing Officer, State Bank of India, said, "The latest IRS just reaffirms the fact that print will continue to deserve its place in the media mix. However, I don’t see an increased share of spends in print because digital is gaining manifold. A marketer will always endeavour to reduce wastage and increase ROI. Instant mass awareness which may or may not be CTA based, but ROI for sure. In a non-CTA/direct response campaign, the efficacy could be measured by just CPR."

Conclusion
The IRS report is extremely positive for the print industry but the reactions from the brands have been mix when it comes to the increase in ad expenditure. All-in-all, brands acknowledge the growth in print consumption but irrespective of that, they will continue to invest in print looking at the immediacy the platform provides. The factors that the brands mainly look at are the type of campaigns and target audience they are intending to cover. For regional audience or readers, advertising in print works better. If a brand plans instant mass awareness, call-to-action campaigns on print can get them good ROI.
In Conversation With

Uday Sodhi takes us through the digital landscape of the country and how SonyLIV is still standing tall in the OTT sphere. – By Soumya Sehgal

Q. Sony LIV was the first OTT streaming service in India and remains one of the top OTT video apps, offering content to more than 30 million viewers. How instrumental has it been in piloting the OTT landscape in India?

A. We’ve been one of the innovators in this business. And today, we serve around 50-60 million users a month. Our journey started off in a small way and this was in the 3G era where we used to run most of our content on the app and website at that point in time. And these were the early days of the smartphone and the app and as time went by in 2014, we also did large scale international events like the FIFA World Cup. Back in 2014, we were probably the first app to stream an international event. So, we’ve done a lot of stuff since then, in terms of introducing consumers to consuming content on the mobile and on the go, both in terms of entertainment sports and movies. We are one of the only ones to start off with original content. So, in terms of leadership, we’ve been the early movers and pioneers in this business in India and we continue to raise the quality bar, offer exceptional customer experience and deliver the width and depth of content across sports, entertainment and movies.

Q. What were the initial hurdles? How did you manage to build a loyal user base?

A. The initial hurdle was more around our heavy dependence on mobile phones— their quality, ability to stream and the infrastructure. So, before 4G became a standard practice or a standard norm, there were significant challenges on the infrastructure and mobile phones.

I think what happened with 4G coming in, we’ve seen a significant increase in the penetration of 4G compatible devices in the quality of devices has increased and the prices have fallen significantly. And as a result, we’ve seen good quality phones at a much lower price. That has helped improve the experience for users with 4G. I think the quality of connectivity has improved significantly over the last few years and that has allowed us to stream some of the best content for consumers.

So today, for example, we’re able to stream some of the best international shows and the quality that any global platform would be able to offer to the users. We’re able to offer services on connected TV Firesticks, Chromecast, Apple TV, and all sorts of devices. We are currently running about 14 different apps and all this is because of the advancements in various forms of connectivity technology streaming technology and mobile phones themselves.

“In terms of leadership, we’ve been the early movers and pioneers in this business in India and we continue to raise the quality bar.”
Q. Sports was a major gainer in 2018. What other trends did you observe last year and how do you see this year shaping up?

A. For me, the big changes that we are currently seeing or the big trends that we’ve won is on the language side and I think the beneficiaries of 4G are going beyond just one area in big towns. We will see more adoption of 4G from people whose native language is probably not Hindi or English. So, we will witness a significantly larger adoption from their own language communities which I think is a big one.

The second big thing is that the penetration of phones is increasing. We are to see more and more 4G connected phones in the hands of younger audiences. Even within the family, we’ll start seeing penetration of phones going beyond male members. Plus, there will be a significant movement on the vernacular content side.

Q. According to a report by Boston Consulting Group (BCG), Sony Liv witnessed a rise of 7X in total time spent on the platform and grew by 3X in terms of MAUs (monthly active users) 2018. In terms of the content, what different are you offering than your competitors? What does your content strategy look like?

A. Our content is significantly different because we don’t offer the content that anybody else has. Our content is the Sony Network content that nobody else has. So fundamentally, each player in the market has their own different content.

Q. With the OTT game getting strong each day, debates on its controversial content have stemmed quite a few point of views. Should these platforms enjoy absolute freedom in the content they stream or steer a middle course and work under set guidelines, what are your comments on this? Also, what do you think about self-regulation carried out by OTT platforms?

A. OTT industry has got together and put together a framework under which we think we can do self-regulation of the content this is as per the law of the land and as a maturing ecosystem we want to ensure that you know what we are providing the right content and informing the consumer what to expect as part of the content. What we’re trying to do is to ensure that the content that is provided on our portals or apps is correctly rated so the consumer knows what the content is and what to expect in the content and also make sure that there is no inappropriate content. And, I think this is the objective which every OTT player has.

Just like the advertising industry has a very good mechanism, we want to ensure that there is a mechanism on the OTT side also which ensures that there is a certain quality of content that goes on. But, Does the Report have Any Effect on the Advertisers?

A. We’re doing a lot of work on the Bangla and the Marathi side. Because we have TV channels in those markets, we’re working with them. For example, on the Marathi side to launch a ‘Kaun Banega Crorepati’ or what they call ‘Kaun Hooel Crorepati’ game on SonyLiv. This means when the game is going to be played on the Sony Marathi-channel, consumers can play the game on their mobile phones too. So, there’s going to be a play-along game for consumers. The program starts at the end of the month and you’ll see a long game at that point in time. So we’re really going deeper with not only content, but also innovation around the content.

Just like the advertising industry has a very good mechanism, we want to ensure that there is a mechanism on the OTT side also which ensures that there is a certain quality of content that goes on.
It is an Opportunity if Advertisers Have an Inclination Towards Podcasts & Audiobooks

- Rajat Uppal, National Marketing Head, RED FM

Q. TV & Digital have gone through tremendous change in the past years. However, especially after Phase 3, Radio has been a rather stagnant medium. Where does Red FM see itself in this space?

A. Radio always has been a steady medium with measured growth and not exponential. It would be incorrect to say that radio is stagnant. It might have seen marginal growth but is not a medium which is out of contention. Digital space is growing at a tremendous speed with everyone jumping onto the bandwagon with the radio industry following suit. Radio brands have extended themselves into the digital medium over the last few years. At RED, we have made digital integral to all our marketing initiatives. We follow a policy of “RDR- Radio Digital Radio” for our initiatives, wherein Radio drives the digital assets and digital integrates back to Radio. We also have extremely strong social media communities with high engagement numbers. We are doing digital content for our brand and also advertisers like Vodafone, HUL, Indus Valley, Honor India, Tinder, Havmor to name a few. Our website hosts a lot of radio content as podcasts and we have recently launched the RED FM App. As a brand, we offer advertising solutions which are a combination of Radio, On-ground and digital. In nutshell, digital will be a way of life for RED...

Q. I see the channel winning a number of awards for its marketing campaigns. Which one of these campaigns received the maximum traction? Please share some insights and numbers?

A. It’s been an action packed and satisfying journey so far at RED FM. Creatively, the brand’s positioning of “BajaateRaho” allows you to do so much more, be edgier and be bold. With the awards tally currently at 380 wins, it would be unfair to pick up any one campaign. But surely, campaigns which have been bold and executed innovatively have found resonance with the listeners and eventually won many metals at many forums. Brand RED is not always about taking tongue & cheek dig at issues of the society or playing pranks on people, the brand has a softer and emotional side too which reflects in some of our initiatives over the years. Few of the campaigns/ initiatives which are close to me – National Jock Exchange, Bajao for a Cause, Don’t be Horny, Pothole Utsav, Malishkako Matt Sunn, Kabaad se Jugaad, Riders Music Festival and The Yellow Taxi Music Project.

“The brand has a softer and emotional side too which reflects in some of our initiatives over the years.”
Q. With the emergence of online music streaming platforms like Gaana and Saavn, how is the business of radio being affected? How did you re-strategize your marketing plans?

A. Most mediums have faced the digital disruption. The Television has been hit the most as the OTT platforms have taken away huge chunk of viewers, especially in the metro cities. The music industry has gone through some challenges in the past due to emergence of digital streaming apps replacing the audio cassettes and CDs. India is a vast market, with the reach and adaptability of radio being much higher than any digital streaming app. Radio is also live, interactive, local and a free to air medium. There is no evidence that that the streaming apps have impacted radio listenership. For many listeners even today, radio is the most trusted source of information. It is also how radio packages and presents the content that makes it stand apart from music streaming apps. Music packaged with interesting RJ content is a plus for most of the audiences.

Q. Should the growing popularity of podcasts and audiobooks worry radio channels? What is your take on the entire scenario?

A. Most Radio brands are doing podcasts and audio books. I see it as an opportunity if advertisers have an inclination towards it. At RED, we have podcasts on our website and App. We have done shows like “EK Kahani Aisi Bhi” & “Short-cuts”, which are essentially short audio narratives like the Audio books.

Q. Red FM has its presence across 68 cities and caters to over 40 million listeners. Since the listener profile differs in each city, how do you synchronize your communication strategies?

A. I have always said that RED FM is a ‘Nat-local’ brand, national in reach and local in connect. Radio is a hyperlocal medium. For a national brand like RED FM, being locally relevant is the biggest challenge for the marketing team. While we would want to create the local connect, it is important that the core proposition of the brand is not diluted. We pass most of our marketing campaigns and initiatives through the brand filters to see fitment. The communication might be adapted to city specific lingo and dialect to make it effective, but the tonality of the communication still remains very RED- Edgy, Bold and Irreverent.

Q. Red FM has recently rated as India’s most admired FM radio station by the ASF. Over the years, you have won more than 375 awards, across various forums. What are you doing differently in terms of your marketing efforts?

A. Like I said earlier, the positioning of the brand allows us to be extremely edgy and bold creatively. That’s surely an edge for us over the competitors. In addition, the teams make most of this edge and are consistently disruptive & innovative in the ideation they come up with. Disruptive ideas backed by consistency in brand communication and scale of execution of these marketing initiatives could be attributed to the wins.

"For a national brand like RED FM, being locally relevant is the biggest challenge for the marketing team. While we would want to create the local connect, it is important that the core proposition of the brand is not diluted."

Bajaate Rahol!
Q. You have been appointed as the CEO of Neil Patel Digital (NPD) very recently. How do you intend to use your past experience in this new venture?

A. I am proud to be part of NPD India. It’s a big responsibility carrying forward. With my 12 years of experience in the digital marketing industry, I have come across diversified market potentials in India and other countries. Being in this industry for many years, I understand where the agencies are missing out. Many of the recent trends and strategies are yet to be adopted by the digital marketing campaigns in India. We drive results for businesses by understanding their core expertise and providing value addition to their users. We aim to bridge the technological and strategic gap by providing the best results for each of our clients.

Q. With an incredible success journey in US, how did India make for a fertile land for your operations? Also, with a plethora of SEO agencies in India, what makes you different from them?

A. India is ripe with Gen Z talent now. They know precisely what they want in life compared to the previous generations. They are mature enough to show their energy through creativity, analysis, and exploration of their career. We see massive potential in their innate talent and want to help the ones who are seeking opportunities in digital marketing.

Since operating in India will be much easier now compared to the last decade, we can thrive by giving the best digital marketing solutions and by attracting the best talent. With the Neil brand getting a lot of traction in India, both on the website and on social media, we sense that most of these talent align towards the spirit and energy that we have towards the digital marketing. Above all, a majority of them are avid followers of Neil Patel, both as an SEO guru and as a prominent internet influencer.
Q. How are you charting out the creation and implementation of NPD India’s vision and mission?
A. Our focus is to bring an ROI driven engagement model to India. Conversion is soon becoming the new norm, and obviously, marketing cannot stay out of this disruption. We have already seen the changes, thanks to powerful tools such as AI-powered conversational chat-bots and automation platforms built over CRMs like HubSpot, Salesforce, etc. Our aim is to provide solutions to the problems faced by marketing departments and to help brands in India get the maximum reach through digital marketing.

Q. How do you see NPD benefiting the small agencies and startups?
A. NPD has experience in helping small and medium businesses and startups to succeed in their industry. We know what works and how to implement them successfully. Now that Neil Patel Digital is making its way to India, we are excited to help Indian companies scale up their potential growth. With the right people, we’ll lead as a performance-centered marketing company to support small businesses and startups in India, thought-leaders who devise strategies based on the nuances of each industry.

Q. What type of talent/acquisition is missing in digital agencies today?
A. As I touched upon in an earlier question, Digital Marketing agencies in India lack the technological advancement of their western peers. Most agencies here are still practicing traditional strategies. Due to this, the talent in the country is not exposed to the latest advancements. We are looking for talent who never stops learning and the ones who have the thirst to innovate and experiment.

Q. What according to you would be the key digital trends ruling 2019?
A. AI is disrupting almost every industry and digital marketing is no exception. Features such as Chatbots and voice assistants will rule the roost, and we can see the transition already happening within the industry. In addition to this, digital marketing will invest time and money in finding the right micro influencers who can build trust for brands. Of course, the content will still be king when it comes to search engines and social media marketing. With companies like Google and Facebook investing more into understanding the content and user intent, only a well-laid out digital marketing strategy with a focus on customer behavior can drive success.

Q. How would you rate the digital marketing sphere in India when juxtaposed with the latest global trends?
A. The digital marketing landscape in India has been on a steady growth but the hype around it has resulted in startups and small businesses banking on false promises. We want the best practices to prevail; hence, we would like to take up the role of a beacon, showing the right path to digital marketing success for Indian companies to follow. To achieve this, we have assembled a team of thought-leaders who devise strategies based on the nuances of each industry.

“Now that Neil Patel Digital is making its way to India, we are excited to help Indian companies scale up their potential growth.”
Not a Smooth Landing!

TDSAT’s ruling reverses TRAI’s directive of not letting the broadcasters use landing page as a marketing or sampling tool.

Landing Page has been a long standing topic of discussion for the TV broadcasting industry, quite as popular as the topic of placement fee in the analog days. The wound has been stripped open with the recent ruling by the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) in which the tribunal has set aside the directive of the Telecom Regulatory of India (TRAI) barring TV channels from using landing page. We try to decode the matter, parameters, impact and the subsequent suggested solutions of the same.

The Issue
Landing page is the screen that one sees, after switching on the set top box, also called as the boot-up page. With the newer and better technology, broadcasters have been placing their channels on the landing page, by paying extra pocket-money to the MSOs, basically buying more opportunity to see for themselves.
For a medium sized MSO, a broadcaster has to spend anywhere between Rs 60-80 crore to get its channel placed on the landing page. In order to tap the top five MSOs, one might have to fetch around Rs 350-400 crore.

Pros
Many consider landing page as a marketing tool, crying out to legitimise the usage of the same in order to promote their new or existing tool. It surely brings a huge top of mind recall benefit to the broadcaster using this.
It is a strong revenue stream for the last mile distribution partner, especially now, with MRP regime where the cuts and margins are decreasing for them.

Cons
Vikas Khanchandani, CEO, Republic TV, said, “The use of landing pages to drive forced reach and compromised ratings will repeat the carriage menace that played out in the Analog Era. Landing is akin to buying placement on the prime band during the analog era and forcing reach thereby manipulating ratings. It vitiates pure-play required for unbiased measurement thereby ultimately compromising

BARC Intervenes
The landing page matter has often come to BARC since it directly intervenes with the viewership data and the measurement body has always maintained that it is not to decide on industry workings, but will only give out the unbiased viewership data.
Many have suggested that why doesn’t BARC make it compulsory that the feed on the landing page must go without the watermark, so that the viewership data is measured only for the feed that is on the regular LCN, or, alternatively landing page should only be allowed to put promotional messaging and not to mirror the original feed of the channel.

A BARC India spokesperson was quoted saying, “Placing channels on landing page improves opportunity to view, and is a purely distribution level activity. BARC India will be compliant with the TDSAT ruling, unless someone further challenges the ruling. Being a responsible joint industry body, our measurement system and processes have been guided by our Technical Committee, with the consensus and support of all stakeholders represented through their stakeholder bodies (IBF, ISA and AAAI).”

Where did TRAI lose the battle?
TRAI lost the battle at the TDSAT hearing at multiple places:
1. It wasn’t in TRAI’s jurisdiction to decide the use of landing page.
2. Who owns the landing page? TRAI could not answer this question satisfactorily, while TDSAT agreed to the appellant’s view that it should belong to the DPOs giving them a huge revenue opportunity.
3. TRAI suggested a blanket for landing page content across all MSOs and DPOs, saying that it must only contain the subscriber-related information, and awareness about the MSO.
TDSAT agreed that the technical difficulties with the varied products available in the market and with multiple DPOs were not taken into consideration.
4. None of the international standards and practices examples were shared/ quoted by TRAI, throughout the process.
Here's an ode to the father of advertising who was actually a woman from the middle east.

The craft of storytelling has been saving necks for a long time, or for at least 12 centuries as far as we know. It’s a well documented fact that once upon a time, the brilliant Queen Shahrzad of Arabia spun long and winding tales, 1001 tales to be precise, to save her neck.

Every night, she would tell a twisted tantalising tale to her murderous husband King Shahryar who intended to kill her in the morning, but she would leave the tale unfinished at a crucial cliffhanger. The King would be forced to pardon her for yet another day, just so she could finish her tale, only to start another one. And so it went. Her storytelling kept her from turning into the next victim in a series of very sad and very dead wives. And that, we believe was the birth of Arabian Nights, or advertising as we know it to this day.

At August, we too spin tales and tell stories to bring brands to life, be it traditional or digital media. With a hat tip to Queen Shahrzad.
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*DATA CRUNCHED

Preeti Jadhav:
preeti@vidooly.com

Mahesh Barve:
mahesh@vidooly.com

For Sales Contact:
sales@vidooly.com