

# Technology and better metrics will drive OOH

## DOUBLE STANDARDS

Billboards are becoming visible in the top 20 cities and upcountry towns. Two industry veterans discuss the main issues and developments in the OOH industry with Samir Lukka



**Anuradha Aggarwal**, vice president, Vodafone Essar



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### What are the issues surrounding measurability of OOH media and how can they be worked on?

Measurability is something that the outdoor industry needs desperately. A medium as big as outdoor has been run for very long on local knowledge and gut feeling, with not much data and statistics available to substantiate any claim and justify the expenditure. Media owners and agencies need to come together and pool their resources in order to ensure a common currency of measurement to be made available at the earliest.

There is quite a problem with measurability in the industry. At the India Outdoor Advertising Association we are engaged in considering a detailed list of OOH display formats city by city and a process by which data will be generated about usage of each of the formats. A reputed market research firm is being engaged by the Media Research Users Council to conduct research in top eight cities to determine reach and frequency for a proposed plan. We expect to have figures on hand by the end of the year to share with all members and large users. We also expect to be able to certify at least two to three companies as authentic, enabling them to offer paid services to individual companies/agencies and their brands.

### Is OOH attracting new advertisers to the medium?

Yes, OOH is attracting new advertisers as more and more small and medium enterprises are realising the power of brand salience. OOH with its local reach and impact becomes an attractive option for advertisers with small business footprints.

We firmly believe so.

### Do advertisers buy posters in conjunction with other media or is it a solus medium?

Vodafone has used OOH as a solus medium as well as for supporting its ATL campaigns. We use outdoor branding to build salience often as a solus medium and as an impact medium to create a multiplier effect for our ATL campaigns. In a constant endeavour to deliver 360 impact, the bigger brands cannot afford to ignore the OOH medium.

While the plan and allocation of budgets to various media in the mix are done at one place, subsequent fine tuning of the plan and the buying of OOH media is entrusted typically to the specialist OOH planning and buying agency.

### Is there an increase in the number of sites, and where are the main areas of growth?

Yes, there is a growth of sites in cities but also a bigger growth can be seen in lower town classes where the medium is evolving rapidly. There is also a lot of innovation taking place in the medium: digital screens in coffee shops and apartment complexes, magic mirrors in mall restrooms – the opportunities are endless.

Yes, there has been an increase in the overall number of sites. Media owners in the top 20 cities are definitely much more prolific in establishing new sites. We find that clients are quietly but surely moving displays into up-country billboards and other formats of display. As such, the main areas of growth continue to be in the top 20 cities although logically it should be the up-country areas. Time has also come for significant growth in indoor OOH spaces like at malls, transit locations and multiplexes, with large and clearly defined audiences.

### To what extent does technology play a role in OOH?

Technology can transform both the medium as well as its use. Globally some very clutter-breaking communication has been delivered in the OOH medium using new-age technology. It can also be a key enabler in ensuring planning and measurement of the medium. Measurement and evaluation in OOH still leaves a lot to be desired; with technology, planning can become a science driving impact and efficiency.

Technology hasn't played much of a role hitherto. However, now that is being made up at great speed: construction of street furniture using stainless steel and aluminium; printing of displays with new technologies to extract very high resolutions; GPRS data capturing techniques for accurate and tamper-proof monitoring; and state-of-art digital displays using both LED and LCDs. All of these place a huge premium on safety in order to remain non-hazardous. And finally, use of green materials and technologies are now the latest focus. Actually, it's in OOH much more than any other medium, where one can easily expect technology to not only leave large imprints but to actually determine future course.

## MY LIFE IN ADVERTISING



**Name** Satyanarayana Kornepati  
**Job** Vice president, R K SWAMY Media Group

**The reason I got into advertising was...** It was the first job I got! And, I learnt to love it!

**The campaign I'm most proud of working on is...** It is tough to single out any as I take pride in what I do.

Nevertheless let me mention a client who made me think way beyond typical media planning and offer innovative, yet relevant, media solutions: Siemens. The work done in India for Siemens has become a global benchmark.

**And the campaign I pretend I wasn't responsible for is...** I take responsibility for everything I do... so, no escape, no pretence.

**My favourite campaign created by someone else is...** Creative ideas and innovation in media strategy today are a given. I love all the creative work done in media that is relevant and result oriented.

**The best moment of my career so far is...** Honestly, many. To mention a recent one, I was one of the three Indians (among 30 people worldwide) recognised by The Internationalist Magazine, New York as Agency Innovators in 2010, for Siemens.

**While the most embarrassing moment was...** Recently, my laptop suddenly stopped in the middle of a pitch presentation

**The best celebrity I've worked with on a campaign is...** Worked with a lot in my 20 years in advertising! All my clients and bosses are my celebrities. And all my team members are celebrities in their own right!

**The person I'd most like to work with in the industry is...** I have had the privilege of working with the best in the industry.

**The person who's had the biggest influence on my career is...** In the last 20 years a lot of people have influenced my career and I have learnt something from everyone. One person who had the biggest influence on my life, besides my parents and wife Uma, is my uncle, J Venkat Rao.

**The best piece of advice I've received during my career is...** Don't be emotional during negotiations, if you want to succeed!

**If I wasn't working in advertising, I'd be...** Working in public sector overseeing PR. But, as per my horoscope I would have done better in law!

**In ten years' time, I'll be...** Probably revisiting the basics of media planning and trying to find my relevance as youth might take over. If I don't find my relevance, just move on and retire! Media planning will never be the same again!