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Soumitra S Bhattacharyya,  
president – corporate  
affairs, Laqshya Media

**'Unity of purpose, maturity and the will to develop the industry first before self interest is the major change that I would like to see'**

Laqshya Media has played a catalytic role in the Indian OOH resurgence with benchmark initiatives to create high value media assets and in delivering highly innovative solutions to advertising clients. Year 2010 saw the company take several important steps to build itself up in a buoyant business environment. **Soumitra S Bhattacharyya, president – corporate affairs, Laqshya Media**, talks about the company's growth experience and the outlook for the coming years in an interview to **network2media's Rajiv Raghunath**. Excerpts:

**An air of optimism pervades the Indian OOH industry in the wake of the economic buoyancy and business uptrend. Do you see this translating into significant increase in OOH business in the current year?**

I am assuming that your word significant means a big growth of the OOH business and this is what I have to say. OOH business is going to be better but for it to be "significantly" better there has to be a shift in the mindset where people look at OOH as the most effective form of advertising media with the least amount of wastage. Unfortunately we are still not there as far as this perception is concerned and the fault lies with us and not the person who perceives us thus. The buoyancy in the market is going to drive the ad business up and thereby OOH would also grow.

**What is your assessment of Laqshya Media's growth experience in year 2010? What were the key milestones surpassed in the year?**

2010 was a year where we were very cautious on the acquisition front and the focus was on business generation and at the same time rationalisation of our asset base across the country. In terms of the agency business we did reasonably well and significantly our research cell could align itself to our business goals because we had to give the research team, time for data collation and to set up the processes to generate statistical numbers. Now that this is finally in place we have started benefiting from this cell. As far as our assets are concerned, after rationalisation we have high quality assets in different geographies. Recently we got the Chennai bqs, the Delhi street furniture and T3 rights for promotions; so overall we did reasonably well. 2011 is the year where we can capitalise on this and grow further.

**Midway through the year Laqshya Media brought both media ownership and agency business under a single umbrella. How well has this worked for the group?**

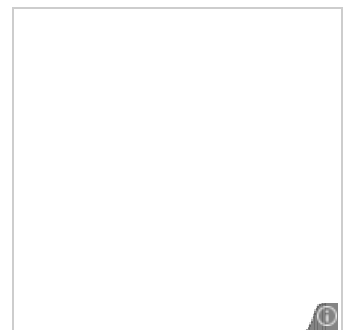
It has worked fine with us and we are deriving strength from each other and every day there are examples of this happening in our day-to-day work. Synergies from both divisions are being used for the clients' benefit and ultimately, in my opinion, the client does benefits from this alliance and that is what is making it work.

**The world is talking about digital OOH much more than ever before. Laqshya Media has had an experience in this domain but exited from it. What were the reasons and are there any plans to re-enter this segment?**

Digital is a content delivering mechanism rather than a media in itself. Digital media is a huge subject and we had entered only the segment which entailed us to have screens in office buildings, malls, etc. We do have digital media at our airports and integrating the digital display with OOH is something we know will be there to stay in OOH. What I am saying is that going digital in OOH is an option that is going to increase as we move ahead and Laqshya is willing to put in its money there but what we exited from was the digital screen business from certain segments (office buildings, malls, etc) primarily because we



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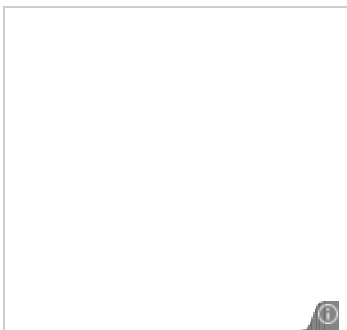


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were at a stage where the downturn did not help us carry that forward.

**Airport is a big OOH story. Laqshya Media has had a significant presence in this sphere. More recently you have also acquired the promotional rights at T3. Are you planning to increase your footprint in this segment, and how?**

Airport is one vertical which gives us stature apart from it having huge potential and access to captive premium audience. Currently with Hyderabad Airport, Colombo Airport and the promotional rights at T3 we are well placed in this segment. Occupancy and value is on the rise, so we are very gung ho about this vertical and we would be increasing our footprint in this segment as we go along.

**Transit media including bqs has recorded notable growth in recent times. Laqshya acquired rights on bqs in Chennai, as a case in point. What is your overall assessment of growth in this segment?**

Bqs in relatively media-starved Chennai is a good option and we are happy to be a part of it. Our bqs in Mumbai and Punjab are doing well. This segment would grow primarily because it can cater to stretches which are away from the main stretches and also because of their pleasing look but most importantly they do a service to the city by providing a shelter for the bus traveler. We consider bqs an integral part of our growth strategy.

**In the year gone by, Laqshya Media had executed several notable campaigns in Tier II & III cities. Are you seeing a new pattern emerging in OOH business in the smaller cities?**

Absolutely. Brands want to communicate with Tier II and Tier III cities and are grappling with the confusion that prevails there and companies like ours are well placed with in-depth knowledge and coverage along with our processes to facilitate accurate deliveries and thus we can give that comfort that brand marketer's need for doing a campaign in these towns.

**Are you planning to increase your international footprint?**

We would evaluate all international options and only if they make sense to us would we be interested.

**Last year, media owners often took up issues like delayed payments, minimum campaign duration, etc. Many of these issues remain largely unresolved. From experience, would you suggest how these issues can be tackled?**

Building a consensus takes time and the only way these measures can work is when everyone agrees to come onto the same platform, so I would beg to defer from your statement that these issues are largely unresolved. The fact that major players in OOH are principally agreeable to this and are backing IOAA on this is a big step in the right direction and all that follows are minor details which can be worked out provided the first step of getting a consensus is done..which in this case is on track. I am optimistic about this and I know for a fact that this will work and things will be streamlined very soon.

**What are the big changes that you would like to see happen on the Indian OOH landscape in the coming years?**

Unity of purpose, maturity and the will to develop the industry first before self interest is the major change that I would like to see in the coming years because only by developing the industry can all the stakeholders grow their own business. Working in silos and grappling with issues is going to get us nowhere. What we can see is consolidation, coordination and collaboration taking this industry to the next level very soon.

You can contact Soumitra S Bhattacharyya [here](#)

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