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What's the most interesting thing you've done outside of work in the last 12 months?

I am raising a two-year-old Gen-Z; fulfilling as it is, trust me... it is interesting to observe how he stimulates change in a millennial household with millennial adults.

Name a brand marketing executive or corporate personality - Indian or international - you admire. And tell us what about she or he is admirable.

At a global level, I have always admired Indra Nooyi. I have known her through her interviews and love the honesty and candour with which she addresses each question. The way she manages her personal and professional life is incredible.

Harsh Mariwala is the other person I look up to. His story, of transforming an unbranded coconut oil into a branded one in plastic bottles, and then growing the business to what it is today, is worth listening to again and again.

Among the younger lot, Manu Kumar Jain from Xiaomi is somebody who wears his brand on his sleeve; he is the biggest endorser of his brand and that's something only a passionate marketer can do.

If your brand were an animal, what would it be - and why?

Quite literally, a "lambi race ka ghoda" - we are here for the long haul!

What was the biggest challenge you and your team faced in the last 6-12 months - and what did you learn from it?

One challenge was launching our summer campaign amid media mayhem; channels not being free-to-air caused huge disruption in data, which obviously affected brands like ours that are large spenders on television. When you do not have any stable data to fall back on to plan your campaign and you have ₹60 crore at stake, the pressure is huge.

My belief was strengthened during this phase. No book or person can teach you how to be a wholistic marketer; you acquire that knowledge over years of work. In the face wash category, we clocked a volume growth of 10 per cent, at par with category growth of 11.2 per cent (Data Source: Nielsen, MAT March, 2019).

We signed on the new age OTT sensation Mithila Palkar as our brand endorser. This move was questioned by many because we were leaving behind a popular Bollywood face for a young, new influencer. But the move paid off - the VTR (View Through Rate) of the ad on YouTube was 46 per cent; the general thumb rule is to expect a 15 per cent VTR.

Which outside forces or trends impact consumer behaviour in your category most? Give an example.

The personal care category is still at a nascent stage in India, as compared to countries like Korea, China or other European nations. It's growing, and this growth is fuelled by an increase in disposable income.

But what's interesting is the way some myths or fads temporarily disrupt consumer behaviour. For example, people do not even know the full form of SPF, but there is this myth that the higher the SPF, the better it is. Similarly, every now and then, we hear about ingredients that are suddenly trending, but no one can prove their effectiveness. Therefore, it is easy for brands to bring in some fancy story or ingredient and change consumer behaviour.

Nowadays brands get trolled all too frequently on social media. As a marketer, have your views on trolling changed in the last couple of years?

Brands are trolled, especially when a celebrity endorses it - because their personal lives are so public today - or if it makes a disruptive claim that's not substantiated. If the brand does not fulfil its promise, the trolling is fast and loud. But what is worth observing is that the brands listen these days and, mostly, revert with logic.

If you could advertise on only one medium for the next 6 months, what would that be - and why?

For us, it would be television because it still gives us the highest reach. We are a 30-year-old company and started marketing ourselves approximately five years ago. We compete with multinational giants that have been around for over 50 years. Hence, we realise that our awareness and consideration still needs to grow.

What do agency partners grumble about most, today?

Earlier, an idea was media neutral; it was appreciated for what it was. But today, agencies are asked to ensure an idea is "insta-friendly" first. My sympathies are with them. ■

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