

# *afags!* Reporter

January 16-31, 2019

Volume 7, Issue 14 ₹100

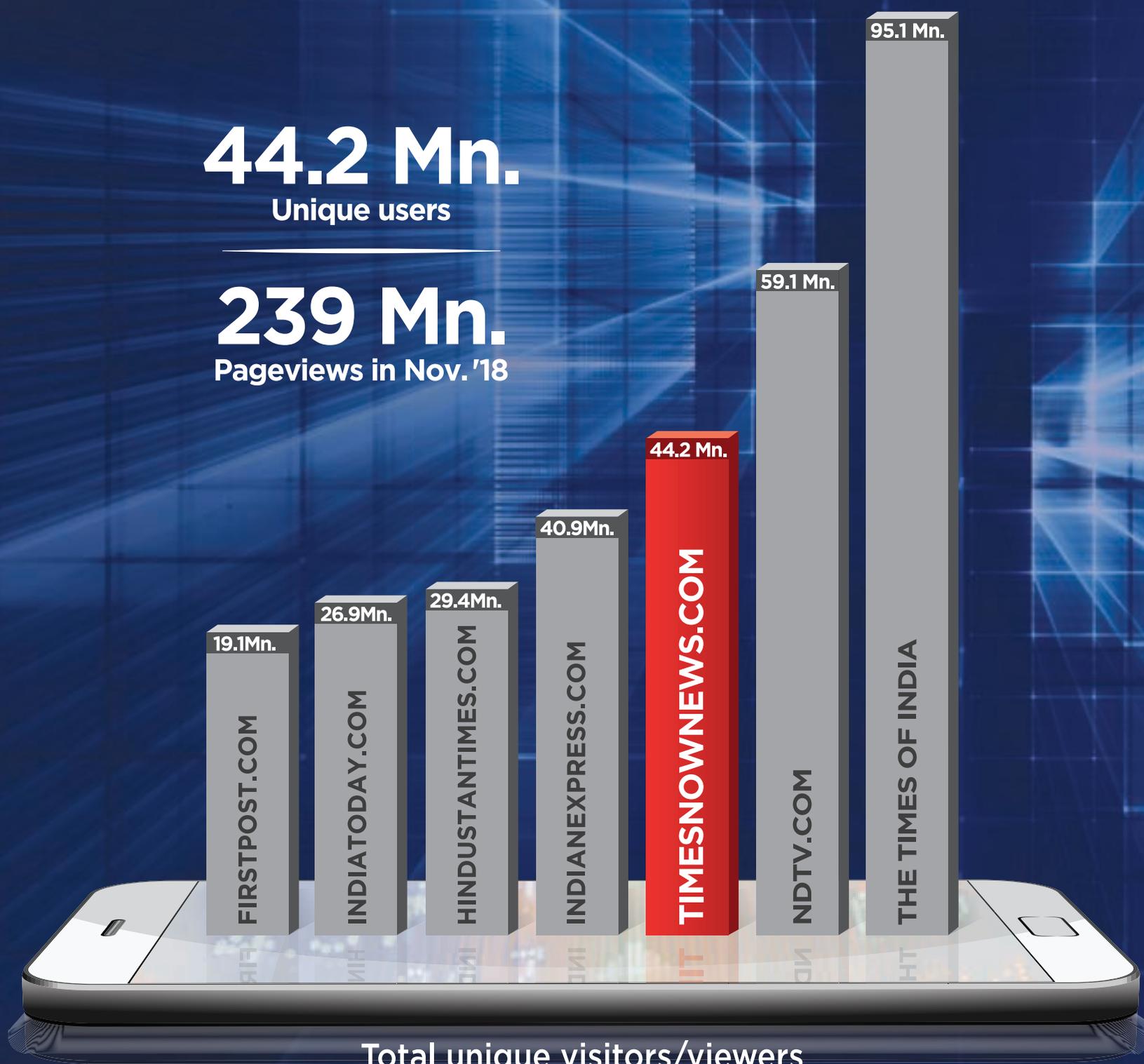
## THE *ag* SPECIAL ency

What's on the minds of the men and women at the helm of agencies? Interviews with 40 creative, digital and media agency executives.

# ALREADY AT NO. 3 AND CLOSING IN ON THE COMPETITION.

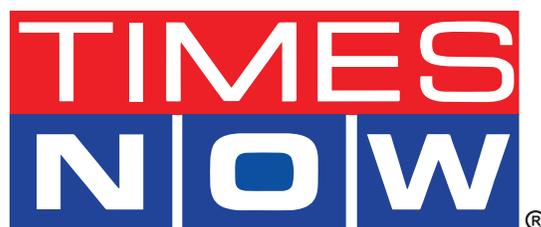
**44.2 Mn.**  
Unique users

**239 Mn.**  
Pageviews in Nov. '18



Total unique visitors/viewers

Source: "comScore, Nov. 2018 (English News Publishers - General News Category)"



**ACTION  
BEGINS  
HERE**

**TIMESNOWNEWS.COM**

## EDITORIAL

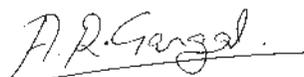
Did you know that most agency executives despise long meetings, administrative work, conference calls and endless email threads? Or that a lot of them gobble up Netflix's Narcos, Black Mirror and House of Cards during their downtime? Or that some of them have mastered the art of being in sync with the goings on in the world of Millennials, despite being social media recluses themselves? We didn't just chance upon these snippets while prowling the LinkedIn and Twitter timelines of the men and women who run advertising, media and digital agencies... we know this – and more – because we asked them.

For this special turn-of-calendar-year issue, we interviewed 40 senior members of the Indian advertising and media fraternity, to better understand the challenges they face as they go about their daily business. The idea was to capture two aspects: the operations side – the actual task of running an agency in a climate of fierce competition. And the brand side – the process of nurturing the accounts on their plates and keeping them relevant in an increasingly fragmented, tech-powered, digital universe.

We put our interviewees into four buckets – advertising business heads, advertising creative heads, media buyers and digital agency leaders. Of course, this sort of role-based classification doesn't always reflect the talents and interests of the people it represents. For instance, do creative heads not make digital media plans? Can't a CEO crack a tagline? Don't media buyers also manage balance sheets?

Let's just say, we segmented them for variety – we asked each group of executives a different set of questions. In hindsight, my tendency to place the more fun questions ('Which is the most exciting product group to craft ads for and why?') in the creative and digital buckets is clear; the suits and media buyers got the more serious questions ('What are the top three digital advertising formats that will dominate in 2019?'). I now know what stereotypes I subscribe to. I'll flip it around next time.

My favourite question is: What does 'content' really mean? I dislike the word and the life it's taken; the other day someone said he "consumed two pieces of content" while trying to show off about a couple of bestsellers he'd read. It's fascinating to note that when it comes down to explaining it in one's own words, there are as many definitions of 'content' as there are interviewees.



**Ashwini Gangal**  
ashwini.gangal@afaqs.com

Team afaqs!Reporter



**ASHWINI  
GANGAL**



**SUNIT  
ROY**



**DEEPASHREE  
BANERJEE**



**ABID HUSSAIN  
BARLASKAR**

EDITOR : Sreekant Khandekar | PUBLISHER : Sreekant Khandekar | Executive Editor : Ashwini Gangal | Associate Editor : Sunit Roy |  
PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE: Andrias Kisku | ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES: Shubham Garg 81301 66777 (M)  
Apoorv Kulshrestha 9873824700 (M) Noida Nikhil Jhunjunwala `9833371393 (M) Mumbai mktg@afaqs.com Marketing Office  
B 3, Ground Floor, Sector 4, Noida -201301 Uttar Pradesh Mumbai 302, Makani Center, 3rd Floor, Off Linking Road, Bandra (W),  
Mumbai - 400050 Subscription Enquiries subscriptions@afaqs.com  
Owned by Banyan Netfaqs Pvt Ltd and Printed and published by Sreekant Khandekar, at 7-A/13, Ch. Ratan Singh Complex, Jawala  
Heri Market, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110 063.

Printed at Artz and Printz 208 DSIDC Sheds, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase 1, New Delhi - 110020  
Design: Kavita Chopra Dikshit

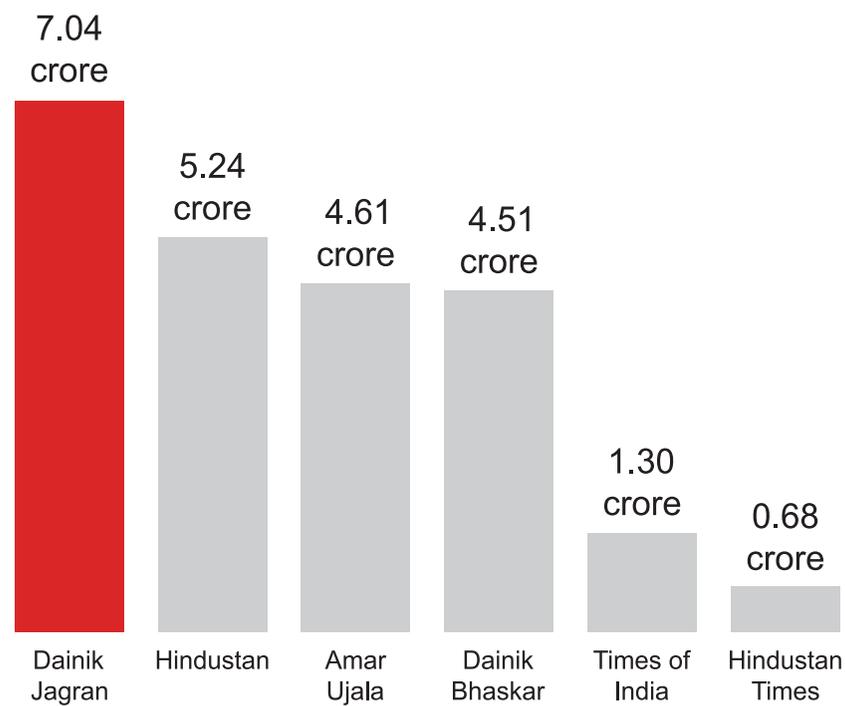
# CONTENTS

RAJDEEPAK DAS - Managing Director – India and Chief Creative Officer, South Asia, Leo Burnett	12
SWATI BHATTACHARYA - Chief Creative Officer, FCB Ulka	14
SUBHASH KAMATH - Chief Executive Officer and Managing Partner, BBH India	16
ANAND CHAKRAVARTHY - Managing Director - India, Essence	18
SUDESH SAMARIA - Chief Creative Officer and Co-Founder, Dentsu Webchutney	22
RAHUL JAUHARI - Joint President and Chief Creative Officer, Rediffusion Group	24
SHAMSUDDIN JASANI - Group Managing Director, Isobar - South Asia	26
RAJNI MENON - Chief Executive Officer, Carat	28
AMER JALEEL - Group Chief Creative Officer and Chairman, MullenLowe Lintas Group	30
TARUN RAI - Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer, J. Walter Thompson South Asia	32
HEMANT SHRINGY - Executive Creative Director, BBDO India	34
MANISH BHATT - Founder Director, Scarecrow-M&C Saatchi	36
SAURABH VARMA - Chief Executive Officer, Publicis Communications, South Asia	40
VIVEK BHARGAVA - Chief Executive Officer, DAN Performance Group	41
PRATIK GUPTA - Co-founder, FoxyMoron	42
ANITA NAYYAR - Chief Executive Officer, India and Southeast Asia, Havas Media Group	43
PARTHA SINHA - Vice Chairman and Managing Director, McCann Worldgroup India	46
ROHIT OHRI - Group Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, FCB India	47
NAVIN KHEMKA - Chief Executive Officer, MediaCom South Asia	48
CARLTON D'SILVA - Chief Executive Officer and Chief Creative Officer, Hungama Digital Services	49

# As Simple as

# A B C ...

Dainik Jagran is the No.1 read daily across India with over 7 Crore readers.



SOURCE IRS 2017 TR



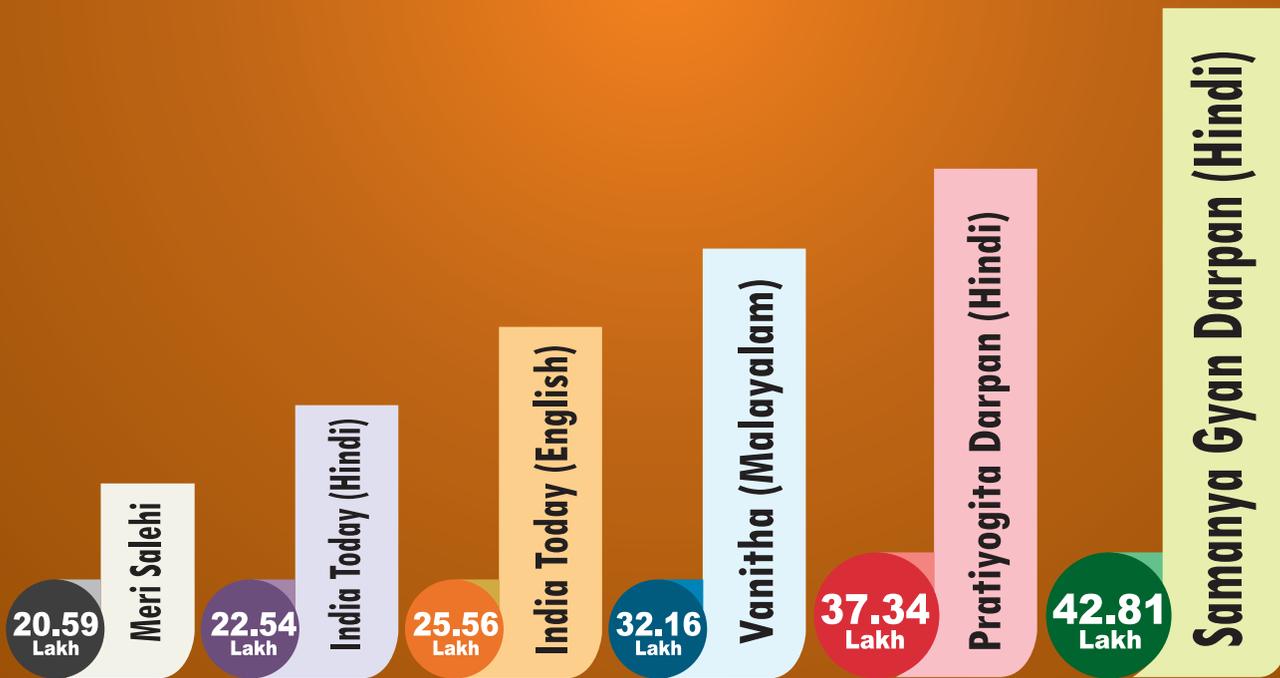
**Dainik Jagran**  
INDIA'S NO. 1 NEWSPAPER

# CONTENTS

VISHAL AHLUWALIA - Senior Vice President and Office Head, GREY Bengaluru .....	50
RAHUL MATHEW - National Creative Director, DDB Mudra Group .....	52
HARISH SHRIYAN - Chief Executive Officer, Omnicom Media Group India .....	53
VINEET BAJPAI - Founder and Chairman, Magnon eg+ and Magnon\TBWA .....	54
KARTIK SMETACEK - Executive Creative Director, L&K Saatchi & Saatchi .....	55
TITUS UPPUTURU - National Creative Director - Dentsu One; Creative Head - Taproot Dentsu, Gurgaon .....	56
HARSHIL KARIA - Managing Director, Schbang .....	57
VAISHALI VERMA - Chief Executive Officer, Initiative .....	59
ASHISH CHAKRAVARTY - Executive Director and Head of Creative - India, McCann .....	60
VARUN DUGGIRALA - Co-founder and Content Chief, The Glitch .....	61
HAREESH TIBREWALA - Co-Founder and Joint CEO, Mirum India .....	62
VIKAS MEHTA - Chief Executive Officer, Mullen Lintas .....	63
VIRAT TANDON - Group Chief Executive Officer, MullenLowe Lintas Group .....	65
PARIXIT BHATTACHARYA - Managing Partner – Creative, TBWA India .....	66
ROBBY MATHEW - Chief Creative Officer, FCB Interface .....	67
AZAZUL HAQUE - Chief Creative Officer, Ogilvy .....	68
SABUJ SENGUPTA - National Creative Director, Hakuhodo .....	69
RAJIV DINGRA - Founder and Chief Executive Officer, WATConsult .....	70
EMMANUEL UPPUTURU - Chief Creative Officer, Cheil WW India .....	72
RUSSELL BARRETT - Chief Creative Officer and Managing Partner, BBH India .....	74

# शिखर पर विराजमान

प्रतियोगिता दर्पण समूह की पत्रिकाएँ



PD MAGAZINES TOTAL READERSHIP

INDIAN READERSHIP SURVEY	सामान्य ज्ञान दर्पण	प्रतियोगिता दर्पण	PRATIYOGITA DARPAN	सक्सेस मिरर
RSCI	68,82,000	59,24,000	18,20,000	16,76,000
IRS-2017 (TR)				



# THE **ag** SPECIAL Agency

What's on the minds of the men and women at the helm of agencies? Interviews with 40 creative, digital and media agency executives.



## RAJDEEPAK DAS

Managing Director – India and Chief Creative Officer,  
South Asia, Leo Burnett

*We are the trend-makers, and how we create our work - reflecting our culture - is up to us.*

### What's your favourite OTT show?

Currently, it's 'The World's Most Extraordinary Homes' on Netflix.

### Does Indian advertising need a makeover?

I'd say it is already going through a makeover. This is evident from simple things like everyday conversations. Clients have begun asking me whether I know a good PR company, a social media or listening agency, a data company or perhaps a content maker that they can work with. Earlier, they used to ask me about good directors or photographers. And why is this important? Because it shows that they are thinking differently and want to work with people with varied skill sets.

The market has changed. Consequently, the industry has changed. For instance, look at the number of creative people moving to the digital content, film-making or long-form content side. The change has been slow but insidious. I'll give it one to one-and-a-half years at best before it becomes very evident; it's just a matter of time.

### Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media reclusive and still prosper?

Yes and no. I'll elaborate on the 'no' first. Social media is a part of the ecosystem where everything is connected to everyone else. You can't sit in your ivory tower and refuse to connect with anyone. Our industry itself is now connecting the best innovations with the best technology and social media. It's really not something you have control over. You need partners to work with, and they aren't always going to be your current set of colleagues; they might be individuals you have never met before. In light of this, I don't think it's possible to be an island.

Why 'yes'? Well, if you surround yourself with bloggers, content writers, trend-makers and YouTube influencers, and meet them often to converse and discuss different points of view, then probably you can afford to stay away from social media. The question is, will you really take the effort to hear 200-300 ideas and trends in a year? It is a long and tedious process. Unless you can do it, it's necessary to be on social media.

### What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?

These aren't trends, but an easy way out for anyone who's wondering what else to do. If you begin by taking a cause and retro-fitting your brand to it, then your work stands to be slotted as 'cause-vertising'. The work you create isn't a 'trend' if your brand is really impacting people's lives. Consider the 'Sit Improper' movement for P&G's Whisper. Would the idea have worked for a soap brand? Of course not. Product-centric, relevant work will never be cause-vertising. We are the trend-makers, and how we create our work - reflecting our culture - is up to us.

### Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for - and why?

Everything is exciting and challenging. If, for instance, you are working on a sports brand, you'll look at all the amazing work by Nike, Adidas or Under Armour. Then you'll realise, 'Hey, everything is already done. What's the next thing for us to do?'

Or consider finance, one of the tougher categories. What new idea are you going to come up with to make a financial service relevant to people's lives? There is nothing that comes easily; everything is a challenge. It's what you make of the business problem that matters.



**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

No, not at all. The beauty of ideas is that they are everywhere. Why should we be the only ones to capture them? We shouldn't be worried about people who have great ideas – we should be collaborating with them. Look at Uber, Swiggy, Airbnb, Twitter, Spotify: those concepts are ideas too, right? Advertising is an ideas business and by association, we must work with people who have brilliant ideas regardless of what industry they are from.

**There are way too many creative award shows today – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

It completely depends on which award shows are your benchmarks

and which ones you believe in. There are several award shows in the movie industry too, but no one is complaining. Ultimately, it boils down to which one is best suited to you and which part of an award show is important to you.

For instance, why can't an advertising agency enter the Red Dot Design Award (for product design)? Similarly, clients can enter the 'Communications' category of an award show. Awards exist for cross-pollination and it's about what is important to us on a micro level.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Long conference calls that go on for hours! ■

**What's your favourite OTT show?**

My favourite OTT show is Mr. Bean.

**What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?**

There were quite a few international campaigns that I found very effective, but from India I think the Savlon Chalks campaign was the most effective one.

**Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

The world needs a makeover and advertising being a part of the same world needs a makeover too. How clients look at advertising needs to change. How agencies infect the client with their vision for the brand needs to change. All I know is every brave piece of work needs a brave client to buy it. That can happen only when our clients get ready to sell less and connect more. I feel the fraternity is ready; only the boardrooms have to change now.

**Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

Some of the quietest creative leaders have had the most 'throbby', pulsating minds. How you are doesn't matter. It's always about what you write.

**What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

You know, it's sad when we look

*Some of the quietest creative leaders have had the most 'throbby', pulsating minds.*

**SWATI BHATTACHARYA**  
Chief Creative Officer, FCB Ulka



at them as just trends. I think these are not trends; these are problems in society which the political system, the policy-makers, are not being able to solve. And hence the job of nudging society has fallen upon brands. I look at it as something very vital and important because brands are as much a part of society as people are.

**Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for – and why?**

For me its women... writing for them, selling to them, nudging them.

**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

No, not at all. If creativity is getting democratised it's a good thing. I personally don't think we need to be worried. The world will always be hungry for storytellers... the more, the merrier.

**There are way too many creative award shows today – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Yes, but people in the business always know which ones matter. As long as we pursue those, we are in a good place.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

When the client asks me to make things "research friendly" – if I could take that away from my day job, it would be an absolute love story. ■



Is Now

# BIGGER BOLDER BETTER

Dainik Jagran-inext has become more BOLD with new fonts and smart icons to connect with more urban-urbane audience. So, don't miss to give your brand a bold look with Bigger, BOLDER & Better Dainik Jagran-inext.

Smart Padho, Smart Bano



For advertising query contact: North - Ruchi-9999957955, West - Sushil - 9820781602, South - Hari-9845517795, East - A. Sanyal - 9836471687  
 Simultaneously Published from: Agra, Bareilly, Dehradun, Gorakhpur, Jamshedpur, Kanpur, Lucknow, Meerut, Prayagraj, Patna, Ranchi & Varanasi

*The only way for agencies to “defend their turf” is by redefining the turf itself.*

**SUBHASH KAMATH**

Chief Executive Officer and  
Managing Partner, BBH India



**If you could hire one person from Bollywood, who would it be – and why?**

Raj Kumar Hirani. His incredible talent for storytelling, humour and performances is something we could use very well in advertising. Moreover, he seems to know what clicks with the masses.

**What was the most challenging/gratifying pitch of 2018?**

All pitches are challenging when you get the brief and all pitches are gratifying when you win them.

**Brand marketers have warmed up to ‘in-housing’ of late. Should agencies be worried?**

I don’t think this is a definitive trend. There may be some aspects of the business that certain companies have built in-house capabilities for, like performance marketing, community management, ORM, and in some cases, maybe even social media management. But if you look at it from a broader strategic and creative perspective, marketers will continue to need the best talent from the best agencies. At the end of the day, it is a creative business and a people’s business. Clients can’t give that creative talent a career path in their system, because that’s not what their business is about. If they’re serious about building brands, then they need to foster strong partnerships with their advertising agencies.

Agencies, on the other hand, need to be emotionally invested in the brand’s success and nurture these relationships by being close to the client’s business needs. As long as both sides are working together to meet common goals, I think these partnerships will always flourish.

**What type of talent/specialisation is missing in agencies today?**

That’s a tough one to answer because beyond traditional advertising, different agencies have invested in different capabilities based on their vision, ambition and client needs. Some may have invested heavily in digital, some in production, some in content, some in design, events, entertainment, etc. I don’t think any one agency would have succeeded consistently across the spectrum. So it’s difficult to generalise where the gaps are.

**‘The client has become more demanding than ever before’ – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Clients have always been demanding. And there’s nothing wrong with that. After all, they’re spending crores through us and they have a right to demand good service. Having said that, I think when the economy is down and their business is under serious pressure, clients tend to get more nervous and consequently, more demanding. Many a time, this can result in some unreasonable demands in terms of costs, responsiveness and crazy deadlines. That’s when agencies need to be strong enough to negotiate better.

**What’s the toughest/most challenging part of running an advertising agency today?**

Retaining talent and commanding the right price from clients for the work we do are the industry’s biggest challenges today.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the advertising world in the next 12-24 months?**

I think AI is already playing a big role in providing the data required to facilitate good decision making. It can help predict trends in consumer behaviour, draw out usage and interest patterns, predict future behaviour and customise campaigns for specific



consumers, thereby making audience targeting sharper. But the bigger question is, can AI replace human ingenuity and creativity? I sincerely hope not. It should be used to support and enhance human creativity, not replace it.

**Of late, there have been fresh discussions around ‘the full-service advertising agency’ and whether brands need them at all. What should agencies do to defend their turf?**

I think the very definition of full-service has changed over the years. Earlier, it just meant creative and media together in one. Now, apart from creative and media agencies, there are digital/social media agencies, PR companies, events, production, entertainment, content creators, design outfits, etc. Some have remained specialists in one field or the other. But larger groups have begun

consolidating and are trying to bring everything under one roof, so as to attract more of the client’s business.

The only way for agencies to “defend their turf” is by redefining the turf itself. Focus on your client’s needs and where the spends are. And accordingly build capabilities to deliver on those needs. And where you can’t invest, collaborate with the right partners. I do think we will be seeing a lot more consolidation in the coming years.

**What’s the one thing about your job you’d do away with in a heartbeat?**

The commercial aspect of running an agency. I’d much rather focus on the strategic and creative aspects for a brand. ■

**In 2019, media agency executives will desperately need to...**

... up-skill themselves to deal with a media ecosystem that is changing at a never-before seen pace. They must accelerate capabilities in delivering platform-agnostic strategy and planning.

**In India, digital media spends have been rising. Will this trend continue in 2019 – or will it reach a plateau?**

This will continue as the reach of digital grows and more consumers start to spend more time online. As long as the consumer is changing media habits, brands will need to follow as well.

**Do clients still think in terms of ‘TVCs’ (television commercial) and ‘DVCs’ (digital video)? And should they?**

Effective communication is all about telling the brand story in an engaging and meaningful way, irrespective of where the consumer is interacting with the brand. It’s not necessary that a TVC cannot work on digital - therefore it would be incorrect to say “a TVC will not work on digital”. The fact that a majority of brands spending on digital videos continue using their TV assets shows that it is working.

However, the opportunity on digital to use specific creative formats - that allow you to tell the same brand story in an even more engaging way - is not being leveraged enough. And that’s where there is a lot of work to be done. When a medium allows you a lot more avenues to engage with a consumer, it’s an opportunity brands should not miss.

**In the absence of a clear measurement system on digital, what’s the best way brands can analyse returns on their online spends?**

Digital measurability is not low. In fact, digital allows marketers to understand, with a great degree of accuracy, how consumers are consuming, interacting with and responding to their digital advertising. The ability to re-connect with consumers who have seen/interacted with your advertising is truly only possibly on digital and no other medium. For brands/categories where the purchase journey ends through an online action (for example: download an app, buy a product online, sign up for a test drive) the degree of measurability is extremely high, as you exactly know how your digital investments are translating into a direct action, in real time. This is not possible on other media.

Data analytics is now a key part of digital media services. Digital marketing gives rise to a vast quantity of data, which when analysed can reveal powerful actionable insights about consumer behaviour.

*The age of self-serving, fully automated campaigns, where AI is building creative assets on the fly in real time, has begun.*

**ANAND CHAKRAVARTHY**

Managing Director - India, Essence



**No.1**  
KARNATAKA'S LARGEST CIRCULATED KANNADA DAILY

# VIJAYAVANI

KANNADA DAILY

**QUALITY  
IS NOT AN ACT  
IT IS A HABIT**



**ICONIC**  
*Performance Outclassed*



**NATIONAL AWARD FOR  
EXCELLENCE IN PRINTING**

**VRL MEDIA LTD**

With sound modelling capabilities and robust end to end tracking of campaigns, one is now able to attribute the impact of digital, and better understand which publishers, creative assets, offers, markets, segments, etc. are working/responding well. This allows marketers to take specific decisions that can improve sales and ROI.

So digital is measurable, as long as you are clear why you are using digital and what impact on your brand health or business metrics you seek.

#### **In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the media buying world in the next 12-24 months?**

One of the key challenges for marketers is to be able to replicate successful marketing interventions repeatedly. Today, multiple forms of both analogue and digital data are being generated by marketing programs. The answer exists within all this data.

Humans have learnt to not repeat things that do not work and focus on the things that do. This has been intuitive, sometimes data-backed, due to best practices passed on. And it has worked for the most part.

However, businesses are becoming more competitive, agility is key, and the consumer is becoming more spoilt for choice. All of this means marketers are under more pressure to deliver better results, quickly, and at high ROI! Humanly not entirely possible!

That's where ML (machine learning) and AI (artificial intelligence) come into play, especially in media where a huge quantity of past campaign data exists. We are already seeing AI being used extensively in performance marketing, CRM, product interfaces with consumers, etc. ML is now a part of all major digital advertising platforms, and more and more digital media is being invested in with the help of ML and AI.

The age of self-serving, fully automated campaigns, where

AI is building creative assets on the fly in real time, has begun. This will continue. AI will also play a role in campaigns that are run by humans. We will see significant changes in the way digital media is being bought, deployed and measured with the help of AI, in the years ahead.

#### **What in your view is the best way to tackle the growing problem of ad fraud?**

There are a few things that all digital advertisers must do to ensure they can minimise/eliminate ad fraud from their campaigns:

- Work with publishers who are trustworthy and who maintain a high degree of control over their own platforms.
- Work with platforms that have aggregated inventory, which has gone through enough scrutiny and checks to prevent ad fraud.
- Work with tech platforms like MOAT or IAS that have the tools to ensure that you can track fraudulent impressions and remove those publishers from your plan in flight.

Today, tech has developed sufficiently to be able to reduce ad fraud to a great degree. While this may come at a cost, the resultant ROI far outweighs the investment that needs to be made.

#### **What are the top three trends that will dominate the media business in 2019?**

One: The growing influence of mobile and digital video in marketing.

Two: Share of programmatic digital spends growing significantly.

Three: The launch of new tools and frameworks to bridge the digital and analogue worlds.

#### **What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Having to respond to/check literally hundreds of emails every day! ■

# Who is this winner?

**MAY 2018**

**No.1**  
in Evening  
Prime-time News  
*in 10L+*

**SEP 2018**

**No.1**  
in Evening  
Prime-time News  
*in India- Urban*

**NOV 2018**

**No.1**  
in Evening  
Prime-time News  
*in All India*

This winner is

**NEWS**

**18**

**इंडिया**

**India's No.1  
News Channel**

## *Editorial content /native advertising has still not peaked and will continue to rise.*



### SUDESH SAMARIA

Chief Creative Officer and Co-Founder,  
Dentsu Webchutney

#### **'What's your favourite OTT show?'**

House of Cards.

#### **Define 'content' in one line.**

Content is something that is to be expressed through some medium, as speech, writing or any of the various art forms.

#### **The digital universe is crowded and noisy. What are the top three things brands must do to get noticed?**

Humanise themselves.  
Engage with audiences.  
Be consistent.

#### **In the days ahead, which industry will impact trends in yours?**

I believe of all the things that are going on around AR (augmented reality), VR (virtual reality) and MR (mixed reality) will be game changers sooner than we all think.

#### **What are the top three digital advertising formats that will dominate in 2019?**

Editorial content/native advertising has still not peaked and will continue to rise. We will also see video ads continue to grow... and, hopefully, personalised recommendations too.

#### **If you could get rid of one piece of 'jargon' from agency vocabulary, what would it be - and why?**

Ironically, while Webchutney pioneered it in India, the word I am tired of hearing now is "viral".

#### **What in your opinion do Millennials really want?**

I have a 15-year-old son, and by observing him and his friends I can tell you that Millennials are setting the pace for a more compassionate and sustainable world. They want to change a lot of the world around them.

#### **What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

I find our entire industry's business model, of charging a fee for the hours we invest, shortsighted. I would love to do away with that and replace it with something more remunerative and rewarding. ■

# 500% Growth in the Last 12 Months

**TIMESNOWNEWS.COM** – Journey from 7 MN to 44 MN Users/Month



Source: comscore (Dec'17-Nov'18 – Unique Users General English News Category)



**ACTION  
BEGINS  
HERE**

**TIMESNOWNEWS.COM**

# *Creativity in advertising is NOT a clever line or a funny jingle that anyone can walk in and do.*

**RAHUL JAUHARI**

Joint President and Chief Creative Officer,  
Rediffusion Group



## **What's your favourite OTT show?**

All-time favourites - Narcos, Game of Thrones, House of Cards (not the latest season - it's a damp squib). Among the Indian ones, I liked Sacred Games. And Powder, since it was grounded and unpretentious.

## **What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?**

Effectiveness is best judged by the client. I liked the body of work done for Swiggy. It was a set of short, sharp and insightful ads. I've also seen them go local and relevant when required. Overall, I think it will do the brand and the business a lot of good.

## **Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

I am assuming the question is in the context of the social media and mobile takeover. In which case, Indian advertising is already in

makeover mode. It's a confused makeover, in progress. One section claims TV is dead. Another section claims the opposite. A third section professes a middle ground and a mix of traditional and non-traditional. No section has a clear answer and I don't think the answer can be clear.

The Indian consumer is spread from the villages to South Mumbai. From children to folks in their 80s. We must appreciate the uniqueness of our country. We are evolving, one stumble at a time. We're in an era of great experimentation. Today, we have more data to play with than ever before. All of it matters. Let's leave it at that without jumping to any definitive claims.

## **Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

I'll answer that simply. Part of being a good creative person is all about being in sync with the consumer's life. If social media is part and parcel of the consumer's life, it needs to be part and parcel of the creative executive's life.

## **What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

Just focus on making the brand relevant to the consumer's life. Pick a cause when it's relevant and when it has something real to do with the brand, not because it's a fad. The same applies for any other trend.

## **Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for - and why?**

I find the challenge of making an old corporate brand relevant again as exciting as selling a new brand of cookies. Or the challenge of conceptualising and creating a tech-based platform for a brand, for that matter. If you enjoy your job and see the opportunities today's tech-friendly world brings to brand building, then there is no dearth of challenges, no matter what the category is.

## **Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

Good question. And one that needs to be answered carefully. Creativity was never the preserve of advertising professionals. Artists, singers, lyricists, scientists, stand-up comedians (of late) have all been creative since forever. Having said that, let's be clear. Creativity in advertising is NOT a clever line or a funny jingle that anyone can walk in and do. Creativity in advertising requires an understanding of brands, consumers and life - all three in a very precise measure. And then some craft, to create advertising that convinces a person to choose one service over

# ZOOMTV.COM

INDIA'S NO.1 BOLLYWOOD SITE



Source: comScore - Bollywood Entertainment Website Category (Nov'18 - 15.81 MN Users/Month )

another equally good one or bad one.

Sure, ideas come from everywhere. They always did. But not everyone has the wisdom to pick the right idea and the craft to mould that idea into a convincing argument. Anyone who sees ads think they can write one. Sure you can. But that doesn't mean you can create advertising. If there is anything ad-folk need to be worried about, it is – do they know enough about the consumer's life? And if they are keeping up with newer ways to reach the consumer without being an unwelcome interruption. It's easy to demystify and oversimplify advertising. Let's not do the profession that disservice.

**There are way too many creative award shows today – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

**'What's your favourite OTT show?'**

House of Cards. It is the best drama series I have seen. How to handle power and people is something to learn.

**The digital universe is crowded and noisy. What are the top three things brands must do to get noticed?**

Firstly, you must establish the brand's presence in each moment of the consumer life-cycle, using digital. Secondly, make sure you are having a conversation with people. Today, the consumer is your biggest advocate; so work closely with consumers, for your brand and products. Finally, you need a clear digital creative strategy – and that doesn't mean just taking your mainline creative and applying it to digital.

**In the days ahead, which industry will impact trends in yours?**

I see three big events coming up: First, the next wave of growth in India is going to be led by language, and we need more and more content in India's varied languages. Secondly, 2019 will be the time when the TV gets smart, and a large number of people will cut the cord and watch TV via the internet and not satellite. This means on-demand will grow at a very fast pace, versus appointment viewership. Finally, my biggest bet will be on voice; we will use voice much more in all forms – to search, to consume, to communicate. On-screen time will reduce due to the increased usage of voice.

**What are the top three digital advertising formats that will dominate in 2019?**

Video, search and in-app.

**If you could get rid of one piece of 'jargon' from agency vocabulary, what would it be – and why?**

I just really want agencies to stop selling ourselves short, start enjoying the work we do much more and be compensated appropriately for it.

**What in your opinion do Millennials really want?**

I think Millennials want more experiences than the generations before did. They would rather spend money on a great vacation than, say, on owning a car. I think we need to keep that in mind before we interact with them.

**Over the last two years, the number of consumers and content creators has soared. Consequently, has the very nature of virality changed? How?**

There are more awards shows today that any advertising creative can remember or count. The thing to worry about? That there are barely any truly credible award shows left. The reason is very very simple. Award shows are a business. More shows means more awards to dole out. Which means more people stand the chance to win. Which means more people will enter. The cycle continues. Sorry, but I don't have a simple answer for this one. It's a mighty messy question and deals with the fragile egos of industry folk.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

I'm going to read that as - 'What's the one thing you'd do away with in advertising in a heartbeat?' My answer is undercutting. It does the industry a great disservice. ■

Given the way digital is moving, and the way consumers are moving, you need to do much more to attract consumers towards your brand than ever before. You need to make consumers experience much more of your brand than a regular commercial, and I think content marketing allows that.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Nothing; I love it as it is. I wake up every morning looking forward to my work.



*On-screen time will reduce due to the increased usage of voice.*

SHAMSUDDIN JASANI

Group Managing Director, Isobar - South Asia

# INDIA'S FAVOURITE PRIME TIME NEWS DESTINATION.



**ATHAR  
KHAN**

**MADHAVDAS  
GOPALAKRISHNAN**

**RAHUL  
SHIVSHANKAR**

**NAVIKA  
KUMAR**

**SWATI  
JOSHI**

**INDIA  
UPFRONT**

**MON - FRI  
8 PM**

**THE  
NEWSHOUR 9**

**MON - FRI  
9 PM**

**THE  
NEWSHOUR 10  
THE  
CLASH**

**MON - FRI  
10 PM**

**TIMES  
NOW**

**ACTION  
BEGINS  
HERE**

**TIMESNOWNEWS.COM**

 **timesnow**

*If we focus only on the ROI and short-term sales impact then we're doing a big disservice to the digital medium.*

**RAJNI MENON**

Chief Executive Officer, Carat



**In 2019, media agency executives will desperately need to....**  
Upgrade themselves each day. The technology, data, concepts and availability of advertising options are evolving quickly and to keep pace is very important.

**In India, digital media spends have been rising. Will this trend continue in 2019 – or will it reach a plateau?**

Digital is as dynamic as it was. Digital has revolutionised India, especially after the entry of Jio. Digital has captivated the audience and is always offering newer formats. The spends will see an increase on three fronts: Brands are realising the potential of digital media and are dispersing spends between TV and digital, owing to OLV (online video). Newer formats, innovation and content will push it further next year. There's higher investment around conversion as e-commerce grows.

**What was the most challenging/gratifying pitch of 2018?**

Each pitch had its own challenges and joys. Pitches give you an opportunity to do a quick and deep immersion into a brand and its audience, and create solutions without any boundaries, so it's always fun.

**Do clients still think in terms of 'TVCs' (television commercial) and 'DVCs' (digital video)? And should they?**

At the moment yes, but they have started evolving in their outlook. In recent months we have seen major barriers being broken. We actively work with clients to break this divide. Our approach to planning video, irrespective of media, is called Video Stack Planning. It's a very strong way to plan video, across screens.

**In the absence of a clear measurement system on digital, what's the best way brands can analyse returns on their online spends?**

If we focus only on the returns on investment and short-term sales

impact then we're doing a big disservice to the medium. Digital plays a large role throughout the consumer journey, which cannot be ignored. There are many ways in which we can measure the impact of digital despite all the limitations. Examples include modeling, brand research and brand lift/brand health surveys through partnerships with various digital partners.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the media buying world in the next 12-24 months?**

AI is changing the way consumers experience brands by making the process more comfortable for them. With AI and machine learning in place, brands need to be more on their guard than ever before, as even their competitors have access to this technology. AI is raising the expectations of the consumer. AI helps a lot in the creation of individual-focussed campaign planning.

**What in your view is the best way to tackle the growing problem of ad fraud?**

The answer lies in the use of data and technology. With the help of an audit agency, the in-stream data needs to be checked basis historic patterns. The audit agency also streamlines the ad serving, ensuring viewability. This helps avoid fraudulent web pages.

**What are the top three trends that will dominate the media business in 2019?**

Marketing automation, data management platforms and programmatic in offline media.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Phony speculative pitches that are held just for new ideas and pricing. ■



**ETMONEY**

Presents

Co-powered By **amazon fire tv stick** **HOUSING.COM** Music Streaming Partner **gaana**

**EVERY DAY**

**#ChillToWin**

**9 PM**



**100 Days | 100 Movies | 100 Prizes**

**MOVIES NOW**

f t i moviesnowtv

© All images belong to their respective copyright owners.

\*T&C Apply.

**What's your favourite OTT show?**

I have many favourites, but currently it's 'The Good Place' which is a comedic take on a conceptual place that you go to when you die if you've been good in life – and the havoc that takes place when someone undeserving gets there.

**What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?**

I'm not sure and I don't have figures but I think the despicable anti-smoking campaign that's running in theatres is working very effectively. It batters and badgers and makes you squirm in that darkened prison but I hear less people sniggering now. And I feel it's working on younger, impressionable audiences very well. Kids are growing up thinking smoking is the worst thing you can do.

**Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

I think talking about advertising needing or going through a makeover has become redundant. All of life is going through a makeover. Humans are going through a makeover and if you look carefully it's humans who are audiences – and the shift in audiences has become perceptible. It's going to go a lot farther. So yes, there will be a massive and continuous makeover for all of life as we know it.

**Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

Yeaahhh! Balki did Fair & Lovely for years without once using it, I know for sure. People direct biopics of famous people without knowing zilch about them to begin with. You can, but the thing is you would have to be a social recluse to be a social media recluse. Social media is on WhatsApp and in conversations. It's in your face so much that you can know everything there is to know if you just keep your eyes and ears open.

**What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

The best way to deal with any trend is to cause it.

**Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for – and why?**

The product category can be anything, the challenge is in the audience. The intersection of that, let's say, soap, with a challenging consumer is what makes it exciting. It's the unlocking of something, that can get someone shiny-eyed about what you're peddling, that thrills us ad folk.

**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

I think it's become too fashionable to sound this caution on advertising people. First and foremost we are brand professionals. Our primary core competence is our knowledge of and empathy for consumers. If we manage to keep that at our centre, we can harness any tool that is available, whether it's tech, data or creativity.

**There are way too many creative award shows today – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

You can get confused with, yes, too many award shows. But if you are like us and have decided only to participate in select award shows, like Effie, because they are the ones who give importance to 'effectiveness' – and 'effectiveness' is what we as an agency live by – then life is set.



*Pitches have become a joke, except for a few that are conducted with some respect.*

**AMER JALEEL**

Group Chief Creative Officer and Chairman,  
MullenLowe Lintas Group

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Pitches. Clearly and unequivocally. We are very good at pitches and have a great pitch record – (in the last three years we've set up a 'top 10 agency', solely based on pitches) – but still. Look, we participate with all our might because it's a practice. But if given a choice to change something, today pitches would have to be it. The way pitches are being run today leave a lot to be desired. Brands are calling for pitches at the drop of a hat, sometimes even to compensate for a lack of application from the marketing team.

The time given for a pitch, on an average, has come to 15 days. What can you give to a new brand in real terms in that much time? Pitches have become a joke, except for a few that are conducted with some respect. Many times pitches have become a new negotiating tool. Call a pitch, appoint another agency, get the fee down by 20 per cent. The entire value of a consultant equation is undermined because I genuinely believe that pitch-winning strategies or ideas may not be the best thing for the brand. What looks good at a pitch table sounds catchy to the client team on that day, but it's not necessarily the most solid idea for eventual domination. ■

**SUDHIR** की ख़बरों का Test  
अब नहीं होगा Best!

**ANJANA** की ज़रूरत थी  
सिर्फ़ Kal Tak

**RAVISH** का Time  
अब नहीं रहा Prime!



अब एंकर नहीं  
ख़बरें खुद बोलेंगी  
क्योंकि आप समझदार हैं

ZEE Hindustan becomes India's first news channel to go anchorless, so that there's nothing between you and the truth.

CONTACT: NATIONAL: MANOJ JAGYASI: 09818066697  
WEST: SANJEEV MULCHANDANI: 9930982633

NORTH: AMIT SETHI: 9891663879  
EAST: R RAMAKRISHNAN: 9831547071 SOUTH: FRANCISCO LOBO: 9845359466

WATCH EXCLUSIVELY  
ONLINE ON



DOWNLOAD APP NOW

**If you could hire one person from Bollywood, who would it be – and why?**

Ranveer Singh. For starters it would be a homecoming. Before he went on to pursue his Bollywood dream, he worked at JWT in Mumbai, while I was heading the office. He told me he has had a few meetings in my room. And he does a mean impersonation of me. Besides, he has spunk, is unafraid, is obviously talented, charming, has loads of energy and a great sense of humour. Everything I would look for in an advertising professional. And with his millions of social media followers he understands the power of digital media well.

**What was the most challenging/gratifying pitch of 2018?**

We have won over 170 new accounts and assignments in 2018. Every pitch is a challenge and every win, gratifying. Big or small.

**Brand marketers have warmed up to ‘in-housing’ of late. Should agencies be worried?**

No, I am not worried. First, it is not a trend. Some brand marketers may have tried it but that’s more for ‘content’ production rather than brand communication. Second, with so much disruption in all the elements of the marketing mix, brand marketers have their hands full. Why would they want to add a responsibility that is currently being handled by experts?

**What type of talent/specialisation is missing in agencies today?**

In the dynamic world we live in, we need a diverse set of capabilities. While we need to re-train our existing pool of talent, getting people from diverse fields hastens the adoption of new skills. The more diverse the better – from data and digital specialists to technology and design specialists. JWT South Asia has companies and divisions that specialise in digital, design, shopper, rural, events, activation, social, CSR and production, besides those that produce television, print and outdoor campaigns. So as a group we already have diverse skills. The challenge, and opportunity, is to cross-fertilise across our various companies and divisions – something we’re aggressively pursuing.

**‘The client has become more demanding than ever before’ – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Of course they have become more demanding. But it is to be expected. Marketing itself has become more demanding. The competition has increased many fold - so many new brands in every category, cross-category competition, new distribution models, constantly changing technology, and so many platforms to communicate on. There are so many more demands on the CMOs – why would we expect them to be less demanding of their communication partners?

**What’s the toughest/most challenging part of running an advertising agency today?**

Talent. Attracting, acquiring and retaining talent. The right kind of talent. People – that’s the business we are in. People are our only asset. And for a variety of reasons, getting the right talent is more difficult today than it was earlier.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the advertising world in the next 12-24 months?**

Our industry should look at AI as an opportunity to improve the work we do and not as a threat. Creativity and imagination will not



**TARUN RAI**

Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer,  
J. Walter Thompson South Asia

*There are so many more demands on the CMOs – why would we expect them to be less demanding of their communication partners?*

# BECAUSE TRUTH MATTERS MOST



20 EDITIONS



7 STATES



1 UNION TERRITORY

be replaced by AI. As a company we believe our work needs to be based on the three pillars of Humanity, Technology and Creativity. AI for us is a tool to improve creativity.

**Of late, there have been fresh discussions around ‘the full-service advertising agency’ and whether brands need them at all. What should agencies do to defend their turf?**

In fact, the discussion has been around integration. About the need to go back to a ‘full-service’ agency model. More and more clients are asking for integration of their various communication platforms, to deliver a consistent message to the consumer. The question is – Who would the integrator be? Ultimately, it is the creative agency that can perform this role of Brand Steward. We

understand the consumer best and we understand brands best. It is ingrained in our DNA. What we need is the ability to embrace new technologies, work with many partners, be platform-agnostic, and diversify our capabilities and skills.

**What’s the one thing about your job you’d do away within a heartbeat?**

I do love the work I do. That’s the reason I have spent two decades in advertising. It is not about what I don’t like. It’s more about what else I would like to make happen in our business. The area that interests me is Original Content and IPs. In a sense, to be ‘owners’ of what we create. That’s the single most important learning from my seven years in the media business. ■

**‘What’s your favourite OTT show?’**

Black Mirror. The amazing thing is that it’s a ‘real-life’, ‘real-time’ horror story. It can happen. It will happen. And some of it is already happening. The best thing about the platform (OTT, in this case Netflix) is the liberty it offers, beyond just nudity and foul language. And Black Mirror uses it very well – right from the overall concept of the dystopian future led by technology, to plots of individual episodes. It’s amazing to see someone crack a great concept, and not get complacent. The writing, the execution and every little detail is well-crafted.

**Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

Everything around us is getting a constant makeover. Technology. Entertainment. Communication. Even the way people think is constantly evolving. There’s a generation change with every passing year. Indian advertising is taking baby steps. But there’s no liberty to learn, experiment and evolve slowly; there have to be drastic changes at a drastic pace.

**Can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

I am an addict, so I might not have an answer to this. But I guess you’re going to have to expose yourself to everything that’s new. And social media isn’t even new anymore. I don’t know if creatives earlier could have got away saying they are radio recluses or television recluses.

**What’s the best way to deal with trends like ‘cause-vertising’, ‘fem-vertising’, and other such?**

Stay true to the brand. It feels like a fad or trend only when the starting point is – ‘let’s cash in on something’. Today you can’t fool anyone. If you try to manipulate them, they will call you out on it, troll you, or worse – ignore you. But

*Today you can't  
fool anyone.  
If you try to  
manipulate them,  
they will call you  
out on it, troll  
you, or worse –  
ignore you.*

**HEMANT SHRINGY**

Executive Creative Director,  
BBDO India



when you start with the brand, the business problem and genuine empathy for the consumer, everything else becomes the context through which you give out the message. And the results follow.

**Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for – and why?**

Any category can be as boring or exciting as you make it. There is so much great work happening across categories, from cars to chewing gums. In fact, I think the tougher it is to crack, the more exciting it gets.

**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

Not at all. It’s the best time to learn and co-create. There are two ways to look at change... which, as clichéd as it sounds, is the only constant. You either get threatened by it and live in denial. Or you embrace it and become part of it. It’s an amazing time for communication. You aren’t limited by mediums anymore. And as I said earlier, advertising needs a makeover. I see agencies still working in the old-fashioned manner – “let’s become a full-service agency” – trying to have in-house specialists. But honestly, every brief comes with a new requirement and a need for specialisation. We should look at collaborating and co-creating instead.

**There are way too many creative award shows today – Agree or Disagree?**

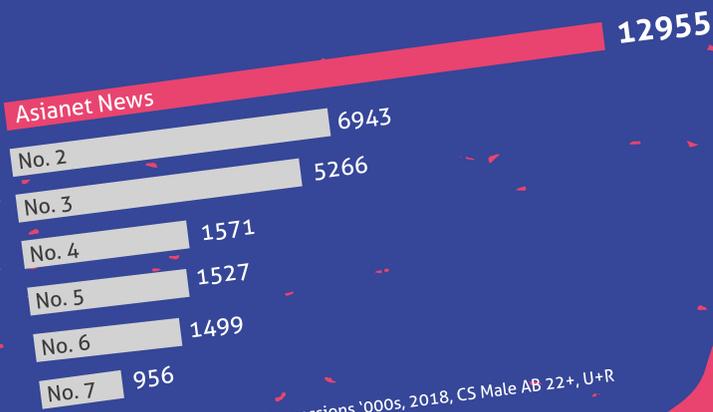
It’s more of a concern for the award show organisers than for the agencies. We can choose which ones to enter. They have to work hard at staying relevant and being credible.

**What’s the one thing about your job you’d do away with in a heartbeat?**

Long meetings. ■

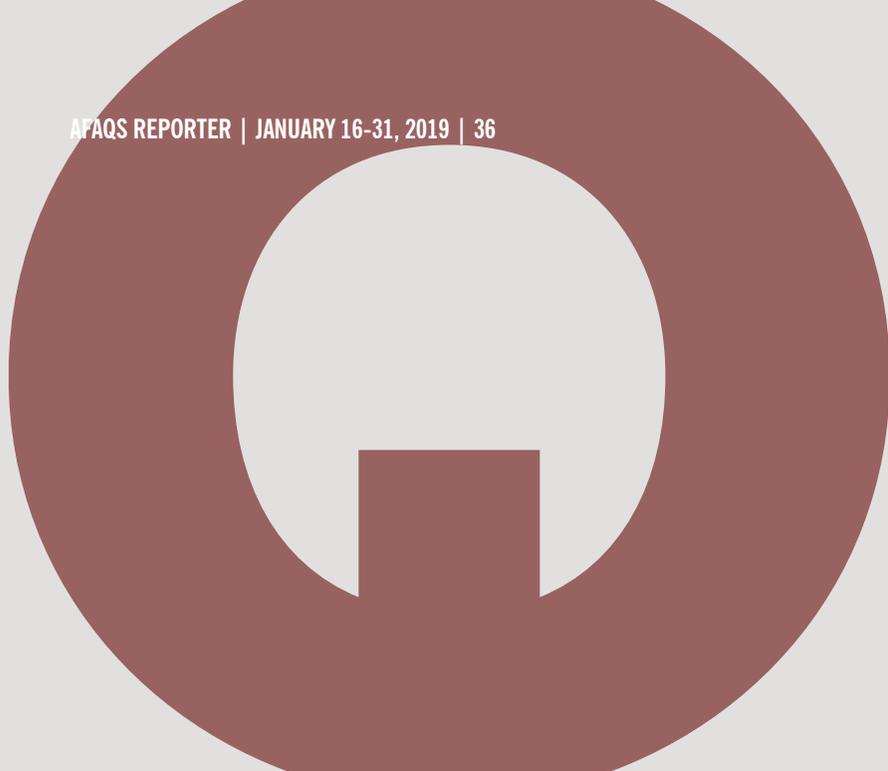
# ASIANET NEWS FINISHES FIRST, YET AGAIN.

Yet another year of being the top news channel in Kerala, as per BARC reports.



Source: BARC, News Channels Impressions '000s, 2018, CS Male AB 22+, U+R

STARBUCK.Tvm.8742



**MANISH BHATT**

Founder Director, Scarecrow-M&C Saatchi

*Indian advertising needs belief. Day by day, advertising is becoming like the ruins of a temple.*

**What's your favourite OTT show?**

None. I know they have some great movies and documentaries which I may like, but the only thing I've watched on Netflix so far is a documentary on Pancham Da. My job doesn't allow me spare time to consume these shows. Serials and series need sustained lengthy slots. I barely get time to talk to my daughter and wife about what happened during the day.

I prefer watching movies in theatres. I love curating and collecting offbeat content, for example a DVD version of Bharat Ek Khoj, DVDs of Tagore stories, BBC documentaries, Indian offbeat cinema from Party to Mirch Masala, published by Shemaroo and NFDC. I am yet to make time to watch these with my daughter, though.

**What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?**

I haven't seen anything really spectacular in 2018. This year, I haven't seen anything even close to ads like Share the Load, Thanda Matlab Coca Cola, Bajaj V, Lalita Ji, Dhishoom Dhishoom, Har ghar kuchh kehta hai, Happydent Palace, Airtel Har ek friend zaroori hota hai, Vodafone Pug or Zoozoos, Lead India, Google Reunion, Fevikwik Fisherman, Lifebuoy Gondappa, Killer Greenfold, Levi's Stick Figures, Garden Vareli - You fascinate me, MTV Citibank Credit Card - The card is great, Zee Cinema's Paap ka Anth, etc.

Some random stuff that caught my attention: Swiggy's Bhindi ad and the Thugs of Hindostan Google Map innovation. I've heard the *aam janta* of our country talk about them.

**Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

No. Indian advertising needs belief. Day by day, advertising is becoming like the ruins of a temple. It needs faith in the idol called 'the idea'. It lacks 'pujaris' and disciples (industry people who cherish the classic understanding of ideas) and 'sheths' (who pay money to renovate this temple and sponsor 'prasad' for every 'aarti' of ideas). If we establish our belief in beautiful ideas and meaningful creative advertising, everything will fall in place. Then everyone will hear the temple bell ring, once again.

**Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

Media is just an over-rated vehicle meant to convey ideas. Media can't replace ideas. At this rate, we will have creative executives who're 'idea recluse'. And that will be D-Day for our beautiful advertising world.

**What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

Borrowing from the popularity of whatever is trending - be it a celebrity, feminism or a social wave - is always an available shortcut for creative people. I will refrain from calling it a trend, because few readers of this interview may treat it like a formula for successful advertising... and tomorrow you will see two more brands riding the same wave!

**Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for - and why?**

Any product that's more interesting than the advertising we create is always challenging to work on. For example: media, gaming, entertainment, sports categories. Most advertisers from these categories get confused between their content and their communication. The role of communication here is not to compete with the content,



**afaqs!**

Presents

**INDIA'S BUZZIEST BRANDS**

14th Edition, 2019



**WHICH BRAND  
MADE THE  
MAXIMUM BUZZ?**

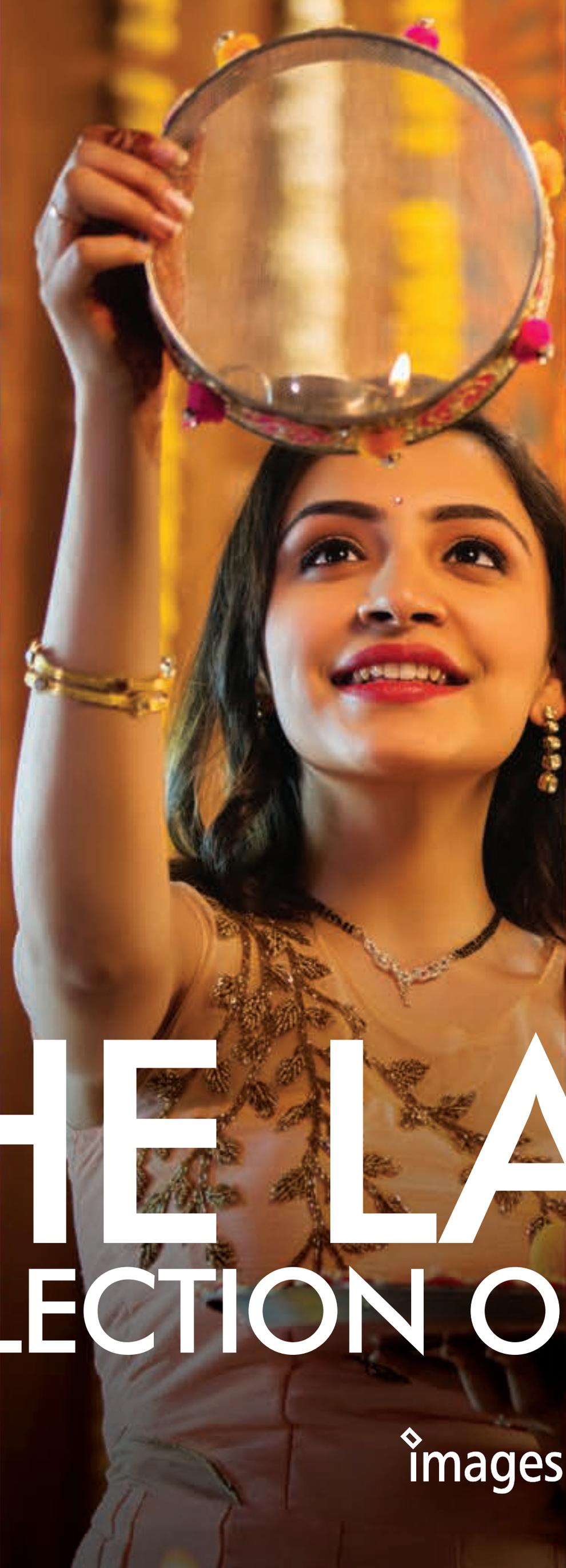
**VOTE NOW**

[www.afaqs.com/all/events/buzz/2019/](http://www.afaqs.com/all/events/buzz/2019/)

**FINAL SHOWDOWN ON:  
February 21, 2019 | Le Meridien, Gurugram**

For Sponsorship: Samarjit Singh: +91-9811436040

For everything else: Isha Dara: +91-9711084406



# THE LA

## COLLECTION O



# LARGEST OF INDIAN FACES

bazaar

but to complement the content. But most advertisers don't realise this. This creates a challenge for the creative agency.

**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

Not at all. If ideas alone could drive the industry and if one didn't need domain experience to craft/sustain ideas, then every e-commerce venture would have been successful. There is a lot to be done after an idea takes birth. Crafting the idea is equally important. The idea is like Krishna – conceived by someone else – but once it comes into your lap, the roles of Yashoda and Nanda become important.

**There are way too many creative awards shows today – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

There are many debates around creative awards in our industry. What to award? Whom to award? Creativity or effectiveness?

Published work or unpublished work? Released for real or released once for awards? Legitimate or scam?

The brutally simple answer is – let's celebrate the creative potential. What's the purpose of celebrating work that is already recognised as creatively excellent and effective by consumers? Why not celebrate work which can be excellent if the client buys it? Who needs KPMG or EY to abort creative potential before the idea is born as a winner in the market? Why are we fighting so much over the release date of an ad, the medium of release or the size/scale of the release?

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Well, my job is my stress reliever. I need to have some creative work to do at all times. I get really anxious when I am out of good jobs to do. So, ironically, the one thing about my job I would do away with is - 'not getting to do one!' ■

**If you could hire one person from Bollywood, who would it be – and why?**

I would hire Farhan Akhtar. Why? Because he's versatile. He's an actor, director and singer. And in today's times, when the industry is going through rapid changes, it is imperative to have talent with a degree of versatility.

**What was the most challenging/gratifying pitch of 2018?**

Spotify.

**Brand marketers have warmed up to 'in-housing' of late. Should agencies be worried?**

Every agency which is not transforming should be worried.

**What type of talent/specialisation is missing in agencies today?**

Data and technology.

**'The client has become more demanding than ever before' – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Agree and disagree.

Agree – for clients putting pressure on the scope of work and the creative fee.

Disagree – on the huge demand for digital business transformation.

**What's the toughest/most challenging part of running an advertising agency today?**

It's like this - We have all been given cars with punctured tyres, and our job is to change these tyres while we're driving at the speed of 100 km/h.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the advertising world in the next 12-24 months?**

Watch out for "Marcel" and you will know.

**Of late, there have been fresh discussions around 'the full-service advertising agency' and whether brands need them at all. What should agencies do to defend their turf?**

The full-service advertising agency is dead. The game is not about the agency any more. It's about how you win at the level of a network. You have to build deep specialisation not at an agency level but at a network level.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Honestly, nothing. I have a great sense of gratitude for the opportunity the Publicis Groupe has given me. ■

*I would hire Farhan Akhtar. Why? Because he's versatile.*

**SAURABH VARMA**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Publicis Communications, South Asia



# *A few days ago I realised that my wife and I are on 27 different WhatsApp groups.*

**VIVEK BHARGAVA**

Chief Executive Officer, DAN Performance Group



**‘What’s your favourite OTT show?’**

Black Mirror.

**Define ‘content’ in one line.**

Education and entertainment.

**The digital universe is crowded and noisy. What are the top three things brands must do to get noticed?**

Brands need to start creating content that solves challenges faced by users. Tomorrow’s marketing is going to be ‘branding through content consumption’. Secondly, brands need to understand that India as a market is moving from mobile-first to mobile-only. It’s crucial for brands to build mobile strategies at all levels. Lastly, there is huge potential for regional languages. Brands will need to build regional content strategies to differentiate themselves.

**In the days ahead, which industry will impact trends in yours?**

Exponential technologies like AI (artificial intelligence) are going to have an impact on all industries, including advertising. Earlier, machines could only replace physical functions; now they are also beginning to replace cognitive functions. AI is surely going to disrupt the advertising industry.

**What are the top digital advertising formats that will dominate in 2019?**

Video, AR (augmented reality) and VR (virtual reality).

**If you could get rid of one piece of ‘jargon’ from agency vocabulary, what would it be – and why?**

“Performance”. Though I head the Dentsu Aegis Network Performance Group, I feel performance in digital has become jargon for sales. Performance is simply achieving any business objective with better efficiency. So, if an agency helps meet a brand communication objective more efficiently, it must be categorised as performance.

**What in your opinion do Millennials really want?**

This is a difficult question to answer. Millennials want instant gratification, they want to work for/buy brands that have a purpose, they want experiences rather than physical objects, they want to create an impact.

**Over the last two years, the number of consumers and content creators has soared. Consequently, has the very nature of virality changed? How?**

I don’t think the concept of virality has changed. We are just more connected than ever before. A few days ago I realised that my wife and I are on 27 different WhatsApp groups. Virality was always a bonus; previously, only one out of a few million pieces of content used to go viral... maybe now it is one out of a few tens of millions.

**What’s the one thing about your job you’d do away with in a heartbeat?**

Thought about it a lot... I like every single aspect of my job; I don’t think I would like to do away with anything. ■

# *The content creators' ecosystem is a bubble, which will surely burst soon.*



**PRATIK GUPTA**

Co-founder, FoxyMoron

## **'What's your favourite OTT show?'**

My favourite OTT show is Narcos. While there are a whole bunch of well-documented reasons as to why, the one that stands out for me in terms of the Indian OTT ecosystem is that it is in a language unknown to India. For India and Indians to accept a show in a language they are not familiar with is something I had not anticipated. For me, it validated the fact that content is 'always' going to be king!

## **Define 'content' in one line.**

It was in the past. It is in the present. It will be the future.

## **The digital universe is crowded and noisy. What are the top three things brands must do to get noticed?**

Understand the platforms available to them and therefore figure out what they can do differently on them to get noticed. Get with the times; use language, emojis and contextual content to stand out. Create quality, not quantity; five amazing posts are better than 100 posts.

## **In the days ahead, which industry will impact trends in yours?**

MarTech.

## **What are the top three digital advertising formats that will dominate in 2019?**

Video. Video. Video.

## **If you could get rid of one piece of 'jargon' from agency vocabulary, what would it be - and why?**

AI. Nobody knows what it will do for their respective industry but everyone is worried about how their jobs are under threat.

## **What in your opinion do Millennials really want?**

Brands with a purpose! Millennials appreciate a holistic brand, one which does good overall. It changes the brand's image and also allows you to 'premiumise' your brand while actually doing good. Its a win-win for sure.

## **Over the last two years, the number of consumers and content creators has soared. Consequently, has the very nature of virality changed? How?**

The nature of virality has not changed in decades. Digital is no different. Either the content wins or there is enough money in play to ensure it's consumed. The content creators' ecosystem is a bubble, which will surely burst soon. And like all bubbles, the good will survive. And so will great content.

## **What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Budgeting and appraisals. ■

*Digital spends will keep rising. The medium has just begun to show traction.*

**ANITA NAYYAR**

Chief Executive Officer, India and Southeast Asia,  
Havas Media Group



**In 2019, media agency executives will desperately need to...**  
... completely digitise.

**In India, digital media spends have been rising. Will this trend continue in 2019 – or will it reach a plateau?**

Digital spends will keep rising. The medium has just begun to show traction, hence the plateau stage is far off.

**What was the most challenging/gratifying pitch of 2018?**

For us at Havas all pitches are equally challenging. How else will an agency put in its best each time?

**Do clients still think in terms of 'TVCs' (television commercial) and 'DVCs' (digital video)? And should they?**

I think it is converging. Increasingly, there is a lot of understanding of what works on TV and what works on digital, from a video perspective. No longer is everyone simply adapting TVCs to digital videos.

**In the absence of a clear measurement system on digital, what's the best way brands can analyse returns on their online spends?**

The best way is to track conversions and sales – there has never

been a better parameter for the measurement of ROI. That said, there are various systems already in place to measure ROI on digital.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the media buying world in the next 12-24 months?**

Artificial Intelligence is being talked about a lot today. It will take more time than stated for it to be adapted. That will happen once its impact and the results of its usage are clear.

**What in your view is the best way to tackle the growing problem of ad fraud?**

Caution, diligence and apt measures.

**What are the top three trends that will dominate the media business in 2019?**

Data, OTT and digital.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

If ever monotony sets in... :) ■

# MEET OUR SPEAKERS



ABHISHEK MAHAJAN  
DRIVEZY INC



ADITI SHRIVASTAVA  
POCKET ACES



ALI HUSSEIN  
EROS DIGITAL



ALON SHTRUZMAN  
KESHET INTERNATIONAL



AMOL PARASHAR  
ACTOR



ANGAD BHATIA  
TIMES INTERNET



ASHWIN SURESH  
POCKET ACES



ASHWINI GANGAL  
AFAQS!



BHASKAR RAMESH  
YOUTUBE



DATTA DAVE  
TULSEA



DHRUV NARANG



DINESH MENON  
STATE BANK OF INDIA



JAYEN MEHTA  
GCMF (AMUL)



KARAN BEDI  
MX PLAYER



KEDAR GAVANE  
COMSCORE



NACHIKET PANTVAIDYA  
ALTBALAJI



NEERAJ ROY  
HUNGAMA DIGITAL MEDIA



NISHANT RADIA  
VIDOOLY



SABRINA DUGUET  
ALL3MEDIA



SAM BALSARA  
MADISON WORLD



SAMEER NAIR  
APPLAUSE ENTERTAINMENT



SAMEER SAXENA  
TVF



SAMEER SINGH  
GROUPM



SATYA RAGHAVAN  
YOUTUBE



UMANG BEDI  
DAILYHUNT



VANITA KOHLI-  
KHANDEKAR  
BUSINESS STANDARD



VARUN SHARMA  
YOUTUBE



VASANT NATH



VIKRAM TANNA  
DISCOVERY INC



VISHNU MOHTA  
HOICHOI



#vdonxtowards

Presents

# vdonxt asia

CONFERENCE | EXHIBITION | AWARDS

3rd Edition

[www.vdonxt.com](http://www.vdonxt.com)

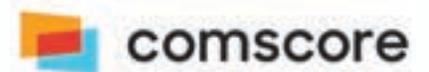
PRESENTING PARTNER :



SILVER PARTNERS :



BRONZE PARTNERS :



COMMUNITY PARTNER :



ANIRBAN ROY  
CHOUDHURY  
AFAQS!



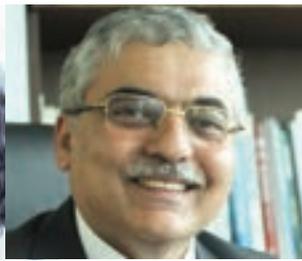
ANIRUDH PANDITA  
POCKET ACES



ANUPAM BOKEY  
RP-SANJIV GOENKA GROUP



ASHA KHARGA  
AXIS BANK



ASHISH BHASIN  
DENTSU AEGIS NETWORK  
SOUTH ASIA



FOTINI PARASKAKIS  
THE STORY LAB



GIRISH DWIBHASHYAM  
SPUUL



HIREN GADA  
SHEMAROO  
ENTERTAINMENT



JANINE STEIN  
CONTENTASIA



JAY LIN  
PORTICO MEDIA



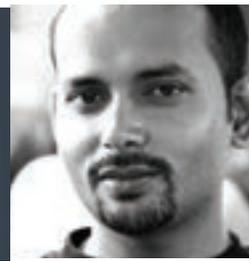
PATRICK GRAHAM



RAHUL SARANGI  
TVF



RAJ NAYAK  
VIACOM18



RAM COBAIN  
FACEBOOK INDIA



RAM SESHADRI  
ADOBE INDIA



SHWETA MULKI  
AFAQS!



SREEKANT KHANDEKAR  
AFAQS!



SUHANI KANWAR



TARUN KATIAL  
ZEE5 INDIA



UDAY SODHI  
SONY PICTURES  
NETWORK INDIA



VIVEK COUTO  
MEDIA PARTNERS  
ASIA



VYOM CHARAYA  
TVF

**What was the most challenging/gratifying pitch of 2018?**

Pitches are always very confidential. We usually don't talk about them. In my opinion, nobody should talk about them. People do it to get some cheap publicity.

**Brand marketers have warmed up to 'in-housing' of late. Should agencies be worried?**

That's not going to be a problem. The best part of our business is the ability and scope to work on a multitude of things. That's what keeps the creativity alive. The in-house people will have to think about just one category day in and day out. No great creative mind would like to be that restrained.

**What type of talent/specialisation is missing in agencies today?**

The coding and programming levels are not very good in the communication side of the business. The better ones still go for pure tech companies. We never get those comp science geniuses. I have struggled during my career to get a good algorithm written – and finally had to do it myself with help from friends.

**'The client has become more demanding than ever before' – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Marketing is under pressure. Most of the formulaic marketing is failing. Hence, there will always be added demand from marketers (and pressure) on all their partners. It's an ongoing process and will keep happening.

**What's the toughest/most challenging part of running an advertising agency today?**

There's too much of under-cutting at every level. People are willing to provide services at ridiculous rates – hence the margins are always under pressure. That in turn, makes investment - in people - ahead of the curve difficult. The situation is a little better for agencies of our size but still we can all feel the pressure.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the advertising world in the next 12-24 months?**

The word AI was developed in 1956. It's not new. We had courses on AI during our college days – which is, by the way, a long time ago. So machine learning and predictive algorithms have been a way of life for many years in many fields. It has been impacting advertising for quite some time. Of course, now the impact is more enhanced and accentuated. But no, AI will never be able to take over. Because the machine's knowledge will always be rote and derivative and hence can't take over 'originality' which is still an advantage for advertising.

**Of late, there have been fresh discussions around 'the full-service advertising agency' and whether brands need them at all. What should agencies do to defend their turf?**

Marketers were very happy with the unbundling of agency services, but are facing bigger issues today. There is a desire for seamlessness in thinking and execution. Agencies don't need to defend their turfs. If there is an increased demand for integrated services, the change will take place on its own.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

The inability to charge an IP-based compensation. ■

*People are willing to provide services at ridiculous rates – hence the margins are always under pressure.*

**PARTHA SINHA**

Vice Chairman and Managing Director, McCann Worldgroup India





*‘In-housing’ is not a new trend. Unilever was one of the first clients to attempt this, way back in 1969.*

**ROHIT OHRI**

Group Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, FCB India

**If you could hire one person from Bollywood, who would it be – and why?**

Ranveer Singh. He is constantly shattering the ‘Bollywood leading-man’ stereotype.

**What was the most challenging/gratifying pitch of 2018?**

Year 2018 has been a really gratifying year from a new business perspective. We’ve won over 25 new businesses – Tata AIA, Vistara, Piramal Realty, Emami, Bisleri, RBI and Apollo Hospitals, to name a few.

**Brand marketers have warmed up to ‘in-housing’ of late. Should agencies be worried?**

‘In-housing’ is not a new trend. Unilever was one of the first clients to attempt this, way back in 1969. It’s nothing to be worried about.

**What type of talent/specialisation is missing in agencies today?**

Multi-skilled idea integration specialists. We have traditional advertising specialists and digital agency specialists, but very few people who can be both.

**‘The client has become more demanding than ever before’ – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Yes. Clients have become more demanding. That’s primarily because of the complexity they deal with on an everyday basis. Navigating this complexity is a hard task and this puts great demands on the client-agency partnership.

**What’s the toughest/most challenging part of running an advertising agency today?**

Finding the right talent is the most challenging part of running an agency today.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the advertising world in the next 12-24 months?**

Connected customers expect to be heard, understood and respected, not fed best-guess mass advertising. In the next few years, AI will evolve to facilitate this. And that’s when it will have an invaluable impact on the communication business.

**Of late, there have been fresh discussions around ‘the full-service advertising agency’ and whether brands need them at all. What should agencies do to defend their turf?**

Very clearly, ‘the full-service advertising agency’ model is back. Clients are looking for integrated teams that deliver on all the communication needs of their brands.

**What’s the one thing about your job you’d do away with in a heartbeat?**

Nothing. I love every aspect of my job. ■

# *TVC adaptation for digital platforms does not work... except, maybe on OTT platforms.*



**NAVIN KHEMKA**

Chief Executive Officer, MediaCom South Asia

**In 2019, media agency executives will desperately need to...**  
...understand the complexity that's emerging due to increased video/digital consumption, and be able to give media-agnostic solutions to brands.

**In India, digital media spends have been rising. Will this trend continue in 2019 – or will it reach a plateau?**

Digital spends will continue to rise in 2019. This is led by increased time spent and content consumption on digital.

**What was the most challenging/gratifying pitch of 2018?**

I think it was Vivo Mobiles. It was the biggest pitch of 2018 and brought out the best in team MediaCom. It was also fiercely fought between media agencies.

**Do clients still think in terms of 'TVCs' (television commercial) and 'DVCs' (digital video)? And should they?**

Yes, they should think differently. TVC adaptation for digital platforms does not work... except, maybe on OTT platforms.

On the digital video front, there are many considerations that we have to take into account, for instance, 'skippable' formats, duration, portrait/landscape mode, etc. It is critical for brand managers to be 'digital-ready' and equipped to face all the nuances of digital.

**In the absence of a clear measurement system on digital, what's the best way brands can analyse returns on their online spends?**

Ideally, wherever possible, look at overall unique reach of the campaign to win your target audience – Nielsen DAR (digital ad ratings) does provide this (barring YouTube mobile and search). If and when BARC comes up with an industry level solution, it will be adopted fast.

In the case of social media, it would largely depend on the brand, the target group and the objective. For example, in beauty related categories, influencer posts and activity systems are inevitable today given the boom in way consumers use influencer content to become aware of new products. Brands want to build curiosity and consideration around the product being talked about. Only social listening can help understand this.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the media buying world in the next 12-24 months?**

Currently it is a buzzword used by many. Artificial Intelligence can help us target our consumers more sharply. The more we connect with consumers, the more data we can generate. With AI, the 'Spray and Pray' approach of media planning will be greatly reduced in India and more data-led media buying will take over.

**What in your view is the best way to tackle the growing problem of ad fraud?**

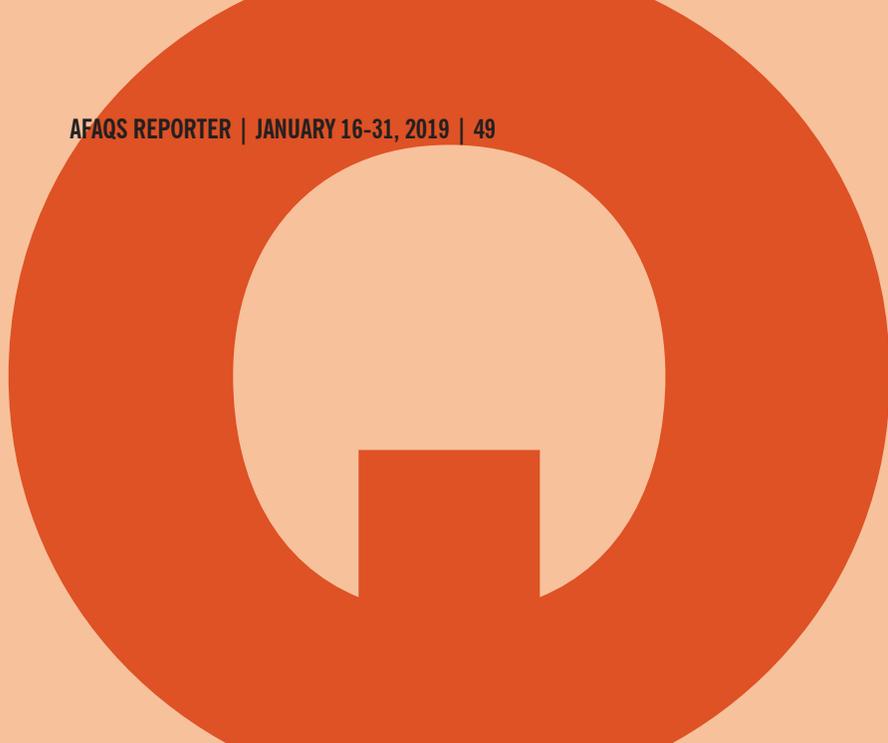
This can only be solved using the third party serving and measurement tools available today. And by then using this data to pay only for the inventory that was compliant with the benchmarks set.

**What are the top three trends that will dominate the media business in 2019?**

The top three trends that are expected to dominate the media business in 2019 are: An increase in consumption of content on digital platforms, led by affordable data and smartphone adoption. Consolidation of viewership across the 'Big 3' – IPL, Lok Sabha Elections and Cricket World Cup. A debate on TV plus reach/mix reach leading to industry standards being developed.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

I think the administrative pressure! ■



## CARLTON D'SILVA

Chief Executive Officer and Chief Creative Officer,  
Hungama Digital Services

*Viral, as terminology, is used too loosely in agency vocabulary.*

### **What's your favourite OTT show?**

That's a difficult question to answer as I feel there are only going to be current favourites. So, if you ask me about my current favourite I would say it has to be 'The Romanoffs' playing on Amazon Prime. It is a show of separate stories in each episode, about people who believe themselves to be descendants of the Russian Royal Family. Excellent writing and a stellar star cast. With regards to Indian content, I liked 'Sacred Games' but I loved the quirk of 'Shaitan Haveli'. It's different from the usual content out there.

### **Define 'content' in one line.**

Content to me is any form of a story that captures your undivided attention for a given span of time.

### **The digital universe is crowded and noisy. What are the top three things brands must do to get noticed?**

Firstly, they need to understand their audience, their likes and dislikes, how to communicate with them, in which form, and most importantly, where. Here is where your research and strategy comes handy. Secondly, be true to your communication. Don't put out a communication piece half-heartedly. Put 100 per cent of your might behind it. Consumers know when you believe in something or not. Make sure it reflects what your brand stands for in every way. Thirdly, be unique. Consumers are exposed to various forms of content because anyone with a mobile phone and a data connection (read: everyone) has seen it all. If you want to ride on a trend give it your own spin. Just don't be a copy-cat.

### **In the days ahead, which industry will impact trends in yours?**

I believe the mobile industry will direct advertising and user experience trends. As device capabilities increase, we will be able to do new and improved forms of communication pieces. The ability to target consumers sharply in their local language will also help in higher conversion or acceptance. We now have mobile devices that have a higher memory than your laptops and soon the ability to do much more on your consumer's personal device will promote innovation and content formats.

### **What are the top three digital advertising formats that will dominate in 2019?**

Video has always been a big advertising format but I believe in 2019 it will just break out to another level. Data providers are essentially the reason for this because they have promoted the consumption of the same with rock bottom rates. Innovations will also be a key differentiator in the coming year. In the tryst to be different, customised innovations will enable a brand to stand out among its competitors. Innovations will also invite an exorbitant amount of earned PR. Mixed media formats will increase dramatically in the coming year. There are no more lines between mediums and most communication pieces will try to take advantage of this and come up with integrated ideas that will make the best of both worlds, online and offline.

### **If you could get rid of one piece of 'jargon' from agency vocabulary, what would it be – and why?**

Viral. It's a bad thing. Something goes viral because there is a lot of money put behind it. The chance of a piece of content going viral without huge monies behind it is one in a million. Till date most brands believe if they create a piece of content they have done their bit and the piece will go viral on its own. Viral, as terminolo-

gy, is too loosely used in agency vocabulary. It most often connotes something that is only produced and not marketed.

**What in your opinion do Millennials really want?**

Millennials are born with a device in their hand. The prime-time slot no longer exists. Their time is prime-time. They are also heavily into discovery and want to be the first to find the best content and share it with their friends. This gives them popularity points and followers. Brands simply need to keep the constant flow of content that interests them and make sure they deliver it to them in the right manner.

**Over the last two years, the number of consumers and content creators has soared. Consequently, has the very nature of virality changed? How?**

There we go with that word again! The rise in consumers has led

to a rise in content creators. This has led to multiple creators occupying unique spaces in the world of content. I believe that marketing of content will become more scientific. Every piece of content is created with a purpose in mind. The effectiveness of the reach of the content is now going to be the biggest talking point in the coming years. Are those million odd people seeing my content really my consumers? What are they doing for me? Is it really leading to a positive change in my brand? 'Virality' will be replaced by 'purpose-driven effectiveness'.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

This might sound clichéd but this is not a job for me because I love what I am doing and hence this is my life. I am in a constant state of learning and would not want to delete any bit from it. ■



*I would love to do away with superficiality. In our business, that's the biggest bane.*

**VISHAL AHLUWALIA**

Senior Vice President and Office Head,  
GREY Bengaluru

**If you could hire one person from Bollywood, who would it be – and why?**

I would blindly hire Kangana Ranaut. She is bold, loves to be in charge and expresses herself without any restrictions or fear. She is not a child of nepotism, has 'self taught' herself through hard work and mistakes. She's a self-made person with a strong point of view; good or bad, despite all pressures she has managed to stand by it and defend it against all odds. Advertising needs such strong and bold personalities who don't flinch under pressure.

**What was the most challenging/gratifying pitch of 2018 in Bangalore?**

We're very choosy about what and who we pitch for, so it is

pertinent that all pitches we participate in are invigorating. Our core is built on creating successful challenger brands and that's what we seek when we gun for new business.

Our big challenge this year was the pitch for Titan's new brand. We pitched against strong incumbent partners of the group. Also, we were entering into a new category. We spent a lot of time understanding and unravelling the category, by talking to experts, studying international brands and buying behaviour. This opened up new ways of looking at this category, and helped discard conventional approaches and leads. We also worked with category specialists and created a winning formula which worked across platforms. Needless to add, we won the account – it was a big high for all of us.

**Brand marketers have warmed up to ‘in-housing’ of late. Should agencies be worried?**

Yes and no. Yes, because talent acquisition is becoming harder and harder, and often comes at a high cost, which is fair as advertising has been among the lowest pay masters across industries.

No, because currently most of the in-house work is executional and operational. For this format to be successful it would need to be independent of the restrictions and expectations imposed by the marketers – this is harder for an in-house operation than an independent agency. The only thing that matters to brands and clients is their success and the partner that can help deliver it. I would say both formats will continue to co-exist without any serious infringement of each other’s territory.

**What type of talent/specialisation is missing in agencies today?**

Despite having easy access to technology, talent today is lazy and superficial. It is hard to get people who love advertising; it’s always their second or last resort. Nobody is investing any time in truly understanding their brands or consumers, nor is anyone really expanding their knowledge across verticals and new technology. All training sessions have poor or indifferent attendance. I see a lot of opposition to deep-diving into a brand or learning new tech. People are happy in their comfort zones.

Market visits or consumer interviews are shunned. In our industry, the most important asset is our talent – but ironically, that’s what is lacking today. We need people who’re passionate about the trade, willing to learn and grow, have a good grasp over new technology and innovations, and can be a ‘thinking solutions partner’ to the client, not just an ‘operations specialist’.

**‘The client has become more demanding than ever before’ – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Clients have always been demanding! I have spent close to 24 years in this industry across geographies and markets and don’t see any change through the years. Despite the pressure and expectations, I continue to share some great relationships with most of them.

The industry, though, has become more dynamic with short reaction times due to new media possibilities and the pressure to grow quickly in a cluttered market. So the old school way of working needs to be transformed into a more enterprising approach. Clients have their own internal pressures and that gets translated into a push on timelines and delivery. But if one truly understands the business one is working on, then this is easy to handle. Being dynamic and proactive helps win the client’s trust. The client-agency relationship is one of equal participation and responsibility. As an agency we are not there to be reactive and deliver on a deadline, but to ensure our client’s success in the marketplace.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the advertising world in the next 12-24 months?**

As the influence of and comfort with AI grows, so will its reach and need. Clients are seeking interactive solutions, but agencies in the traditional advertising space have been laggard in this respect. We would need to create a strong AI-based learning and solutions approach, both externally and internally. Traditional media would need to be synced up with AI to be able to provide ‘anytime solutions’, not just primetime-based ones.

**Of late, there have been fresh discussions around ‘the full-service advertising agency’ and whether brands need them at all. What should agencies do to defend their turf?**

On the contrary, clients are seeking integrated solutions from more rounded and singular agencies. Most clients are stuck with multiple partners – that becomes a big responsibility and headache because the client has to then ‘sync’ everyone. This also creates a dependency on different departments versus looking at an agency as a business and communication partner.

**What’s the one thing about your job you’d do away with in a heartbeat?**

I would love to do away with superficiality. In our business, that’s the biggest bane. One solution does not work across everything and we need to learn to build rigour into our understanding and functioning. Advertising is not about quick-fix solutions and short cuts. It’s about building long-term assets. ■

**What's your favourite OTT show?**

Chef's Table. It's a show about the lives of some of the most creative and innovative chefs from different corners of the world. It'll make your stomach growl and give you itchy feet, at the same time.

**What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?**

The Swiggy campaign during the IPL. It was simple, and yet had charming touches that made it stand out even in the IPL's Kumbh Mela of advertising. Internationally, I would say it's the new John Lewis commercial. It's not often that a commercial makes you well up. It uses a star, the stature of Elton John, and yet makes such a beautiful and lingering point about the brand.

**Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

I think Indian advertising needs a shot of confidence. The belief in the power of advertising and brand building is getting swayed by all the digital talk. Digital isn't a substitute for a brand. And neither is it the death of craft or storytelling.

I always make it a point to turn on the TV when I travel to other countries. And I really feel Indian advertising is far superior. It's our understanding of brands, our storytelling and our craft that makes it so. The new kids on the digital block are trading that away, in a bid to be fast. The trick is to adapt without losing our touch of magic.

**What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

The best way to deal with any trend is to be among the first few. After a while, you're just another in the sea of sameness. And by that time it's no longer a trend.

**Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for – and why?**

Any category that has a sharp and gutsy client.

**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

It's not just about advertising. Creativity in any field no longer needs the tag of 'creative'. But I don't think creativity alone was ever the strength of advertising. Advertising is about using creativity to unleash the power of brands. We just need to think of it as having creative people who are not on our rolls – and direct and channel their creativity, like we would do for those in our teams.

**There are way too many creative award shows today – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Awards are all about the quality of the juries. I feel many of the award shows are playing the agency representation game – and are, in the process, inviting less accomplished people to the jury. And this is what is throwing up so many questions and doubts about award shows.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Pitching without a pitch fee. ■

*I always make it a point to turn on the TV when I travel to other countries. And I really feel Indian advertising is far superior.*

**RAHUL MATHEW**

National Creative Director, DDB Mudra Group



*With everything being trackable, one needs to just focus on metrics that are likely to impact business objectives.*

**HARISH SHRIYAN**

Chief Executive Officer, Omnicom Media Group India



**In 2019, media agency executives will desperately need to...**  
... upscale their capabilities across digital media and focus on delivering quantifiable results.

**In India, digital media spends have been rising. Will this trend continue in 2019 – or will it reach a plateau?**

This trend is here to stay for a while. Compared to other mature markets, our ratios are still behind. We have only started witnessing the absolute impact of digital. We still have at least a few more years to go before we can even start talking about spends plateauing.

**What was the most challenging/gratifying pitch of 2018?**

We have participated in quite a few new business pitches in 2018 across categories and have experienced a great success rate. In fact, 2018 has been one of the best years for us in terms of new business wins. Each pitch presents different challenges in terms of coming up with disruptive/innovative solutions; I wouldn't single one out.

**Do clients still think in terms of 'TVCs' (television commercial) and 'DVCs' (digital video)? And should they?**

Clients should just think about the messaging when communicating with their consumers. There are many different channels and integrated approaches today, so clients should not view them as siloes.

**In the absence of a clear measurement system on digital,**

**what's the best way brands can analyse returns on their online spends?**

Digital mediums also suffer from over-measurement. With everything being trackable, one needs to just focus on metrics that are likely to impact business objectives. To that end, online-offline integration is crucial.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the media buying world in the next 12-24 months?**

AI will bring in optimisations and cut wastage. This means additional monies by virtue of savings, and the opportunity to experiment with innovations. AI will also help stem unrealistic expectations of YoY savings too.

**What in your view is the best way to tackle the growing problem of ad fraud?**

Shift to viewability buys on digital and make tools like Integral Ad Science (IAS) the default. The onus is also on publishers.

**What are the top three trends that will dominate the media business in 2019?**

Programmatic, big data and evolved measurements.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Nothing. I signed up for this, including the madness. ■

**'What's your favourite OTT show?'**

It will have to be a tie between Narcos (Seasons 1 and 2) and the current sensation called Mirzapur. Something tells me, my inclination towards gangster movies/content is a secret no more!

**Define 'content' in one line.**

Content for me is anything that engages a viewer or consumer either in the form of entertainment, information or interaction.

**The digital universe is crowded and noisy. What are the top three things brands must do to get noticed?**

While it is hard to devise a formulaic approach for something as unpredictable as the digital medium as well as the Millennial consumer, there are three primary aspects that might emerge as critical success factors:

Firstly, relevance – the quality and relevance of the content becomes really defining in a crowded digital world. So whether it is a heart-touching TV service ad or humorous branded content around a dating app, relevance and quality remain crucial.

Secondly, duration – for most purposes, delivering the message in the shortest possible time remains the most glaring challenge as well as opportunity for brand marketers in the digital ecosystem. So whether it is highly effective YouTube bumper ads or short crowdsourced content on apps like TikTok, catching the eye of the consumer, delivering the entire message and ensuring brand recall - all in seconds not minutes - will be key.

Thirdly, cost and speed of production – while most agencies, brands and production houses have understood the importance of short format digital content, the production of this content continues to languish in conventional high cost production templates. Agencies and brands that can evolve and start churning out faster, more economical and innovative content production via content crowdsourcing will emerge as the winners.

**In the days ahead, which industry will impact trends in yours?**

Given the way branded content is becoming more and more prevalent and effective, I see a strong convergence between advertising and the M&E sector. There's going to be an enormous overlap between the two, be it in the space of OTT platforms, short content apps, or digital content crowdsourcing. Another trend I see making an enormous impact on advertising is programmatic and data driven ad serving, which in turn emerges from the convergence of creativity, analytics and technology.

**What are the top three digital advertising formats that will dominate in 2019?**

This is pretty straightforward – YouTube bumper ads, programmatic banners, and branded content short films.

**If you could get rid of one piece of 'jargon' from agency vocabulary, what would it be – and why?**

It would have to be the term 'digital' itself! You see, everything around us is digital – television, publishing, content, communication... what is not digital? And yet, this term continues to be used as if it defines a 'specialisation' of some sort. I think it is time for both agencies and clients to stand up and take notice – we live in a digital world! If there is any special term that is needed, it will probably be 'non-digital' (whatever that is!)



*I see a strong convergence between advertising and the M&E sector. There's going to be an enormous overlap between the two.*

**VINEET BAJPAI**

Founder and Chairman, Magnon eg+ and Magnon\TBWA

**What in your opinion do Millennials really want?**

I have enormous respect for Millennials as they accept nothing just because it has been defined under some framework. If you want to engage a Millennial, it will have to be for the merit of your communication, and not because it was recommended by the elders, not because it has a famous actor in it, not because it carries a strong social message or because it is backed by a brand... not for anything except its immediate and granular relevance. In fact, to me, that is the fresh new canvas available to both brands and agencies.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Absolutely nothing. One of the blessings of leading an agency is the variety of expressions one finds to one's personality. I can be a suit and be pitching in a boardroom one morning, be the dreamy creative copywriter by lunch and be guffawing with the tech geeks by evening. Why would I let go of any of this? ■



## KARTIK SMETACEK

Executive Creative Director, L&K Saatchi & Saatchi

*Agencies are helping product innovations, tech innovations, brand innovations and more.*

### **What's your favourite OTT show?**

No real favourite, to be honest. I'm probably the last fan of mindless television.

### **What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?**

I think Star Sport's IPL campaign 'Best Vs Best' was a clutter-breaker. It was a brave move to not opt for a larger than life execution of the kind we've come to expect from IPL campaigns over the years. Instead, the films were insightful, charming, and distinct from all the IPL campaigns out there. Other noteworthy campaigns, for me, have been Raymond's 'All Black' campaign, Sony's FIFA World Cup campaign and the recent Apollo Tyres film, which is a world-class piece of execution.

### **Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

I wouldn't make a blanket statement like that. In a vast, complex market like ours, there's room for all kinds of advertising. Having said that, I do think agencies don't invest enough time or resources in new media and technology. One look at this year's Cannes winners in categories such as Mobile and Brand Experience shows how far behind the game we are.

### **Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

I'm not sure anyone in any industry can afford to be a social media recluse in these times. While you don't need to qualify as an influencer, it's important to keep up with what's happening on the various platforms. That said, in all honesty, I haven't a clue about Snapchat.

### **What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

Trends reflect a certain mood of the times. The key thing to consider is brand fit. If it's relevant to your brand and target audience, I think trends should be made the most of. As far as 'cause-vertising' or 'fem-vertising' go, probably the easiest way to change the way a brand is perceived is to give purpose. In recent times, Ariel, Whisper and Star Plus are examples of brands that have done it well and stood apart from their peers. However, it's important to react early and be consistent with it, otherwise you could come across as disingenuous.

### **Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for – and why?**

While all categories pose their own unique challenges, I think automotive in India is particularly daunting. It's a polarised market where you either succeed brilliantly or fail miserably, with the stakes running into thousands of crores. The communication therefore needs to strike a delicate balance between showcasing metal and building a brand story.

Perhaps that's why advertising in this category tends to play safe for the most part.

**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

No, I don't think it's something the ad fraternity should be worried about. While on one hand it means our traditional domain is under threat from content creators and the like, it also means clients are open to ideas coming from agencies in non-traditional domains. As we've seen over the last couple of years, agencies are helping product innovations, technology innovations, brand experience innovations and more. I think it's about agencies acknowledging the new order and then planning for it.

**There are way too many creative award shows today – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Yes, I have to agree there are too many award shows with too many categories and even more sub-categories. In some agencies, entering award shows itself is a full-time job with dedicated staff. I think it's counter-productive for the industry when the best talent spends more time making case study videos than solving client problems.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

I think time-sheets for the creative department is just pointless paperwork. Apportioning hours to come up with an idea is probably an accountant's take on how creative thinking happens. ■

**What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?**

I like the 'Kerala is Open' campaign by Samsonite. It was very refreshing and looks genuine. The storytelling, the casting, the lighting... everything is delightful.

**Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

I like the way it is going. We are in a transition phase. And I am fortunate to be around in these times. I began my career when print was king. Clean layouts. Lovely typography. Strong headlines. That was the era of Futura Bold and Helvetica. Then of course came television. Everyone thought it would kill radio, but radio made such a fantastic comeback. Now, digital is growing. It's amazing to see consumers' real-time response to the campaigns we are doing on the medium. The comments, the views, the likes, the love – everything is great to see. TV is still going strong. OOH has always been up there! Now let's see where we go from here.

**Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

I am not sure. But it's good to go on a diet every now and then. I keep taking sabbaticals from social media. I had shut my Instagram account sometime back. Recently, I started afresh again. Social media is part of life today. You can't deny its overwhelming power in our lives anymore. The key thing is to not let it control you. The first time I went off Facebook was after I had gone for a dinner with my wife; after updating a status about the date, I was busy replying to the compliments and comments. Ironically, it became a distraction from the very moment I thought I was enjoying. That's when I decided to shut it for a while.

**What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

These are fancy terms that may trend for a while and pass away. At the heart of all these terms and trends, there should be solid brand building. If you are not building a brand or trying to help sell a product or service, you may be wasting precious money.

**Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for – and why?**

Every category is exciting and challenging. Whether you are launching a new product/service, trying to achieve growth or overcome hard challenges, everything is equally enjoyable and satisfying. I don't believe in a caste system-like attitude towards brands. FMCG

*I keep taking sabbaticals from social media. I had shut my Instagram account sometime back.*

**TITUS UPPUTURU**

National Creative Director - Dentsu One;  
Creative Head - Taproot Dentsu, Gurgaon



is as much fun as thermal power. Ideas should be democratic. They should be accessible to all.

**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

I never thought it was the preserve of advertising professionals. Everyone is creative in their own way. My wife is a PhD student, studying Bio-technology. But she is so creative with paper, cloth, colour, even mustard seeds. The other day she melted all the used candles lying around the house, collected the molten coloured wax in one of those large-mouthed stone flower pots and created a large candle that she kept in a corner of the living room. It looked so beautiful. You should see the way my daughters combine flavours while they bake cakes! So yes, everyone is creative in their own ways.

In the context of ads, I know this is the age of co-creation. Few years back, we did 'The curious case of missing files'

for Toshiba laptops. We shot films with a key part of the film missing. We asked consumers to tell us what may have happened. We were amazed by the kind of response we got. It was inspiring and pushed us to be even more creative.

**There are way too many creative award shows today - Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

This is not true with regard to advertising alone. Look at film awards. Almost every major TV channel has its own award show. It's good revenue for those who conduct these shows. Awards are good in general but the real award is when you are remembered and loved by the audience you are engaging with. The best award I've received so far is a comment from a guy in Pakistan for our 'Hamein Jaldi Hai' ad.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Nothing, actually. I am grateful. ■

**'What's your favourite OTT show?'**

Sherlock. By far.

**Define 'content' in one line.**

Content is something that stimulates your senses.

**The digital universe is crowded and noisy. What are the top three things brands must do to get noticed?**

Employ visual trickery. Let the content tug at emotions - either through humour or sadness or even wonder. And deliver a twist at the end that stays with the audience like that smooth after-taste of a good meal.

**In the days ahead, which industry will impact trends in yours?**

Developments in technology will definitely impact advertising. With automation and machine learning, redundant tasks done by human beings will be replaced, ensuring they focus on value addition. Traditionally, amendments in technology have always affected advertising. For instance, location-led services a couple of years back and the evolution in AR (augmented reality) and VR (virtual reality), more recently. I also see advertising companies attracting more and more technology graduates and offering 'communication-led business transformation consulting' services. The output of our service will need to go beyond the intangible. Communication, just like finance, will be built into every function of the organisation's design; it will need to become measurable.

Apart from technology, in India particularly, cinema - which is now both in cinema halls as well as on our devices - has been influencing the way messages are crafted. That will continue to affect trends in advertising. Colour palettes, choice of music, choice of celebrity endorser, styling - all have traditionally been affected by pop culture and, consequently, movies.

**What are the top three digital advertising formats that will dominate in 2019?**

Formats that help drive brand recall and lift will dominate, like

*Content has become very fragmented over time. Twenty years back, TV controlled the media narrative.*

**HARSHIL KARIA**  
Managing Director, Schbang



pre-roll ads (including all variations - 6, 15, 20, 30 seconds). We'll see more advertising money being pulled to OTT platforms as they invest in premium content. Advertising will move where consumers move. Pre-roll formats that contextualise the video (YouTube VOGON) or weave in the consumer's location/surrounding temperature, etc. will do well.

Formats that make you stop and stare on a vertical feed will do well too. One of the problems with Facebook and LinkedIn video ad products is that the average watch-times are beyond horrendous. Reason being, our thumbs on these platforms are always on overdrive. Before we even attempt to see a message, we've crossed it. So formats that use visual trickery with the feed - make the product pop out, or make it seem like elements of the feed are breaking - will stand out. They're essentially in-feed video formats that are used in ways beyond the traditional 15 or 30 second.

'Statics' will stick out as well. Because brands are treating their digital statics as 'print ads', the spotlight is back on the copywriter and art director. The creation of the 'share' button and the mushrooming of multiple WhatsApp groups have helped popularise this form of creative.

**If you could get rid of one piece of 'jargon' from agency vocabulary, what would it be - and why?**  
 'Servicing' is a word I'd love to get rid of. It has a very subservient ring to it. And it connotes a lot of dependency on pleasing clients basis intangibles like behaviour and decorum as opposed to performance. Sure we're in the business of serving clients, but it's important to approach it as the business of helping them grow their business! That's why I'd replace 'servicing' with 'solutioning'. We deliver solutions for business growth through the lens of communication. Everything must be fiercely linked back to the growth of the company we get attached to. We're growth catalysts.

**What in your opinion do Millennials really want?**  
 Millennials want to do a lot - and forget. They can change their outlook entirely within a span of two to three years. Each Millennial is his/her own advertisement and his/

her own community. Everyone wants to post, sing, dance, and build a following. They don't want to belong to, be tied down by or get defined by anything. Brands that aid re-invention - by being at the cutting edge of culture or by being utilitarian in terms of consistency and price - are likely to thrive.

**Over the last two years, the number of consumers and content creators has soared. Consequently, has the very nature of virality changed? How?**

Content has become very fragmented over time. Twenty years back, a singular media device - the TV set - controlled the media narrative around a given event, say, Sachin's performance at Sharjah. Consequently, everyone discussed it and it went viral. After all, virality kicks in when people talk about the same thing altogether.

On the other hand, when Rohit Sharma was busy scoring his fourth T-20 century that only Dad saw, Mom was busy discovering a new podcast for work while one of the little ones consumed at least 15 videos in the same amount of time on YouTube Kids, while the other not so little one spent time on Netflix. Because fewer people within social circles are seeing the same things, they have lesser in common to talk about and hence you have fewer mass viral phenomena today.

However, today we see more 'viral' pieces of content that last for shorter periods of time, that are less 'mass', and are focussed on specific micro-communities. Every kind of content has a market and the potential to gather two to five million views in two days.

Virality is extending to elements beyond content. Brands have the opportunity to build experiences and products that can permeate these micro-communities.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

I wish I didn't have to spend so much time convincing clients to give creative people access to business data. Today's advertising workforce has a fierce penchant for creativity but also sees business as part of the popular lexicon. This new breed of creative professionals has the power to transform businesses by looking at the numbers. ■



*Ad fraud is an all-too-common issue for modern marketers.*

**VAISHALI VERMA**

Chief Executive Officer, Initiative

**In 2019, media agency executives will desperately...**

... need to have an integrated view of offline and online, and plan for audience engagement backwards.

**In India, digital media spends have been rising. Will this trend continue in 2019 - or will it reach a plateau?**

This trend will continue and the share of digital spends will only increase, in the days ahead.

**Do clients still think in terms of 'TVCs' (television commercial) and 'DVCs' (digital video)? And should they?**

Yes, some of the clients still think in terms of TVCs and DVCs, separately. They need to shift to screen-agnostic planning.

**In the absence of a clear measurement system on digital, what's the best way brands can analyse returns on their online spends?**

We have to start looking at brand metrics as and when we plan for audiences. And it will have to be media-agnostic in nature.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the media buying world in the next 12-24 months?**

AI will help buyers predict patterns and trends, and analyse media consumption over a long period, basis big data. This will give (media) buyers lot of relevant inputs and will help them make long-term negotiations with far more accuracy.

**What in your view is the best way to tackle the growing problem of ad fraud?**

Ad fraud is an all-too-common issue for modern marketers. Fraudulent clicks can heavily skew results and potentially hurt your brand's reputation. Some of the steps that can be taken to avoid this are: Firstly, work with trusted internal and external partners and have fewer but high-quality vendor relationships. Secondly, monitor your campaign closely and know what the metrics are - and track that closely. Thirdly, build a strong programmatic tech stack.

**What are the top three trends that will dominate the media business in 2019?**

Content marketing. Rise of OTT. And mobile marketing.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Short deadlines which put pressure on the team. ■

*I find colas particularly challenging, since what we have to sell, and what people consume, is the advertising itself.*



## ASHISH CHAKRAVARTY

Executive Director and  
Head of Creative - India, McCann

### What's your favourite OTT show?

I'm not big on shows, OTT or otherwise. I've seen Sacred Games, The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, Cosmos anchored by Neil deGrasse Tyson, Stranger Things, and some others.

### What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?

I quite liked the Akshay Kumar-starrer Mumbai Traffic campaign, and the Swiggy campaign. But if I had to pick only one, and for effectiveness alone, then I will go with Swiggy.

### Does Indian advertising need a makeover?

A makeover suggests something superficial. I think as an industry, if we are to continue being relevant, we need something like a full-body overhaul.

### Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?

On the face of it, no. Except that I happen to know a few fantastic creative people, who aren't on social media.

### What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?

The first few brands to spot a trend and ride it, do benefit. It's even better if one can actually start a trend. However, if you are late in the game, you need to have a unique, 'own-able' cut on the trend, or risk being seen as a me too. Or worse, not at all.

### Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for – and why?

I find colas particularly challenging/exciting, since arguably what we have to sell, and what people consume, is the advertising itself. The rest, as they say, is just sugar and coloured water.

### Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising

### professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?

This statement ("ideas can come from everywhere/anyone") has been thrown around in advertising, ever since I can recall. Back in the early nineties, this line was in almost every 'how-to' book of advertising and marketing. So, in that sense it is certainly not new. But yes, there are many more quarters from where ideas are flowing in now, and hence we face far stiffer competition than ever before – if not a downright existential threat.

The way we communicate is changing rapidly. Technology is now a creative tool. Our previous media vehicles somehow feel inadequate. Most advertising agencies grappled with this for a long time – some still are. Meanwhile, media and production houses, technology companies, event management firms, digital and CRM agencies, TV and radio channels, and God knows who else, have taken on the mantle of "communication partner" for clients.

Advertising agencies have responded, but the results haven't always been spectacular. Beyond pompous credential presentations, and the odd metal or two at some international fest, few are considered serious contenders in the new spaces (especially in India). Interestingly though, many new-age companies are hiring people from advertising. I am somewhat reassured that ad agencies, as we know them, may have a dubious future, but ad professionals are forever.

### There are way too many creative award shows today – Agree or Disagree? Explain.

I don't think there can be too much of a good thing. And awards are a good thing. Sure, it becomes a bit expensive, to enter all. But most agencies have a strategy to enter what they consider the top shows. This also means the ones that don't maintain standards die out after some time.

These days, many of the top creative shows feel like technology fairs, anyway. So, I am all for more creative award shows. ■

*Content in any form or medium is an asset that we consume out of choice and not just by force.*

**VARUN DUGGIRALA**

Co-founder and Content Chief, The Glitch



**‘What’s your favourite OTT show?’**

That’s a tough question. It depends on the time of the day or day in the week, if you ask me.

But just to put some down, over this year it’s been ‘Sacred Games’, ‘The toys that made us’ and ‘Wild Wild Country’. Right now I’m binging on ‘Queer Eye’. But the sleeper hit for me was Varun Thakur’s ‘Shaitaan Haveli’.

**Define ‘content’ in one line.**

Content in any form or medium is an asset that we consume out of choice and not just by force.

**The digital universe is crowded and noisy. What are the top three things brands must do to get noticed?**

Be culturally relevant, be true to your values, add value to a consumer’s life.

**In the days ahead, which industry will impact trends in yours?**

A base of “Social media platforms and their algorithmic evolution”, filled with “OTT platforms and their growth strategies” along with a pinch of “the evolution of traditional media” will give us a recipe that will impact trends in our industry.

**What are the top three digital advertising formats that will dominate in 2019?**

Video in all its forms will continue to dominate (it’ll be one, two and three in my book) but audio-only content could be an emerging dark horse.

**If you could get rid of one piece of ‘jargon’ from agency vocabulary, what would it be – and why?**

‘Engagement’ – it’s too broad a term and covers too much without being specific to anything.

**What in your opinion do Millennials really want?**

Millennials want to move beyond being referred to as a demographic to being looked at as a generation with a clear mindset of popular culture, driving changes in the way the world works. If you can add to this then you have their attention and loyalty.

**Over the last two years, the number of consumers and content creators has soared. Consequently, has the very nature of virality changed? How?**

While the nature of vitality has evolved with the rapid increase in content, the essence of true vitality hasn’t... which is cultural relevance.

**What’s the one thing about your job you’d do away with in a heartbeat?**

Nothing, I love my job. Unless there is a way to add more hours in a day for it, I have no complaints. ■



*Brands will need to create the equivalent of apps that can get fired up on voice devices.*

**HAREESH TIBREWALA**  
Co-Founder and Joint CEO, Mirum India

**‘What’s your favourite OTT show?’**

I am still fairly old fashioned; not much of an OTT fan. I still read books (in print), visit a cinema when I want to watch a movie, and switch on a news channel on TV in the evening. I started watching ‘House of Cards’ but it simply become too addictive. I’d end up sitting for hours in front of the screen. I decided the old way is better for me. At least it limits my time in front of the screen. However, occasionally, I latch on to ‘Shark Tank’ on OTT.

**Define ‘content’ in one line.**

Something that keeps you engrossed... and you want more of it.

**The digital universe is crowded and noisy. What are the top three things brands must do to get noticed?**

Relevance. Relevance. Relevance.

In traditional media (print and TV), one could force the consumer to pay attention to a brand message by way of placement... till our brains started hard-wiring the placements out, thus making mainline less effective. On digital, one cannot force someone to consume a brand message; one click on the cross sign and the brand message is forced to disappear.

Just as brands are looking for consumers, consumers are also looking for brands. The challenge is: Can you be in front of your consumer at the right time, in the right context, with the right message? Data Analytics provides the right time and the context. And then creativity has to do its magic with the right messaging.

Marketing Automation enables reaching out the consumer with relevant communication, at scale, basis demographics, browsing behaviour and transaction history.

Digital is not just about communication or about Facebook, Google and Twitter. It’s about creating amazing consumer

experiences at all consumer touch-points.

Recently, I was at Dreamforce in San Francisco, where a case study about Marriott Hotels was presented: If you are booked into a Marriott Hotel, you can get a digital key on your phone. When you enter the hotel, you can just walk upto your room, without waiting at the checkin counter. Before reaching, you can, say, pre-order a coffee, so that as soon as you unlock your room, room service gets alerted. If you ask the voice-assistant to set the temperature to say 23 degrees, the information will be stored in the hotel’s database for next time. If you book a cab, the voice assistant will alert the concierge.

**In the days ahead, which industry will impact trends in yours?**

E-commerce seems to be at the cutting-edge of using digital. And by e-commerce, I mean any kind of product or service transaction that gets consummated via the web. In traditional advertising, we talk about the point of sale being the moment of truth. In the e-comm world, every transaction is an endorsement of this moment.

**What are the top three digital advertising formats that will dominate in 2019?**

Video is obviously a no-brainer. With increased data speeds, video seems to be the biggest attention grosser at this point in time. I also see a rise in influencer-based digital marketing. We’re seeing the emergence of non-celebrity influencers, who command a substantial social following for specific categories or geographies. We’re also seeing the emergence of a voice-driven internet. Brands will need to create the equivalent of apps that can get fired up on voice devices.

**If you could get rid of one piece of ‘jargon’ from agency vocabulary, what would it be – and why?**

I’d like to get the word ‘agency’ itself out of agency

vocabulary. Once upon a time, an agency was actually a representative of the publisher, whose job was to use a great creative thought to sell media space. The agency would be compensated by the publisher (good old 15 per cent) and not by the client. The client got the service free of cost.

Today, the modern day agency earns its bread from the client. Hence we call ourselves 'communication consultants', much like legal or accounting consultants do. The entry of traditional consulting firms into the communications business endorses the fact that our role is now to consult with the client and not represent the media publisher.

#### **What in your opinion do Millennials really want?**

Millennials want to engage with brands that relate to their value system. Thanks to the fast pace of technology, traditional brand-building blocks like product differentiation, distribution reach and communication reach are becoming less relevant. Thus when Nike took a stand with the Kaepernick ad, the brand's core consumer constituency stood with it, propelling its stock to an all-time high.

Millennials in one part of the world are not vastly different from Millennials in other parts of the world;

they have similar behaviour and choices. Cultural unification is making political boundaries irrelevant.

#### **Over the last two years, the number of consumers and content creators has soared. Consequently, has the very nature of virality changed? How?**

The change in the nature of virality is not on account of an increase in the number of consumers and content creators. It is because platforms like Facebook are no longer truly social networks. In an attempt to monetise the platform, great content is no longer the king. The tipping point for virality has shifted thus making it more difficult for content to become viral on these platforms.

However, platforms like WhatsApp, which are still not focussed on monetisation, encourage virality. Put up a great piece of content, and it will get forwarded via multiple groups and channels in almost no time.

#### **What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Answering e-mails. E-mails have made us digital slaves. Our day is dominated not by our agenda or by what we want to achieve in the day, but by incoming mails in the inbox. There is too much communication, and too little thinking. How I wish e-mails can be done away with! ■

#### **If you could hire one person from Bollywood, who would it be - and why?**

Farhan Akhtar. 'Dil Chahta Hai' in many ways was a generational marker of Indian cinema. It helped spawn a new genre in Bollywood that was reflective of a country of youngsters that India had already become. The film set the tone for Indian cinema's evolution for the next 20 years and Farhan deserves a lot of credit for that. The advertising industry needs such catalysts of evolution who can help shape the industry for the next 20 years.

#### **What was the most challenging/gratifying pitch of 2018?**

The most gratifying pitches are ones where you win a business without a pitch. We are grateful to have had a few of these in 2018.

#### **Brand marketers have warmed up to 'in-housing' of late. Should agencies be worried?**

Agencies have bigger things to worry about than in-housing by clients. In-housing is nothing new, and I can say that because I work for Lintas. We started as an in-house agency over a century ago.

The challenging part is - the reasons for in-housing today. Agencies have been long aware that their operating models are lagging behind the evolved marketing landscape. There was a window of time when agencies needed to play the catch-up game. That window has passed now.

Future success for an agency will not come from adapting itself to change but re-imagining the agency model altogether. I'm glad to see that every network and holding company has now woken up to that reality. One is finally seeing some concrete steps towards

*The CMO has  
the shortest  
average tenure  
among all CXOs in  
the world today.*

**VIKAS MEHTA**

Chief Executive Officer, Mullen Lintas



re-invention. While the verdict is not out yet on what model will be 'the one', the collective flux is a sign that it's around the corner now.

**What type of talent/specialisation is missing in agencies today?**

That depends on the type of agency in question. Creative agencies typically struggle with skills in data and technology. Media agencies are good with data but struggle with intuition and ideas. Digital shops understand platforms and tech, but struggle with the strategic imperatives of a broader marketing mix.

The bigger gap, which is being felt by clients increasingly, is multi-disciplinary expertise. As touchpoints get more fragmented and consumer journeys get more complex, we will need people with skills to stitch together seamless brand experiences. Most marketers and their agencies lack this skill today. Though 'integration' remains the most over-used term in our business, very few people have real integration skills.

**'The client has become more demanding than ever before' – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Clients are under pressure and it's only natural that they demand more from their partners. Marketing is being held accountable for business impact and sales more than ever before and that's changed the CMO's role drastically. There's a much more complex consumer universe to navigate, and then there's the threat (and opportunity) in technology and data. The requisite skill sets to run the entire marketing mix are not so readily available with any one agency partner, forcing clients to aggregate them from many partners. The CMO has the shortest average tenure among all CXOs in the world today. When more is being demanded from you, it's only natural that you'd demand more from your agency partners.

**What's the toughest/most challenging part of running an advertising agency today?**

Talent and technology. In the talent market, we're now competing with entities on both sides of our own value chain. Our clients and service providers are competing for the same talent pool as us.

We need to embed technology deep into our offering without losing our creative edge. It's about bringing technology in without becoming a tech company. Which aspect of technology we bring in-house and where we

collaborate with partners is a constant balance that takes effort and time.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the advertising world in the next 12-24 months?**

For our clients and brands, it's a great new avenue to express creativity. AI is beginning to impact the solutions we create in areas like customer service, CX mapping and CRM. The impact is more visible in process automation use-cases. Soon, you'll see innovations based on AI and ML (machine learning) in the way we communicate. It's a fertile ground for innovations like mass-customisation of messaging, experiences and campaigns.

For our own business, there is merit in testing AI solutions in areas of process automation. AI should be used to augment human skill, instead of substituting it. The next phase will be about re-looking our delivery models and finding areas where AI can bring greater efficiencies. We are still a few years away from an AI-bot being a creative director or a strategist, but use-cases like data mining or media optimisation are certainly on the horizon.

**Of late, there have been fresh discussions around 'the full-service advertising agency' and whether brands need them at all. What should agencies do to defend their turf?**

Every brand needs an omni-channel approach to marketing. This makes an obvious case for a full-service offering. The real debate is: How many agencies are built to not just promise, but deliver seamlessly, a full-service solution? Each has its preferred phrase, like 'integrated', '360 degree', 'full-service', 'power of one', but there's a lot to be desired when rubber hits the road with a full-stack solution of that nature.

The best way agencies can defend their turf is by building an operating model that's designed to deliver the promise of a full-service agency. It needs re-imagining the agency organisation like a symphony orchestra instead of a roster of solo artistes.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Long meetings. While I love meeting with people and spending time with them, I like work meetings to be short and to the point. If the objective of a meeting is to make a decision, a meandering discussion often means poor preparation. ■

**VIRAT TANDON**

Group Chief Executive Officer,  
MullenLowe Lintas Group

*I would like to see more communication planners who can develop and plan the brand's journey.*

**If you could hire one person from Bollywood, who would it be – and why?**

I would hire people like the younger Vishal Bhardwaj or 'Raj & DK' (Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK) who are so deeply connected to Indian culture and are involved in the creation of new stories like Pataakha or Stree.

**What was the most challenging/gratifying pitch of 2018?**

SBI Life. It's a hugely trusted brand and a lot of good work has been done on this brand in the past. The challenge is to help connect the brand with the younger audience and make it aspirational. We are very happy to undertake this journey with the client.

**Brand marketers have warmed up to 'in-housing' of late. Should agencies be worried?**

While Lintas started out as an in-house agency many decades ago, the creative and marketing landscape has now evolved too much. It's not strategic for clients to start in-housing creative services. It may actually be counter-productive. But agencies need to respond quickly to the gaps that are emerging due to the changing needs of marketers.

**What type of talent/specialisation is missing in agencies today?**

I would like to see more 'communication planners' or 'connections planners' who can develop and plan the brand's journey along the entire experience spectrum.

**'The client has become more demanding than ever before' – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

That's true. And why shouldn't they? It's tougher than ever to get the attention of the audience and even tougher to build preference in today's competitive and cluttered world. However, I believe clients will be more successful if their lead brand agency plays the role of providing seamless solutions, rather than the client working with many agencies and fragmenting the communications pie.

**What's the toughest/most challenging part of running an advertising agency today?**

Attracting the best talent is the toughest part of the job. There are many sexy alternatives for creative people today. They want to be a part of the new economy. And obviously, they come with a very different view of how brands should be built.

The other big challenge is of remuneration. The agency must earn well – this is very important, not just for the agency, but even for

the client. The consequences of squeezing the agency on remuneration will come back to the client in the form of lack of investment in people, technology, organisational development, etc.

**In what way/s do you see Artificial Intelligence impacting the advertising world in the next 12-24 months?**

I am very excited about the opportunity that AI offers brands in the area of consumer engagement. This can happen in various ways. For example, during the IPL, a food delivery brand can use AI to create a campaign that is micro-targeted to fans of different clubs, across different cities, depending on their team's performance.

**Of late, there have been fresh discussions around 'the full-ser-**

**vice advertising agency' and whether brands need them at all. What should agencies do to defend their turf?**

I am totally for "the full service model". The specialist model has resulted in the problem of the idea getting fragmented. So while the client is spending a lot more on different channels, and different agencies are creating a lot of work for each channel, it's not all synced up. This impacts the ROI of the overall communication.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Travel. I wish I could travel less and get more done. But I also don't like to have important discussions over video and phone calls. So, I don't think travel is going away from my life anytime soon. ■

**What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?**

Effectiveness is a matter of numbers and I don't have them but the following ideas were the ones that I thought were better than the rest of the work we put out last year:

I loved Samsonite's '#KeralaIsOpen'. It was on tone, didn't seem opportunistic and had heart. Kudos to the client and partners for doing it right.

I found Tata Steel's 'We Also Make Tomorrow' smart. I love the throwback to 'We Also Make Steel'. I loved the strategy, not necessarily the ads. But full points for harnessing the strength of a highly resonant campaign of yesteryears to tell a future facing story about the company.

I also like the line for the 'Share A Coke' campaign in India. What a smart way to translate a packaging intervention into a creative platform. I love 'Har Rishta Bola Mere Naam Ki Coca-Cola'. Very smart advertising writing at work there. The father-son film was slickly produced with oodles of personality.

I found the thinking behind '#YouAreMyParleG' smart. It rings true of the brand and helps connect with a set of consumers that, perhaps, has lost touch with the brand or takes it for granted. The films could have been better, but then that's subjective.

**What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

The best way to deal with a trend is to create something that serves as a counterpoint. After all, the most important job of any advertising is to get noticed. How would you get noticed if you are just another note in the cacophony of a trend?

While dealing with trends in advertising, there are two aspects to consider. Firstly, voice: One of the most important things we advertising people do is crack the voice of the brand. The way the brand looks, feels, thinks, speaks and does. When a brand has a distinct yet consistent voice it becomes clear what kind of work the brand can and cannot do.

Secondly, authenticity: What's in the archaeology of the brand? What does it stand for? What kind of citizen is the brand? Therefore, what are the things it can participate in and have an opinion on? When we create work that falls into any of these trends does it seem authentic to the brand?

*While there are a few stand-out pieces, a lot of our work feels extremely perishable.*

PARIXIT BHATTACHARYA  
Managing Partner – Creative, TBWA India



**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

I feel creativity was never the preserve of advertising professionals. All along, there have been great problem solvers and craftsmen/craftswomen outside our industry. Today the real job of an agency is to be the marketing department of a company. And with that comes the ability to work with various partners with diverse skill-sets and crafts. The seamlessness with which an agency orchestrates this 'multi-outfit idea and solution-generating animal' will decide how effective it can be. I don't think agency people need to be worried. It's a matter of how narrowly or broadly one defines their relationship with the brand. The sharpest of marketers get this and enjoy robust and enriching relationships with their agencies.

**There are way too many creative award shows today – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

There are more than 700 creative award shows today. So, agree. Award shows are hugely important but I think we are discounting their importance by creating and participating in way too many shows. When I was young in the business, we had four international shows and one domestic show. Each show had a different take on the work and that was refreshing. We as an industry should figure out how to get back to that simplicity. And pour more money into educating, nurturing and scouting talent. Also, we should think

about how we can wield more influence on business and administration. It won't happen by turning up at award shows every Friday.

**Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

We need to produce more robust platforms for brands. And, create work that leads culture. While there are a few stand-out pieces, a lot of our work feels extremely perishable and in some ways behind other creative industries in leading culture.

**Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

To each her or his own. In our business, people buy people first and then ideas, so social media is great for creative leaders to build the right persona. But eventually one's work speaks the loudest. Also, it helps to understand that the world may not necessarily end if you don't share that 117-second edit of your last film.

**Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for – and why?**

It's really exciting to work on products that are in a category of one. The work is always differentiated so the opportunity to do something significant and memorable is huge.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Conference calls. ■

**Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

If there is one thing we can do it is – change our approach to the online space. Right now the mainstream agency's solution is to acquire a 'digital' agency or start its own digital department. But online is not a medium like TV or print. It is increasingly becoming like electricity, a necessity. What I mean is – digital thinking has to be at the core of everything we do, in every department.

**Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

Personally, I am not a big fan of social media, but I recognise its power to encourage creativity and collaboration, and to influence behaviour.

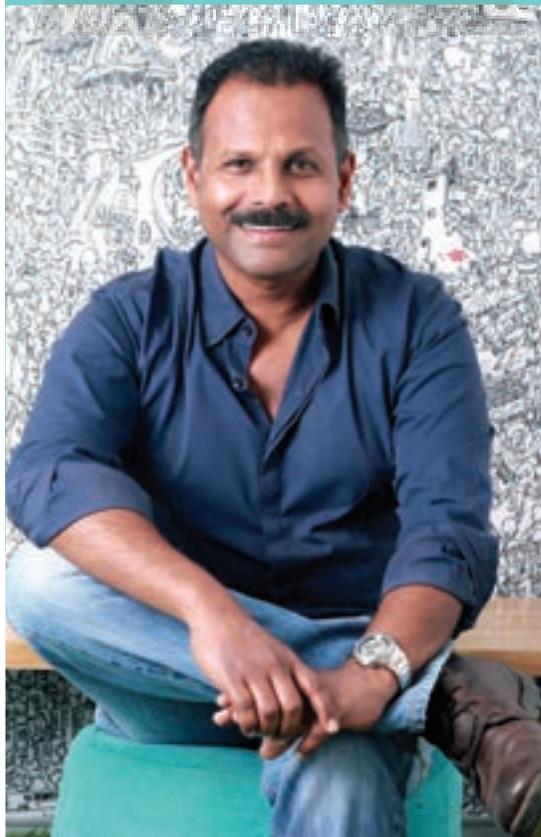
Interestingly, I know of many so called recluses who are very active on social media. Where else can you join groups, participate in forums, send hugs, kisses and smileys, and closely follow the lives of others, while being cooped up in a room, away from everybody?

**What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

Our job is to build brands and help move products off shelves. Now, if a trend is not fighting the core of the brand, and is helping it sell, then you should embrace the trend. If not... Everything should be judged from the perspective of the selfish interests of the brand.

*As long as we  
crave external  
validation  
there will be  
award shows.*

**ROBBY MATHEW**  
Chief Creative Officer, FCB Interface



**Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for – and why?**

In the right hands, even the dullest products can have magical advertising. And by right hands I mean the client too. Because, more often than not, it is the client's vision and courage that result in brave, scintillating advertising.

**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

Earlier too, creativity wasn't the preserve of advertising professionals. Our true skills have always be in the area of creating and nurturing the compelling brand idea. We are the keepers of the brand flame, the stewards of the brand. If we think our job is to just come up with creative ideas, we should be really worried.

**There are way too many creative award shows today – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

As long as we crave external validation there will be award shows. Then, if we have one or ten, how does it matter?

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Suffering fools. ■

**'What's your favourite OTT show?'**

Narcos has been my favourite OTT show, followed by Sacred Games. I love the storytelling of both these shows. From character sketching to detailing in screenplay, both shows can be called 'cult' shows amidst all the other OTT shows out there.

**What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?**

I think the launch (campaign) and continuing work on Saregama Carvaan Digital Audio Player is the most effective advertising campaign not just of 2017-18 but of the decade. To me this is where advertising should head towards. A partnership so pure that you not just create the brand... you create the product. Also, I like the way they captured the true essence of the product – nostalgia. That's what makes the product what it is.

**Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

Well, it does. I think Indian advertising needs younger and bolder thinking. We need to understand the power of various mediums. We have to forget and let go of our fascination with films. For example, in India a digital idea is a digital long format film. Both clients and agencies need to understand the power of the medium and engage beyond video content.

Also, we hardly get to see big campaigns or big ideas. A viral video is what everyone is after – a tear-jerking long film with a social cause. We have forgotten the art of creating ads like the Zoozoo campaign or the funny Fevicol campaigns. We hardly get to see ideas that are clutter-breaking and disruptive anymore.

**Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

Well, I am a social media addict. But there are many who are extremely well versed with the digital medium and various other social platforms but are not active users. So if being a recluse means having no idea what social media is, then the answer is a BIG NO! Every creative has to be well versed with the medium.

**What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

Advertising has always mirrored and showcased the current mindset of the masses. Cause-vertising and fem-vertising are nothing but current trends that most brands want to be part of. When a brand picks a topic of conversation that's trending, it engages audiences better. This helps, especially on social media.

The best way to deal with this is to participate in it, but not over-indulge in it. We should not forget that we are in the business of selling products... we're not here to change society.

**Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for – and why?**

Having worked on almost every product category over 17 years, I'd say working on online shopping portals is the biggest challenge in a developing economy and populated country like India. Here hopping on weekends is the most popular pass-time... and a *kirana* shop owner is almost like a relative. Hyper marts are a new, enjoyable offline experience for many.

Convincing such an audience to shop online is quite a task. From convenience to affordability, all carrots have to be used cleverly. It's a long battle and 'selling' online shopping behaviour will remain a

*We have forgotten the art of creating ads like the Zoozoo campaign or the funny Fevicol ads.*

**AZAZUL HAQUE**

Chief Creative Officer, Ogilvy



big challenge for marketers and advertisers for years to come.

**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

Creativity has never been the preserve of advertising professionals. We just used creativity, stories, various art forms, poetry, and prose that were present in the world to tell brand stories. And that's what makes us professionals/experts. Ideas always came from everywhere. Advertising professionals just picked them up to create brands.

**There are way too many creative award shows today – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Agree. But I have always been a firm believer of 'work that works'. A successful campaign is the biggest award for any advertising professional. Awards are losing their importance and credibility because of this deluge of award shows.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

In my case – travel. I am just too tired of it. Though it may look exciting, it makes you the 'up in the air guy'. That's what most of my friends call me. ■

*With profits of ad agencies shrinking, the management should take a hard look at the real benefits of awards.*

**SABUJ SENGUPTA**

National Creative Director, HakuHodo



**What's your favourite OTT show?**

Narcos.

**What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?**

FF New York and Sea Shepherd: The Plastic Ocean.

**Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

'The advertising agency' needs a makeover. Ad agencies owned ideas a few years ago, but today there are ideas all around. Look around; all start-ups are great ideas. Ad agencies need to adapt and do this quickly. We need a sustainable business model, which should be like consulting. Agencies should be involved right from the inception of the product, and should offer a much wider variety of services. Be a business partner to the client.

**Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

No. And why only creative? Planners and client servicing should all be there. I think everyone is on social media. Some are active, some not. What is important is to keep track of social trends which can be effectively used for insights and campaign planning.

**What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

Why do we need to 'deal' with this? We as a society have come a long way and are still evolving. I think, 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising' helps society accept/correct many misconceptions. Some of the work in this space is very insightful and inspiring.

**Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for – and why?**

Smartphones for sure. There is no or little difference between brands.

**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

As I have mentioned previously, everybody is thinking of new ideas now. Agencies now need to collaborate and create stuff. The HakuHodo philosophy of 'Invent the future' is very relevant. The point is to come up with solutions for consumers, not necessarily advertising solutions.

Worrying won't get anyone anywhere.

**There are way too many creative award shows today – Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Agree. Multiple award shows are a good revenue avenue for the organisers. Agencies need to take a call – whether to enter awards. Also with profits of ad agencies shrinking, the management should take a hard look at the real benefits of awards. If we do insightful work which is appreciated by consumers and grows the client's business, that also is great recognition.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Half hour deadlines. ■



*Today virality and 'discoverability' can turn a normal person into a celebrity.*

**RAJIV DINGRA**

Founder and Chief Executive Officer, WATConsult

**'What's your favourite OTT show?'**

It's Black Mirror. It has some really dark themes but it shows some real impact of technology on the future.

**Define 'content' in one line.**

I'd much rather define 'good content'. Here is my take: Good content is something that makes you feel emotions, that is, happy, sad, angry and shocked when you consume it. It could be in text, audio or video form.

**The digital universe is crowded and noisy. What are the top three things brands must do to get noticed?**

- Create content that they would like to watch even if they had to pay for it.
- Create conversations with consumers that make consumers smile.
- Create innovations that build on their brand purpose.

**In the days ahead, which industry will impact trends in yours?**

I feel the technology industry, specifically Artificial Intelligence, Voice Technology and Internet of Things, will have a huge impact on advertising and the way it is delivered and consumed.

**What are the top three digital advertising formats that will dominate in 2019?**

- Video will be No. 1
- Innovative mobile ads will be No. 2
- Native Advertising will be No. 3

**If you could get rid of one piece of 'jargon' from agency vocabulary, what would it be - and why?**

Strategic - It's an over used term with little meaning or merit.

**What in your opinion do Millennials really want?**

Millenials don't want to 'waste' their time. So what they really want is return on their 'time investment'.

**Over the last two years, the number of consumers and content creators has soared. Consequently, has the very nature of virality changed? How?**

Yes it has. Today virality and 'discoverability' can turn a normal person into a celebrity. Be it Dancing Uncle or Chai Peelo Aunty.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**

Unnecessary email threads that don't end. ■



**YOUR  
ORGANISATION'S  
SUCCESS STARTS  
WITH HIRING  
GREAT PEOPLE**



**Jobswitch.in is a specialised job site for the  
Advertising, Media & Marketing professionals.**



**For more information, write to us at : [Jobswitch@afaqs.com](mailto:Jobswitch@afaqs.com)**



*The veterans need to not only understand, but also be humble and accept that this is not the same industry they joined many years ago.*

**EMMANUEL UPPUTURU**

Chief Creative Officer, Cheil WW India

**'What's your favourite OTT show?'**

At the moment it has to be Tik Tok. It's crazy to see how the young are using a platform to create such interesting content. Pinterest democratised art and design and now has become a source of inspiration for creative folk. Now I see Tik Tok doing the same for video content. What's even more heartening is that it's been taken over by not just people from metros but also from villages!

**What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?**

Honda's "Teri Har Udaan Hamari Shaan Hai". It's epic.

**Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

Yes! It's a continuous process. I still see the old mindset in many people. There is still talk about ATL, TV, digital, radio and print. That is where it needs to get a makeover. The veterans need to not only understand, but also be humble and accept that this is not the same industry they joined many years ago. I tell myself that I have just joined the industry, that I am starting all over again. The advantage is that this time I am in a position to make a difference.

**Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

I don't think it's possible, which is why the moment I hear about a new app, it's downloaded on my phone; you will see all kinds of apps on my phone. One just can't afford to remain secluded because one needs to know what people are watching, what they are doing, what they are consuming, what their language is... it's very important and it does influence my own creative work. I tell my people, "Don't just start with 'film opens on' every time you get a brief..."

**What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

I feel a lot has already been done in this space. I am not a big fan of it. I don't believe in jumping onto the bandwagon and supporting a cause just because everybody is doing it. Many brands have deliberately started joining some conversation or the other. They are making desperate attempts to look good. A brand should do it only if the team genuinely believes in something, has ROI attached to it, and if doing it makes a real difference to the brand.

**Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for - and why?**

The reason I am here at Cheil is Samsung. They are a big player in the mobile category, targeting young Millennials. There is scale, audience and technology. The canvas can't get bigger. And to make it even more exciting, competition in the category is hot. I played the cola wars on behalf of Sprite during the mid-2000s; today, we have some serious battles to win in this segment.

**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

There was a time when my art partner and I sat in a corner and churned out Lions and Pencils. That era is over. This is an age of collaboration. I absolutely love to collaborate with everybody, whether it is within the agency, with the client or even with the audience.

**There are way too many creative award shows today - Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Awards have become an expensive game to play. Not only are there too many award shows... there are too many categories too! But I hope someday sanity will prevail and only the relevant ones will survive while the rest will just fade away.

**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**  
Con-calls! ■

# afaqs! Reporter



## The Steal-a-Deal Offer

Term	No. of Issues	Cover Price	Final Pay
1 Year	24	₹ 2,400/-	₹ 2016/- (inclusive taxes).
2 Years	48	₹ 4,800/-	₹ 3495/- (inclusive taxes).



YES, I WANT TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE afaqs! Reporter RIGHT NOW ! (Tick whichever is applicable)

- I want a one-year subscription.
  I want a two-year subscription.

First Name	<input type="text"/>	Last Name	<input type="text"/>
Billing Address	<input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Office		
Address 1	<input type="text"/>		
Address 2	<input type="text"/>		
City	<input type="text"/>	State	<input type="text"/>
Postal Pin	<input type="text"/>		
Designation	<input type="text"/>	Company / institution	<input type="text"/>
E-Mail	<input type="text"/>	Fax	<input type="text"/>
<b>Phone (Please mention one number atleast)</b>			
Residential Number	<input type="text"/>	Office Number	<input type="text"/>
Mobile Number	<input type="text"/>	GST Number	<input type="text"/>



I am enclosing a cheque / DD (payable in Delhi) No. .... dated ..... drawn on ..... in favour of 'afaqs! Reporter' for Rs. ....

**Cheque / DD should be in favour of afaqs! Reporter and mailed to the following address:**  
 afaqs! Reporter, B 3, Ground Floor, Sector 4, Noida -201301 Uttar Pradesh

**For Enquiries:**  
 Mail: [subscriptions@afaqs.com](mailto:subscriptions@afaqs.com)

**Terms & Conditions:**  
 • Please mention your name and address on the back of cheque/DD. • Photocopy of this form is acceptable. • This is a limited period offer valid in India only. • Offer may be withdrawn without notice. • Offer valid for new subscribers only. • Please allow 2-4 weeks for delivery of your magazine. • All disputes subject to Delhi jurisdiction.



*The veterans need to not only understand, but also be humble and accept that this is not the same industry they joined many years ago.*

**EMMANUEL UPPUTURU**

Chief Creative Officer, Cheil WW India

**'What's your favourite OTT show?'**

At the moment it has to be Tik Tok. It's crazy to see how the young are using a platform to create such interesting content. Pinterest democratised art and design and now has become a source of inspiration for creative folk. Now I see Tik Tok doing the same for video content. What's even more heartening is that it's been taken over by not just people from metros but also from villages!

**What in your opinion was the most effective ad campaign of 2018 (outside of your own agency's work)?**

Honda's "Teri Har Udaan Hamari Shaan Hai". It's epic.

**Does Indian advertising need a makeover?**

Yes! It's a continuous process. I still see the old mindset in many people. There is still talk about ATL, TV, digital, radio and print. That is where it needs to get a makeover. The veterans need to not only understand, but also be humble and accept that this is not the same industry they joined many years ago. I tell myself that I have just joined the industry, that I am starting all over again. The advantage is that this time I am in a position to make a difference.

**Today, can a creative executive afford to be a social media recluse and still prosper?**

I don't think it's possible, which is why the moment I hear about a new app, it's downloaded on my phone; you will see all kinds of apps on my phone. One just can't afford to remain secluded because one needs to know what people are watching, what they are doing, what they are consuming, what their language is... it's very important and it does influence my own creative work. I tell my people, "Don't just start with 'film opens on' every time you get a brief..."

**What's the best way to deal with trends like 'cause-vertising', 'fem-vertising', and other such?**

I feel a lot has already been done in this space. I am not a big fan of it. I don't believe in jumping onto the bandwagon and supporting a cause just because everybody is doing it. Many brands have deliberately started joining some conversation or the other. They are making desperate attempts to look good. A brand should do it only if the team genuinely believes in something, has ROI attached to it, and if doing it makes a real difference to the brand.

**Which is the most exciting/challenging product category or product group to craft ads for - and why?**

The reason I am here at Cheil is Samsung. They are a big player in the mobile category, targeting young Millennials. There is scale, audience and technology. The canvas can't get bigger. And to make it even more exciting, competition in the category is hot. I played the cola wars on behalf of Sprite during the mid-2000s; today, we have some serious battles to win in this segment.

**Creativity is no longer the preserve of advertising professionals. Today, ideas come from everywhere. Should ad-men and ad-women be worried?**

There was a time when my art partner and I sat in a corner and churned out Lions and Pencils. That era is over. This is an age of collaboration. I absolutely love to collaborate with everybody, whether it is within the agency, with the client or even with the audience.

**There are way too many creative award shows today - Agree or Disagree? Explain.**

Awards have become an expensive game to play. Not only are there too many award shows... there are too many categories too! But I hope someday sanity will prevail and only the relevant ones will survive while the rest will just fade away.

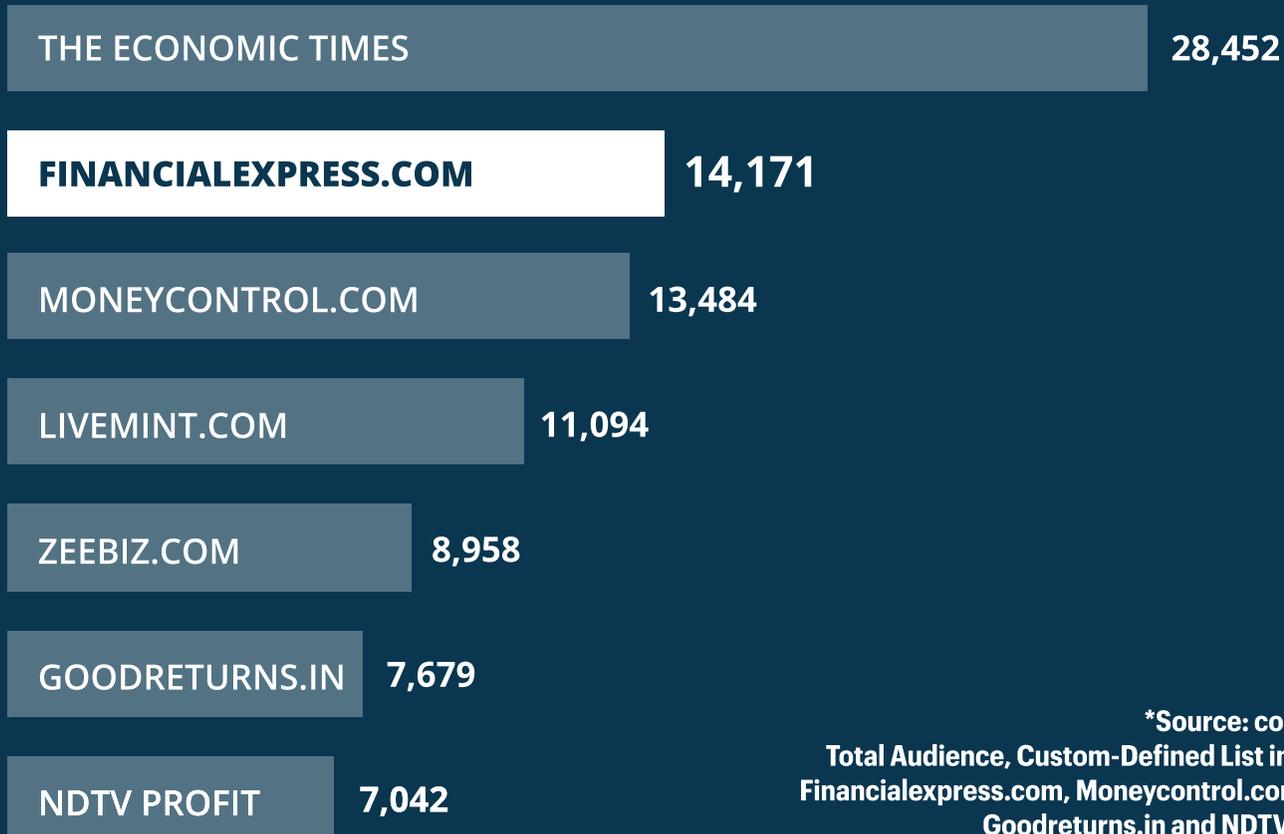
**What's the one thing about your job you'd do away with in a heartbeat?**  
Con-calls! ■

# FINANCIAL EXPRESS

**FINANCIALEXPRESS.COM  
IS INDIA'S 2ND LARGEST  
BUSINESS & FINANCIAL  
NEWS PORTAL**



## TOTAL UNIQUE VISITORS (000)



\*Source: comScore MMX® Multi-Platform Total Audience, Custom-Defined List includes: The Economic Times, Financialexpress.com, Moneycontrol.com, Livemint.com, Zeebiz.com, Goodreturns.in and NDTV Profit, November 2018, India

FOR ADVERTISING, PLEASE CONTACT

**MADHU TIWARI** (NATIONAL SALES HEAD)  
M: +91 9611633224, E: madhu.tiwari@indianexpress.com

**KALYAN CHAKRABORTY** (REGIONAL HEAD - SOUTH)  
M: +91 9972222142, E: kc@indianexpress.com

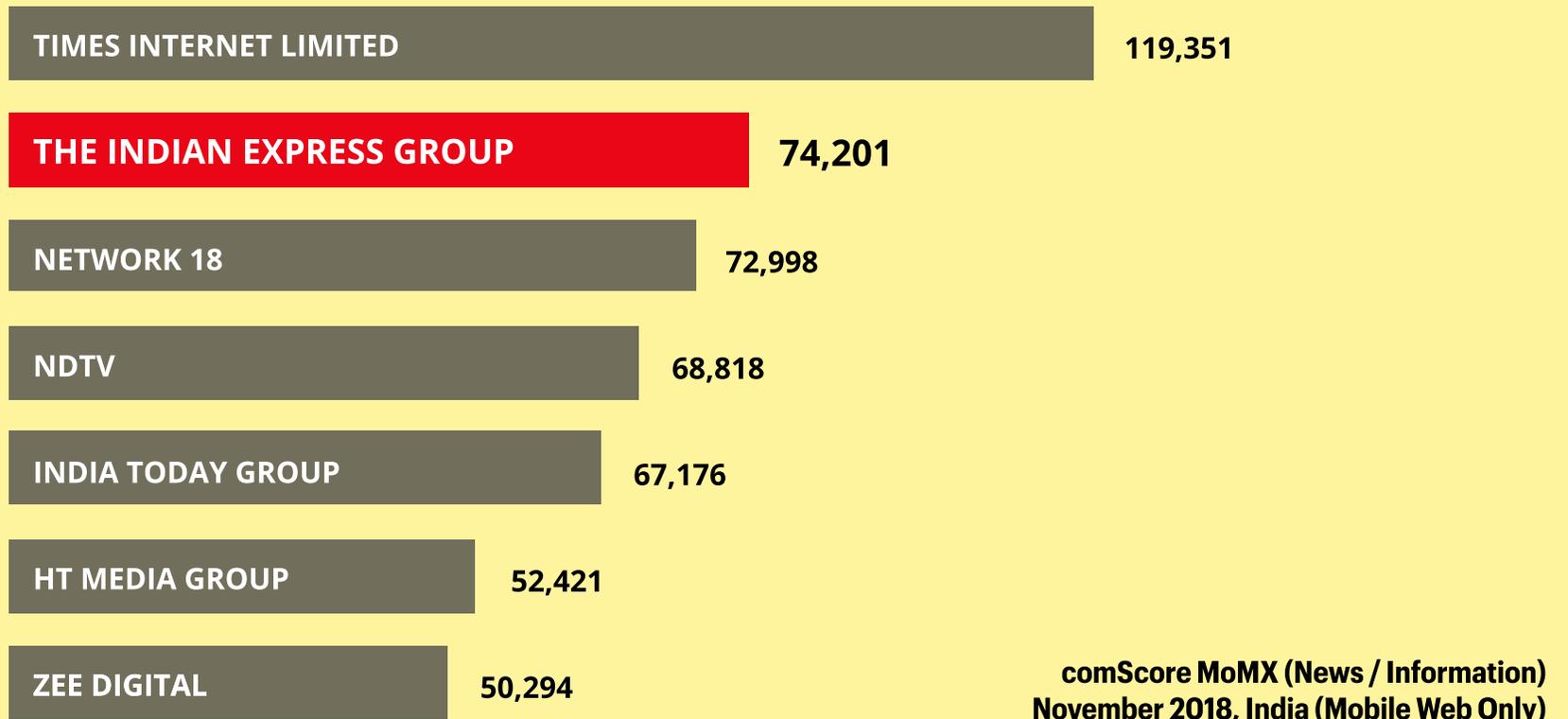
**NITIN SHARMA** (GM SALES - NORTH)  
M: +91 9999837776, E: nitin.s@indianexpress.com

**SACHIN DONGRE** (REGIONAL HEAD - WEST)  
M: +91 9892414314, E: sachin.dongre@indianexpress.com



**WE ARE  
INDIA'S 2<sup>ND</sup> LARGEST  
DIGITAL NEWS  
PUBLISHER**

TOTAL UNIQUE VISITORS (000)



 **The Indian EXPRESS**

**FINANCIAL EXPRESS**

 **जनसत्ता**

 **लोकसत्ता**

**INUTH**

 **Indian EXPRESS**  
MALAYALAM

 **Indian EXPRESS**  
TAMIL

 **Indian EXPRESS**  
BANGLA

FOR ADVERTISING, PLEASE CONTACT

**MADHU TIWARI** (NATIONAL SALES HEAD)  
M: +91 9611633224, E: madhu.tiwari@indianexpress.com

**NITIN SHARMA** (GM SALES - NORTH)  
M: +91 9999837776, E: nitin.s@indianexpress.com

**KALYAN CHAKRABORTY** (REGIONAL HEAD - SOUTH)  
M: +91 9972222142, E: kc@indianexpress.com

**SACHIN DONGRE** (REGIONAL HEAD - WEST)  
M: +91 9892414314, E: sachin.dongre@indianexpress.com