



B KRISHNA RAO

Senior Category Head | Parle

“

Competition can emerge quickly from anywhere. Who could have imagined the collapse of Nokia or Blackberry?

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PERSONAL**Who is your biggest professional mentor?**

I've looked up to Al Ries (author). His ideologies and innovative marketing approach have revolutionised the way brands communicate with consumers. It would be awesome if I get to spend a day or even an hour with him.

If not a brand marketer, what would you be?

A movie actor. I am a big fan of Paresh Rawal. Both marketers and actors have to constantly evolve and adapt to new situations. Creative thinking is at the core of both.

Name a brand (other than your own) you admire. Why?

IPL. The Indian Premier League is a platform for many brands, including Parle. As a marketer, I believe in investing in the IPL. I've learnt the importance of being focused and consistent from the IPL.

CATEGORY**What are the big challenges you see coming your way in the next 12 months?**

A big challenge is quickly adapting to new-age digital targeting.

What's the biggest change in the way consumers approach your segment today, versus a year back?**To what do you attribute this?**

A growing number of young Indians are in the 24-38 years age group and have higher disposable incomes than their older counterparts. They also have a lower propensity to save and are less afraid to display what they eat and drink to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This drives sales in the premium and value-added products categories. When it comes to FMCG products, consumers are spoilt for choice today.

In what way/s does your marketing strategy change from Tier I to Tier II and III markets?

TV, print, radio, cinema and new-age digital mediums help us reach consumers in Tier I and II markets, but Tier III markets require focused below-the-line activities. For Tier III markets we have LUP or low unit price packs, that generate trials and increase the frequency of consumption. We also use Doordarshan to reach out to rural India.

MARKETING**What's the toughest part of being a brand marketer?**

Being dynamic, yet staying focused.

Name the biggest professional hurdle you faced recently. How did you tide over it?

Demonetisation and GST roll-outs resulted in slowdown. Our consistent focus on legwork to increase direct distribution helped us return to double digit growth.

As a marketer in the digital age, what is your biggest nightmare?

Competition can emerge from nowhere and in no time. That makes us highly vulnerable. How imaginable was the collapse of Nokia and Blackberry with the entry of iPhone?

ADVERTISING**What is your lead medium of communication today?****Which medium do you use least?**

TV. We rely the least on mediums like radio and print.

Are the best creative minds still in advertising?

Yes, there's extraordinary talent in advertising. The need of the hour is creative thinking for the digital medium.

In what way has your relationship with your agency partners - creative and media planning/buying - changed of late? What's the one must-have quality for an agency today?

The relationship has evolved. We believe in result-orientation. It's not just about awards; it's important to meet business objectives as well. We want all our agencies to have an 'open-mind approach'.

Are you open to paying agencies a pitch fee?**Why/why not?**

A pitch fee makes an agency complacent. We want agencies to bring out their best, win the business, and partner us towards success.

Do you wish you could work with just one full-service creative agency instead of multiple creative minds?

I would always want to explore multiple creative minds. It brings in new perspective to the business.



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