



Photo : Yashpal Bhagat Singh

# TARUN JHA

Head of Marketing and Product | Skoda Auto India

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## PERSONAL

**Who is your biggest professional mentor?**

Rajesh Jejurikar of Mahindra & Mahindra. He is one of the sharpest minds in the business and I have learnt immensely from him.

**If not a brand marketer, what would you be?**

I would have been a teacher. Of that I'm sure.

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

**And tell us why.**

Volkswagen. Not many brands can claim to be consistently engaging and relevant for more than half a century around the world. It takes a hell lot of conviction and confidence to do what it has done.

## CATEGORY

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

The two big challenges that we see are – firstly, entering crowded segments and trying to stand out and be relevant. And secondly, working on pride of ownership that our customers associate with my brand.

**What's the biggest change in the way consumers approach your segment today, versus a year back?**

**To what do you attribute this?**

Most customers enter our showrooms today with a fairly good idea of what they want, as they have done a lot of research and have spoken to friends and family. Browsing has reduced in the automobile category. The average number of test drives being taken by a customer has come down. This can be attributed to the surfeit of information available all around, and is also a sign of a market that is maturing extremely quickly. Customers are very well informed and also carry strong opinions.

**Which product segment out there impacts trends in your category most? Why?**

Infotainment systems and connectivity are impacting the trends most as they are seeing the most rapid advancements.

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

For our brand, it is not as complicated as it may be for some others, owing to our product portfolio as well as the profile of our customers.

## MARKETING

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

Listening to the customers and being in a constant dialogue with them is the toughest challenge for brand marketers today.

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

Striking a balance between being a European brand and still being Indian enough, so as to not alienate our customers. It takes perseverance and patience to tide over these hurdles.

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

Technology will rob the brand of emotion, warmth and the human touch.

## ADVERTISING

**What is your lead medium of communication today?**

**Which medium do you use least?**

Print and digital followed by television. For us, radio is the least used medium.

**Are the best creative minds still in advertising?**

Not really. These days we see some exceptionally creative minds in the areas of product design, customer experience and applications development.

**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?**

Recently, the agency-client relationship, in our case, has changed quite dramatically. Since we have a flat and lean structure, our agency partners are team-mates with a strong sense of belonging. The one must-have quality we look for in our partners is ownership of our business problems as their own. This leads to the best solutions and good work.

**Are you open to paying agencies a pitch fee?**

**Why/why not?**

Cannot comment on this topic.

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

**Why? The more creative minds we have access to, the better we are placed.**