

Institute for Studies in Industrial Development

Two-day National Conference on the State of Advertising Industry in India: A Critical Appraisal

February 16–17, 2018

Conference Rationale

The Indian advertising sector did a business of about Rs. 60,000 crores in 2016. If one were to include the related industries like production of commercials (TV & Radio), celebrities endorsing brands, modelling, events and BTL, it would touch to more than Rs. One Lakh crore. Many critics however question the way the size of the sector is measured, i.e., whether it is based on media billing or revenue earned by it. The 15% commission that the media shared traditionally with the ad agencies for booking of space and time does not hold much ground anymore. The Tariff cards seem to have lost their relevance. It is not uncommon to see clients negotiating ad rates directly with the media houses, circumventing ad agencies and media buying agencies. Critics often consider ad spend as a total waste of money that they suggest could rather go in to consumer discounts. There does not seem to have any empirical data on the functioning of the ad sector per se and the overwhelming changes that the ad industry has witnessed in the last over two decades or so. If anything, there is an all-around opacity governing the sector.

Advertising is perceived as a glamorous profession with zero accountability to society. On its own part, the advertising industry has never cared to question or clear the misperceptions around it or to position itself in a certain manner.

Advertising is one of the professions in mass communication like journalism, PR and related areas, where one does not need a formal degree or professional qualification to enter the field. At the same time, it is also a fact that more than 100 universities and professional institutions have courses at both undergrad and postgraduate levels in mass communication, including advertising. A job in mass communication is considered a coveted achievement, especially by the younger generation.

Despite all that is said about it, the proponents of advertising believe that advertising is a nearly scientific profession that moves markets and minds. Advertising is considered an important marketing activity that informs and persuades consumers about various brands, their unique selling propositions/values and enable them to make informed choices.

Liberalization of the Indian economy brought about a paradigm shift

The last about a quarter century has been very defining for the ad sector when the economic liberalization completely changed the way the ad business was

conducted in the country. The era facilitated the entry of global agencies in India. Many homespun agencies either merged with them or disappeared for lack of business. The ad business now has become highly globalized, with a couple of international groups controlling advertising in both the developed and the developing world. While people working in the ad sector may have some idea about these changes, but people at large are bereft of any information. During the last few years, the FICCI and CII's Media & Entertainment Reports have given some idea about the projections in the ad world, but a lot remains dormant. There is no one professional body in the country that presents the state of advertising sector in India in a periodic manner.

Advertising and social responsibility

There are varying issues that the ad sector need to address, like the issue of social responsibility, portrayal of women, use of children, surrogate advertising, the reach and access of media that define the tariffs through TRPs, the mergers, acquisitions and conflict of interest, the media commission issues, among others.

Advertising and media

One does not see much coverage in the mainstream media on advertising sector per se. One of the obvious reason one can think of could be that being dependent on advertising for sustenance, media does not critically analyse the ad sector. An industry that is worth about One lakh crore per annum deserves scrutiny, appraisal and critique.

Issues such as these have been on the minds of academics and researchers for long. To break the ice and undertake an appraisal of the ad industry as a first step, the ISID is organizing a two day National Conference on the **State of Advertising Industry in India: A Critical Appraisal** on 16-17 February 2018 by inviting empirical papers from the world of academia on the various sub-themes under the overall theme and also invite industry icons, who have been there for several decades and understand the strengths, but at the same time the challenges and machinations at work in the sector. It is hoped that through a combination of both the strategies, i.e., empirical papers and experiential discourse on various thematic areas, there will be some clarity on the sector that may provide a road map for future empirical work.

The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) has sponsored the National conference.

Who would benefit?

Policy makers, Ad Industry and academics & Research scholars.

It is proposed to invite academic and research scholars from the departments of mass communication/ advertising as per ICSSR norms, industry experts, ICSSR members to the conference.

Desired Outcome

It is expected that that the deliberations at the conference will result in getting insights on:

- Issues that need policy intervention
- Bring together a body of knowledge that would benefit the industry, policy makers and faculty & research scholars.

Core Team

Professor J. Jethwaney, Conference Chair,
Prof. Seema Goyal, ISID,
P.V. Narayanamoorthy,
Tilak Mukherji and
Shruti Jain.

Coordination: B Dhanunjai Kumar
Conference Volunteer: Saachi Soni

Brief Profiles

Professor Jethwaney worked at the premier Indian Institute of Mass Communication for over 25 years where she was the Program Director for Advertising and PR before joining ISID in January 2017.

Professor Seema Goyal is Professor -Audio Visual communication. She studied and briefly taught at the American University, Washington DC before joining ISID over a decade ago.

P.V. Narayanamoorthy is a leading ad media planning and strategy expert, scholar and visiting faculty.

Tilak Mukherji is a seasoned researcher in the social sector and highly recognized for his work in India and many countries.

Shruti Jain, has over 20 years' experience of working in some of the top agencies in strategy & planning and consultancy sector before joining the Bennett university as Associate Professor (Advertising) recently.

B. Dhanunjai Kumar works in the Media & Communications Division, ISID
Saachi Soni, She climbed Mount Everest at 19, did her masscomm undergrad from IP College, Delhi University, joined IIMC 2015-16 and now works in Adventure sports at DD Sport.

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