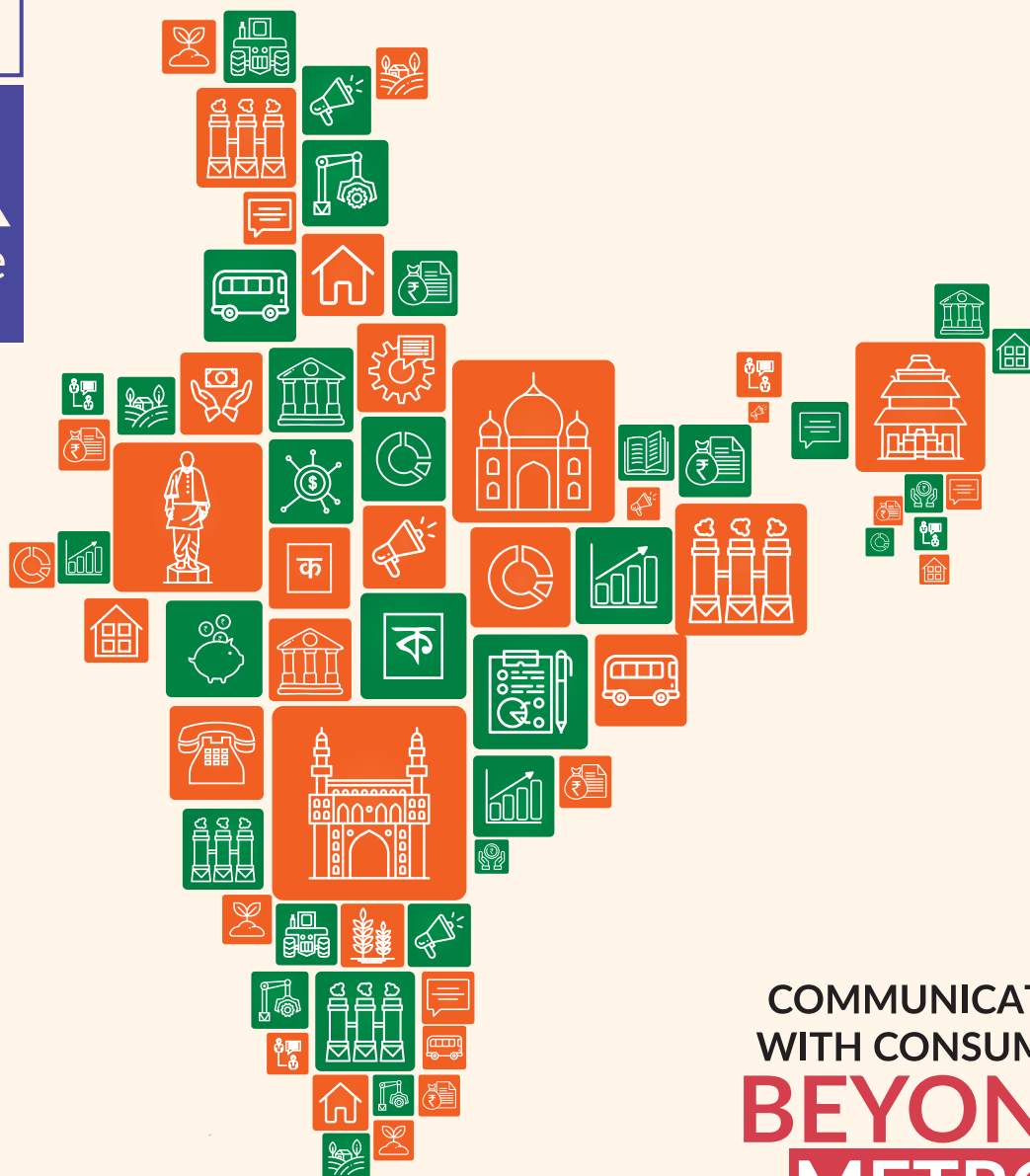


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# Reputation TODAY

A magazine for Public Relations and Corporate Communications Professionals

**FOCUS**  
**PR**  
in Middle  
India



COMMUNICATING  
WITH CONSUMERS  
**BEYOND  
METROS**

## INTERVIEWS

### Roger Pereira

I believe that very soon we will have a totally digitised communications world.

### Sonia Huria

Today consumers want to experience the real brand and know their real stories.

### Sunayna Malik

Our biggest challenge today is the dearth of good talent and the limited passion to learn.



# THE JURY

#FulcrumAwards

## Alex Malouf

Manager- Corporate Communications,  
P&G Dubai

## Aman Dhall

Head – Corporate Communications,  
Policybazaar.com Group of Companies

## Amandeep Singh

Chief General Manager – Corporate  
Communications, Indraprastha Gas Limited

## Amit Chaudhery

Chief – Brand & Communications,  
Medanta – The Medicity

## Aparna Thomas

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India & South Asia Sanofi

## Archana Muthappa

GM & Head – Corporate Communications,  
Bangalore International Airport Ltd.

## Arpan Basu

Head – Corporate Communications,  
Coca-Cola India and South West Asia

## Chhavi Leekha

Director – Corporate Communications and  
Brand Reputation, InterGlobe Aviation Ltd.

## Deepa Sapatnekar

Consumer PR Lead, LinkedIn APAC &  
Head – Communications, LinkedIn India

## Gabriela Lungu

Founder,  
Wings Creative Leadership Lab

## Heena Kanal

Vice President & Head – Corporate  
Communications, Cipla

## Mona Kwatra

Head – Brand & Communications,  
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## Shveta Singh

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Communication, L&T Financial Services

## Sreedhanya Shanmughan

Head – Communications,  
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## Subir Moitra

Director – Marketing & Communications,  
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## Sumeet Chatterjee

Sr. Vice President – Brand Group Corporate  
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## Vipin Nair

Global Head-Corporate Communications,  
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### Categories for Technique Awards

- Best Use of Content
- Best Use of Creativity & Innovation
- Best Use of Event
- Best Use of Digital
- Best Use of Integrated Communications
- Best Use of Public Affairs
- Best Management of Crisis
- Best Use of Internal Communications
- Best New Product Launch
- Best Use of Media Relations
- Best CSR Campaign
- Best Regional Campaign

### Categories for Special Awards

- In-House Team of the Year - Mid-size (2-4 team members)
- In-House Team of the Year - Large (5 and more team members)
- PR Consultancy of the Year - Emerging (INR 10 cr and below)
- PR Consultancy of the Year - Mid-size (INR 10-20 cr)
- PR Consultancy of the Year - Large (INR 20-50 cr)
- PR Consultancy of the Year - Giant (INR 50 cr above)
- Lifetime Achievement Award - (Nominated by the Jury)

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- Hospitality and Travel
- Automobile
- Lifestyle, Luxury and Sports
- Technology and Telecom
- Healthcare and Pharma
- Consumer Products and Retail
- Not-for-profit and Associations
- Manufacturing
- Entertainment, Media and Celebrities
- Banking and Financial Services
- Services

### Categories for Sector Awards

- Best Hospitality and Travel Sector Campaign
- Best Automobile Sector Campaign
- Best Lifestyle, Luxury and Sports Sector Campaign
- Best Technology and Telecom Sector Campaign
- Best Healthcare and Pharma Sector Campaign
- Best Consumer Products and Retail Sector Campaign
- Best Not-for-Profit and Associations Sector Campaign
- Best Manufacturing Sector Campaign
- Best Entertainment and Media Sector Campaign
- Best Banking and Financial Services Sector Campaign
- Best Services Sector Campaign



**31<sup>st</sup> May 2019**

Early Submission Deadline

**21<sup>st</sup> June 2019**

Late Submission Deadline

**20<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

Shortlist Announcement

**28<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

Awards Night

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## FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM



Close to a decade ago the term **Middle India** began to gain currency. The term refers to at least three aspects. People from several strata living beyond the metros, middle class living within large metros in certain pockets and to those whom a regional language is the preferred mode of transacting. Today there is a social network focussed on people who converse primarily in regional languages, global social networks and new-age Indian media outlets have embraced this multi-language approach. Brands are creating various engagement opportunities and touch points for this segment. Public Relations is not far behind. There are firms in tier two towns that are emerging. There are communications team members being stationed in cities that one would not have thought of, as having the potential a few years ago.

In fact, over half the applicants at the School of Communications and Reputation this year came from towns as varied as Konnagar, Ernakulam, Gwalior, Bhubaneswar, Indore, Udaipur, Dibrugarh, Jhansi and Raipur among others. The future of India is not only young, but it is in this Middle India. This edition of the magazine as well as of the Influence Now Communication Conclave is dedicated to Public Relations in Middle India. Let us not confuse middle India with the middle class. However, those who see the potential in this emerging segment and take steps to cater to their needs will reap benefits in the long term.

We are glad that we have chosen to host every edition of PRAXIS in Middle India. The eight edition will take place in September in Goa. From the very first edition there has been a demand to take this annual meet to this happening city-state. We hope that you will be able to join a very special edition that already has five fire-brand women who have confirmed to be speakers. You can check details at [www.praxisonline.in](http://www.praxisonline.in) and one can sign up at [bit.ly/PRAXIS2019](http://bit.ly/PRAXIS2019).

We are also delighted to be the official print magazine partner for the fourth consecutive year at the fourth edition of the Fulcrum Awards. We hope several of our readers participate in this and take back winner trophies. Details are at [www.fulcrumawards.in](http://www.fulcrumawards.in).

The next edition of the magazine, which will be out at PRAXIS, aims to be a first of its kind directory of PR professionals. We urge you to check this link [bit.ly/RTDirectory](http://bit.ly/RTDirectory) and share your details to be featured in this collectors' edition.

As always, we eagerly await your feedback on the magazine. We are in the fourth year now and we hope we have made you proud by being the only print magazine dedicated to the Indian Public Relations professional. Please send your thoughts to [team@reputationtoday.in](mailto:team@reputationtoday.in)

# PROFILES OF COURAGE

The third batch of the full-time programme at SCoRe, the Class of 2019 will complete their education this month and be ready to join the public relations community as a full-fledged professional. Through 10 months of academic rigour, this group has undergone comprehensive education in public relations and communications, mentored by leaders at some of the leading reputation management firms and corporate communication professionals, and applied it through a two-month internship at some of India's leading PR consultancies. In this final leg, they get exposure to advanced communications techniques and have gotten an opportunity to work with corporate communications teams. Here are brief snapshots of their professional profiles.



Anjana PV

Anjana is a Bachelor of English Language and Literature from Prajyoti Niketan College, Kerala. Her interest for communication and leadership skills took her to the world of Public Relations. She is open to learning and keen to work hard to reach her goals.



ADFACTORS PR



@AnjanaPV2



anjanavenugopal.wordpress.com



Lynn Misquith

Lynn is a Bachelor of Commerce from St. Agnes College, Mangalore. Her passion for marketing & communications drove her towards the field of Public Relations. She believes in turning her dreams into reality by accepting challenges and accomplishing them efficiently.



Edelman



@LynnMisq



storiesbylynn97.wordpress.com



Neha Shah

Neha holds a degree in B.A (Hons) in Arts, from Pearl Academy of Fashion, New Delhi, specialising in Textiles. She has nine years of work experience of working in the field of textiles. Her love for communication, managerial skills and meeting new people made her join Public Relations.



Lifes Journey Voyage



@Shah\_Neha85



lifesjourneyvoyage.wordpress.com



Sushabya Pradhan

Sushabya holds a degree in B.A with specialisation in Journalism and Psychology from M S Ramaiah College of Arts, Science & Commerce, Bangalore. Her love for meeting new people and desire for learning drove her towards the field of Public Relations.



Avian



@Susavya



perfectblemish22.wordpress.com



Winter Internship



Urvashi Rawat

Urvashi is a BBA graduate with a specialisation in Finance & Chinese from Amity University, Noida. She is a strong communicator with a creative bent of mind, who has also been successful in understanding people and extending to them. This combination has drawn her to the field of Public Relations.



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# COVER STORY.

## THE LURE OF MIDDLE INDIA: COMMUNICATING WITH CONSUMERS BEYOND THE METROS



**With greater numbers comes greater responsibility and there is no way that brands can ignore the huge target audience in Middle India. There is a visible increase in number of consumers from tier 2, 3 & 4 cities. How are brands tackling this shifting landscape? Senior editor, Shree Lahiri speaks with some experts to get a grip on the lay of the land.**

They say that real wealth of India lies in its villages. Travelling back in time to Mahatma Gandhi's comment, "If the village perishes, India will perish too"; it was prophetic indeed, and it is significant that the importance of Middle India has now swung into the spotlight. Statistics support this too - nearly 70% of the country's population live in rural areas. To be precise, according to the last census (2011) the rural-urban distribution is

68.84% and 31.16% respectively. Plus, rural development is considered a key parameter in India's growth and prosperity.

Well, with greater numbers comes greater responsibility and there is no way that brands can ignore this target audience. How are brands tackling this shifting landscape? With the onset of digital era, consumers from

small towns have their own circle of aspirations. And, today, as we are on the election mode, politicians are trying every possible way to cater to the appeal of people beyond the metros.

In a competitive scenario and demanding business environment like this, how is Public Relations capturing the changing markets in their communication strategies?



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## DEEPA SRIVIDHAR

Director, Corporate Communications & Marketing  
Turner

The consumer base in this area is highly motivated to spend. There has been an evolution in consumer behavior and spending patterns due to their rising incomes, mobile penetration and data connectivity. **This is alongside developments affecting their attitude and consumption pattern which lead the way for businesses.**

### The rules of the game are dynamic

Brands and especially PR professionals need to understand that the rules of game are different when it comes to rural markets, especially in India, where diversity rules. Additionally, the rural environment is vastly different from the urban and therefore communication to potential customers requires a specialised and integrated approach. Without experience, exposure and expertise in understanding the small town economy, it is definitely challenging

to devise a strategy effectively.

PR practitioners need to innovate exclusively for rural consumers because the values and sensitivities of the rural audiences are in stark contrast to that of their urban counterparts.

### How has the shift happened today, in terms of businesses addressing Middle India?

India's rural markets have been offering outstanding growth opportunities for global as well as local companies to experiment with

their marketing strategies. Making further inroads into the Indian markets for increase in market share and brand recall requires developing of insightful (read customised) product innovation, packaging, marketing and ancillary activities to capture rural loyalty. Even a leading electronics brand like LG could not help but develop a 'LG Rural Television' called 'Sampoorna', to address area-specific consumer needs. It launched its DTH enabled TVs and swept markets that had poor networks in cable and satellite connections. Now, that was a masterstroke when it comes to offering customised solutions. All the experts were in unison with the fact that the shift has definitely taken place.

**Shailesh Goyal**, Founder, Simulations Public Affairs Management Services observes - "With metros and mini-metros now saturated and pampered enough with choicest brands and products all over, they are unable to give desired growth. FMCG and all other businesses are thus increasingly focusing now towards Middle India for impetus".

There was a time when brands did not have any special budgets or special strategies for the rural markets, notes **Atul Malikram**, Founder, PR 24X7 and adds, "but in the last two decades things have really changed. Now brands understand the importance of the rural markets and hire specialised teams to take care of these markets". Also, the communication, packaging, placements of the products and one-to-one connect with the consumers has increased. One can clearly see that the sharp bias that used to exist 20 or 30 years ago between urban and rural is no longer present.

Brands have become more sensitive. It's a do-or-die situation. "All brands realise that in order to sustain growth, they need to address the consumers in Middle India," says **Rashmi Tandon**, Partner, Media Tech Associates. The big city/metro consumer has experienced all brands and is somewhat jaded ...nothing excites them unless really innovative and exotic. It is the consumer residing



## SHAILESH GOYAL

Founder  
Simulations Public Affairs Management Services

“With rising **aspiration of consumers in the Middle India**, coupled with their increasing power to spend, brands are reworking themselves to be available to such target audiences at **entry level price points and trigger consumption**.

in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, who is going to drive the growth and they are the ones who are now being targeted with marketing activities, PR, advertising and the like.

**Effectively, has the relationship taken a new turn - between brands and consumers in Middle India?**

Given their unique dynamics, an “urban” communications approach will not hold well in tier 2 markets. And because the values and sensitivities of the rural audiences are

a stark contrast to that of their urban counterparts, PR practitioners need to innovate exclusively for these consumers and go that extra mile.

The relationship between brands and consumers in Middle India has definitely taken a new turn, according to Atul Malikram. Earlier, the Middle India consumer was assumed to be poor with little or no education and limited purchasing power. But now the perception is changing.

With increasing literacy levels and

media exposure, people in Middle India are demanding a better lifestyle. Now brands have realised that the small town consumer is as diverse and different as the urban consumer and that they too have the purchasing power that brands are looking for. So, they are looking beyond metros and trying to increase their footprints in Middle India.

It actually comes down to a question of growth. “Brands are now closer to the consumers of Middle India...they need them for their growth stories”, asserts Rashmi Tandon, with total conviction.

**What are the engaging ways followed by marketing communications today in Middle India?**

Tools like roadshows, sponsorship of local events (even really small ones which the local distributor or dealer may engage with) and competitions to amplify branding and advertising across the city skyline are being used today. Brands are creating properties in the Middle India local markets which become annual features and have a loyal following.

As **Deepa Sridhar**, Director, Corporate Communications & Marketing, Turner, sees it, the golden rules of engagement are “commitment” and the core mantra of “think regionally, act locally”. It is commitment that creates an emotional connect and this only comes when you think from the customer's perspective.

The rules are guided by the 'A' factor, according to Atul Malikram. The rules of engagement followed by marketing communications today in Middle India are doctored by the following five 'As':

- **Affordability:** Pricing the product sensibly and keeping it affordable is the key to widening one's customer base in Middle India.
- **Accessibility:** Making your product accessible to the small town buyer continues to be a



pertinent issue. Best solution to this is a good distribution strategy.

- **Awareness:** Generating awareness about products on offer in middle India is a different ball game altogether. There's nothing like a live demonstration to win customer confidence.
- **Acceptance:** Getting people to accept your product depends on the content of your advertisements. Using opinion leaders like local celebrities is another way of gaining acceptance of the audience.

- **Association:** Joining hands with local institution, partnering with them is a sure shot way of guaranteeing success in the rural market.

Another opinion is that companies are following 'KISS' strategy (Keep it simple, stupid!), opines Shailesh Goyal. The communications are straight, psychologically or emotionally touching with enhanced access points. 'No Frill' offers are served with participative approaches via localised 'below' as well 'above the line' marketing initiatives to engage the prospective customer base.

### Are brands doing enough to reach out to Middle India?

Interestingly, the rural FMCG market in India is expected to grow at a CAGR of 14.6 per cent between 2016 and 2025 and reach USD 100 billion by 2025. Trying to increase its penetration in rural areas to generate more revenue from rural India are organisations like Patanjali, Dabur, HUL, Britannia, Nestle and so on.

The phenomenon began post 2016, and demonetisation and GST has given impetus to it. The urban consumer is spoilt with choices at dream prices, states Shailesh. The volumes have shrunk forcing companies and brands to look beyond tier 1 cities. Advertising, promotions, OOH, PR and digital everything is being used in Tier 2, 3, 4 and rural India.

Brands are expanding wide and deep enough to reach out to the Middle India, according to Deepa Sridhar. They are conducting ethnographic studies, customising content locally, learning the customer's consumption habits and addressing their needs, besides exploring every available platform to reach out to Middle India.

Whether it is FMCG or consumer durables, everyone has tapped into these markets as they find more opportunities there and are trying to encash them. But the problems of rural marketing are continuing despite all efforts. The rural marketer faces many challenges. Distribution costs and non-availability of retail outlets are major problems faced by the brands. Many brands, which should have been successful, have failed miserably. This is because most firms try to extend marketing plans that they use in urban areas to the small town markets. The unique consumption patterns, tastes, and needs of the rural consumers should be analysed at the product planning stage so that they match the needs of the rural people.

Are brands really doing enough or do they need to do more? That's the question Rashmi Tandon asks, when



**RASHMI TANDON**

Partner  
Media Tech Associates

"Communication needs to be a focused and holistic strategy, if brands are ambitious about mapping tier 2 and tier 3 cities and if they desire to delve into the definition of rural consumerism. Engagements happen at different levels, and consumer connect is the need of the hour."







## ATUL MALIKRAM

Founder  
PR 24X7

Rapid advancement in technology and better connectivity has significantly increased the scope of **business in rural geographies and small towns**. Many brands are now aggressively focusing on Middle India markets.

she stresses the fact that brands need to penetrate even more, as the market is immense and the real growth will come from there in the future. "Radio and TV are very engaging and powerful vehicles as they have a huge following," she adds.

### What are the ways to improve brand communication?

Marketers need to communicate the right message to develop the desired mindset among the consumers. The need for focused marketing

communications today in Middle India should not be underestimated; the innovation should be carried out within the framework of the 4-R principle: Relevance, Reliability, Reach and Resonance, points out Atul Malikram. If the Indian advertising industry wants to reach out to rural India in an effective and efficient way, it has to relate itself in local colours, customs and modes of communication in order to make itself relevant to the needs and desires of rural consumers. It has to win the trust of the masses by undercutting

its own excessive dependency on western styles of advertising. It has to reach out to rural consumers and relate to them, so that it can bring about the desired behavioral changes. Also, it has to find ways to create resonance. The four components share an interdependent relationship with each other.

Shailesh Goyal makes an interesting point, as he suggests - 'CCP' (Cut, Copy and Paste) way of communication doesn't work in engaging audiences in Middle India. Regional language and content with national / international *tadka* using 360-degree promotions connects the consumer and serves best to the aspiration of people of Middle India.

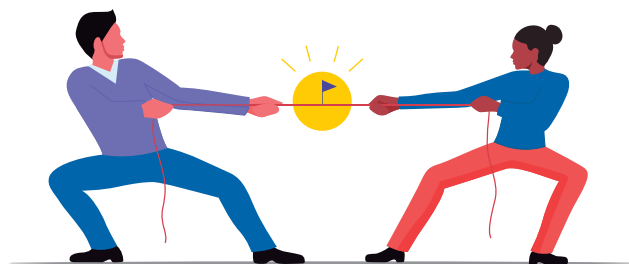
So, logically, marketing strategies would differ to stay valid to the small town consumers. A multi-pronged marketing strategy focusing more on local communication and activation for tier 2 markets is more suitable, which ensures connect with the local consumers and trade. Brands really need to look into the rise of Nano Influencers, points out Deepa Sridhar. Brands need to identify them in the local markets within Middle India and collaborate with them. "Therein lies a huge opportunity, for brands to communicate, which currently is untapped," she emphasises.

However, Rashmi Tandon argues that brands need local visibility and availability in order to capture the minds of the target audience. As they say, '*Jo dikhta hai woh bikta hai*' - so, brands need to be seen by the target audience.

Success in these regions will depend on innovative marketing strategies, as they witness rapid demographical changes. So, betting big on small town markets is giving big returns today, and it is working!



# IN THE LEAGUE.



Vast opportunities exist - providing PR services in the hinterland, bridging the gap between the major metros and the mini metros. Here are some players who specialise in reaching out to consumers in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.



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Fuzion PR based in Chandigarh, claims to be India's strongest regional PR firm with a presence even in the smallest of regions of the country. Aiming to become a one-stop solution for all communication for brands across regional India, the company has created an impact in Regional PR, operating across the domains of communication.

## MEDIA-TECH ASSOCIATES

Media-Tech Associates is a PR firm which specialises in media relations in Tier 2 cities across states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Assam and Meghalaya. Additionally, they also undertake work and events in Nepal.



MEDIA-TECH ASSOCIATES



PR 24x7 Network Limited

## PR 24X7 NETWORK

Headquartered at Indore, PR 24x7 Network, has a company philosophy that contributes to "connect and convey", as they help clients in connecting with their market segments to convey their messages. They have created a benchmark for themselves since their inception in 2006.

## QUIK RELATIONS

Quik Relations is unrivaled in the ability to help clients safeguard their reputation during challenging times. Having a client-focused philosophy that is reflected in their clients' corporate and brand reputation, Quik Relations has managed many successful campaigns across industries, since its inception in 1999.



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## SIMULATIONS PUBLIC AFFAIRS MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Simulations Public Affairs Management Services, based at Ahmedabad, crafts narratives that build a lasting impression. Offering 360-degree communications solutions, they strategise to ensure that the designed communication creates an impact. Through guided perception-building exercises, they help brands to create brand value.

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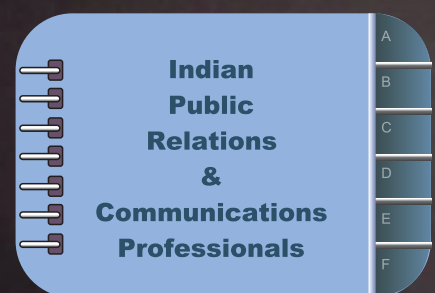
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# GURU SPEAK.

*I do believe that very soon, there will not be a PR world or an advertising world. It'll just be a communications world – totally digitised!*

**ROGER C. B. PEREIRA**

Advertising and Public Relations Veteran



Roger Pereira has been a Marketing Communications Consultant to more than a hundred companies in India and across the world, and several Governments – India, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, the US, Indonesia, Singapore & Sri Lanka. Many awards have come his way (Indian and International), including the U.N. Award, five Lifetime Achievement Awards, felicitations at the Banff Film Festival, Emmy Awards & the Hollywood Academy of Arts and Sciences. Founder of the Advertising Standards Council of India, the International Advertising Association Chapters in India, Indonesia, Singapore & Sri Lanka. He has also initiated mentorship programs for the youth as the Vice Chairman of Mumbai First and a Board Member/Advisory Board Member/Trustee of a few companies/NGOs & other institutions. A literature and theatre enthusiast, Roger originally planned to be an actor, then a priest, then a fighter pilot, but fate ruled otherwise, as he shared! Looking back at his career, he touches on some interesting milestones in his journey...

**RT: How would you describe your long and eventful journey in the world of Public Relations?**

RP: Exciting ... frustrating ... rewarding! I had quite a few entries and exits into the world of PR. The first was at the instance (or shall I say insistence?) of Mrs Indira Gandhi, when she was Minister for Information & Broadcasting. That was in 1965 after the Pakistani intrusion into the Rann of Kutch. Thanks to her, I learnt from the best, Prasanto Sanyal! The second was at the request of Mr S J Coelho, the MD of Gujarat Alkalies & Chemicals Ltd at the time of their IPO. Incidentally, he was the Collector of Kutch at the time of

the Pakistani intrusion (but, that's another story!): The third time, was at the request of the path-breaking Singapore PM, Lee Kuan Yew. And finally, it was the wonderful and legendary JRD Tata, who not only suggested that I take the plunge, so long as I focussed on strategic Public Relations – like what Tata's did to save TISCO (Tata Steel) from nationalisation. His advice was backed by awarding me the critical Tata businesses that included the merger of TOMCO and Lakme with Hindustan Lever (HUL, today).

**RT: Share with us the story of how you moved from Advertising to Public Relations.**

RP: To this, there's only one simple matter-of-fact answer: I had no choice. My terms of disengagement after a five-year notice, left me with no option!

**RT: What was the main inspiration in your professional life that set you going?**

RP: To be honest, I have been truly blessed! In my career span, I have had the best gurus/role models, to learn from, first hand: JRD Tata, Dr Vikram Sarabhai, Dr Ravi Mathai, Dr Varghese Kurian, Gira Sarabhai, Achyut Barve, Bill Bernbach, Bill Marsteller & Harold Burson, Ebrahim Alkazi, Alyque & Bubbles Padamsee, Noel Godin, Adi





Marzban, N. P. Godrej, Bapu Deolalikar, Vasant Sathe, S.J. Coelho, H. J. D'Penha, Ela Bhat, Martha Stuart, Bill Sweeney, Amartya Sen, Ratan Tata, Jack Wells ... the list is longer!

**RT: Most PR campaigns have traditionally been centred around the metros or the 'tier one' cities. In your time, how did you approach outreach to 'tier two' and 'tier three' cities?**

I have had the opportunities of working in almost every class town, down to the villages ... with Dalits, Adivasis, men and women ... selling the idea of forming co-operatives for milk, cotton, groundnut oil, equity to farmers from the allotted category of companies like GNFC and even selling the advantages of detergent bars and explaining to them how and why the dirt cannot resettle on the fabric as they do when they wash with soap, even in hard water areas! (And, often, sleeping in the open in rural areas where I contracted malaria nine times!)

**RT: Share with us an example of a memorable PR campaign that you worked on.**

RP: There were many! Let me mention three:

- 1) Overwhelming the negative plants by certain multinationals against NDDDB in the infamous Irish Butter Case!
- 2) Combatting terrorists at the Brooke Bond Tea plantations at Doom Dooma, Assam.
- 3) The highly successful launch of Tata Indica when we had to return 50,000 full payment cheques!

**RT: You had said once that the biggest mistake an MNC can make in India is to misunderstand the local culture. Share an example or two of an MNC that cracked this right?**

RP: Kellogg's' turnaround after they made the mistake of claiming to change the food habits of India.

GE under Jack Wells - he articulated the turnaround thus: "People see India as a developing country. We see India as a country with a developed intellectual infrastructure!" and with that India was launched as the software capital of the world. As my friend Jerry Rao jocularly remarked: India should be paying GE a royalty of a million USD per year!

**RT: What are the differences you see between professionals from the 90s and professionals of today with respect to their approach to work?**

RP: To be honest, I don't meet too many PR professionals today. So, I am not really qualified to comment on this.

**RT: A large part of your time is now involved in charity work - giving back to society. How satisfying is this phase of your life?**

RP: I don't do charity. I am not a rich person! I give back. And my time is very valuable. I hear what lawyers charge these days, but 10 years ago my billable rate was, probably, in the highest bracket - for the benefit of my company!

**RT: What is your advice for new professionals entering the PR profession today?**

RP: I don't believe I am qualified to give advice. I am not a wise man, but certainly a highly experienced individual; and I readily share my experiences that people and I can learn from - I still consider myself a student! However, I do believe that very soon, there will not be a PR world or an advertising world. It'll just be a communications world - totally digitised!



# INNOVATION FIRST COMMUNICATION CONCLAVE

7th March, Gurugram

# REPLAY



Sanjiv Kapoor, Chief Strategy and Commercial Officer – VISTARA (TATA SIA Airlines) delivering the Keynote Address



Ramanathan Ramanan, Mission Director, Atal Innovation Mission delivering a Special Address



Atul Ahluwalia, Founding Partner First Partners giving the Welcome Speech



Rachana Panda, CCO, GE South Asia in a Fire Side Chat with Sudhir Mathur, CEO, Cairn Oil and Gas, Vedanta



The CFO Panel (L - R) Dilip Yadav (First Partners) - Moderator, Amit Roy (NIIT), Narayanswami Shekhar (Times Group), Rajiv Kapahi (Boston Scientific), Nitin Garg (Genpact)



Sakshi Vij, Founder & CEO Myles Cars delivering a Special Address



The CCO Panel (L - R) Suniet Bezbaroowa (Deloitte), Shikha Sehrawat (TripAdvisor), Ruchica Tomar (MakeMyTrip), Latika Taneja (MasterCard), Indu Sharma (Reckitt Benckiser), Arun Sudhaman (The Holmes Report) - Moderator



The Engaged Audience @ IFCC 2019



# INNOVATION FIRST COMMUNICATION CONCLAVE

7th March, Gurugram

## REPLAY



**Arun Sudhaman**, CEO & Editor in Chief,  
The Holmes Report in conversation with **Sanjiv Kapoor**



Registration Desk @ IFCC 2019



**Richa Gopal Shotriya**, and **Atul Ahluwalia** presenting the  
India Innovation Outlook 2019 - A Study by First Partners



Team of IFCC 2019



**Santanu Gogoi**, Founding Partner,  
First Partners giving the  
Vote of Thanks



**Sujit Patil**, VP & Head - Corporate Brand  
& Communication, Godrej Industries showcasing  
Innovation in Communication



The Engaged Audience  
@ IFCC 2019

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Asif Upadhye, Director, SPRD

## Regional Content - The next big thing for digital in India

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Read the full article at: [bit.ly/OnlineOfflineAsifUpadhye](http://bit.ly/OnlineOfflineAsifUpadhye)

Smita Venkataraman, VP - Corporate Communications & HR, AGS Health

## Lord of the Brand - Fellowship of the Regions

Effective communication is all about saying what you want to say in the language of who you are saying it to. The term 'language' in this case, encompasses a much broader spectrum such as micro-culture...

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# INNOVATION FIRST

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#### KEYNOTE ADDRESS



**Sanjiv Kapoor**  
 Chief Strategy & Commercial officer  
 VISTARA (TATA SIA Airlines)

#### FIRE SIDE CHAT



**Sudhir Mathur**  
 CEO  
 Cairn Oil & Gas, Vedanta



**Rachana Panda**  
 CCO  
 GE South Asia



**Sakshi Vij**  
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**Ramanathan Ramanan**  
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## COMMUNICATOR SPEAK.

**"Our biggest challenge today is around talent. There is a dearth of good talent, attitudes are blasé and the passion to learn and excel is relatively limited."**

### Sunayna Malik

Managing Director - India & Senior Vice President - APAC  
Archetype



Sunayna Malik has been with Archetype (formerly Text100) for over 13 years now and in her capacity as the Managing Director, she holds responsibility for the overall leadership, strategy and direction of the organisation in India. She speaks with Senior Editor Shree Lahiri about her journey, the evolving field of Public Relations, the Archetype promise and more.

**RT: Text100 began operations in 1996 in India. How has the India journey been?**

**SM:** It's been an incredible journey and although I've only been part of it for the last 13 odd years, I think my predecessors would probably vouch for the same.

23 years ago, we started off as Text100 – India's first MNC consultancy, with a single-minded focus on technology. This differentiated proposition set us apart for many years and we worked with the Who's Who of the IT and telecom sector and grew by leaps and bounds. Around a decade ago, we took a conscious decision to diversify into select new verticals – primarily those that leveraged technology for their competitive advantage. This gave us the opportunity to not only apply our in-depth understanding and experience of technology to newer domains, but also helped us broaden our client portfolio, brought in new

perspectives to our thinking & approach and of course, an infusion of some great talent.

Recently, we rebranded ourselves as Archetype with the merger of Text100 and Bite, another Next Fifteen group consultancy with a strong play amongst new-age brands. As the name indicates, our intention is to set the standards for the next generation of global firms – where marketing and communications converge seamlessly, where technology is at the core and where being global means being finely tuned to local markets. We see this as an extraordinary opportunity to try and build something new, at a scale that honors and retains the best parts of two strong consultancies.

**RT: The universe of Public Relations has evolved through the decades. How do you see the growth including at your organisation?**

**SM:** PR has definitely evolved with the explosion of digital, social,

creative and integrated solutions. As a business, our perspective has been shifting from a pure play communications standpoint to that of a marketer's. At Archetype, our purpose is to partner with category creators and industry leaders to build a portfolio that is composed of exciting, impactful companies with heaps of current (and future) potential - indeed, the world's most magnetic brands which have both, a unique position and a really strong brand pull.

We're living in a new world, rich with new opportunities and challenges and the way business is conducted is undergoing a sea change with the proliferation of digital technologies. Given this context, we are making significant investments in building up our capabilities across tools, software as well as a host of specialised offerings which equip us to offer creative solutions to our clients. We started our creative and content

group last year and today this team, is delivering some amazing work – beyond PR to several of our clients.

We are also focused on scaling up and upskilling our talent pool, as they really are at the heart of our business. It is crucial to be relevant in today's digital age – therefore nurturing our talent to equip them with pertinent skills that strengthen their understanding of the changing dynamics is an increasing priority.

I believe the profession is poised for strong growth and by constantly redefining our proposition in line with market forces and trends, we're becoming more relevant and honest every day.

**RT: What is the promise of Archetype?**

**SM:** By definition, Archetype means an original model or prototype that others imitate. With our strategy of "best people, best work, best clients", we will be the archetype for the reimagined global consultancy - a communications & marketing organisation where each office around the world is a pioneer in its local market, finely tuned to the region in which they operate, but supported by consistent client standards globally.

We're committed to building a portfolio stacked with brands that will help us attract other exciting clients, bring new candidates into the fold, and most importantly - make each of us proud.

**RT: Having spent over a decade at the firm, what are the highs and lows of your leadership stint?**

**SM:** Every journey has its set of highs and lows and mine is no exception. I think the transition from being a pure play technology consultancy to one with a diversified portfolio, was a hugely challenging time for us, as non-technology clients weren't always willing to give us a chance to prove ourselves, despite being impressed with our approach, our ideas and our people. We knew this was an absolute imperative for our continued growth and were equally determined to crack through, but it took a lot of patience, huge, huge effort and there were days when our frustration knew no bounds. I'm really

glad that period is history now and we're well established across select verticals including Healthcare, Pharma, Auto, Education, Entertainment, Travel, FMCG, Insurance and a few others.

In recent times, as a business we've all been grappling with major changes as integrated communication has become the norm, necessitating investments in new skills, processes, talent and tools. All of a sudden, we've found ourselves confronting a different reality and there was so much that needed to be unlearned and cast afresh. Big, loud and beautiful found few takers; small, snackable and "real for me" became the mantra; differently-skilled people were required, who came at a premium and affected cost structures; teams needed to be realigned, new processes and workflows were required to be introduced etc. etc. - it's been disruption and transformation on so many fronts.

**RT: What are the challenges that PR consultancy leadership face today and will do in the near future?**

**SM:** I think our biggest challenge today is around talent. There is a dearth of good talent, attitudes are blasé and the passion to learn and excel is relatively limited. Those who are motivated and keen, are always looking for the next big thing and hence the pressure to keep them engaged and motivated is immense.

Secondly, when it comes to PR budgets, they continue to be relatively small. Clients are willing to spend huge amounts on marketing and advertising, but somehow flinch when it comes to PR. In that sense we've failed to elevate the value of PR in their eyes and equate it to the other disciplines.

**RT: What does it take for a woman to strike a work-life balance?**

**SM:** In one line – knowing your priorities and staying true to your commitments - both at work and at home. It's important to prioritise "me time" and have the maturity to differentiate between urgent and important vs important but not urgent.

A strong, supportive ecosystem at home obviously helps but in nuclear

families, staying connected with your children and family 24x7 in today's digital age is a reality. It's an advantage we did not have when I was a young mother so I think today's women are more fortunate.

However, I have a different take on this. Why would you ask this question of a woman only? A work life balance is gender neutral.

**RT: What is your advice for youngsters who are entering the PR world?**

**SM:** I think anyone who makes their career in PR should enjoy reading. It's such an enriching discipline and every day brings new learnings and ideas. So, if you're naturally curious and knowledge hungry, it's the best place to be in. Every brand you work for teaches you something new and the wealth of information we unwittingly collect, is amazing.

Also, ask questions – lots of them. Don't take things at face value - try and understand the logic behind. Be inquisitive, practice curiosity.

Last, but not least, respect yourself, because then you'll deliver work you are proud of. Our best comes from the passion to excel, to exceed – so treat every task with the respect it deserves.





MUMBAI, 2018

SUPER NIGHT



REPLAY



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Siddharth Banerjee Business Leader & Author



Shreya Narayan - Actor & Model



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NEW DELHI, 2019

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Panel Discussion on **Importance of Communication in Politics**



**Priya Sahgal** - Journalist, Author and Political Commentator



Celebrating **Jayoti Lahiri's 80th Birthday**



**Surabhi Hodigere** - Political Commentator and Founder, Political Quotient



**Papa CJ** performing an impromptu gig



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# COMMUNICATOR SPEAK.

Now-a-days, *consumers want to experience brands and know the real story behind them*, and the people and ethos that drive them thus, bringing more authenticity into business.

## SONIA HURIA

Head - Corporate Marketing, Communication & Sustainability  
Viacom18



**Sonia Huria drives communications, network marketing and social impact agendas for Viacom18. She oversees brand communications across all its five lines of businesses – broadcast entertainment, film entertainment, digital entertainment, experiential entertainment and consumer products – as well as leads one of the industry's most decorated marketing communication functions. She speaks to Shree Lahiri on her journey, achievements and more...**

**RT: You have spent over a decade at Viacom18. How has the journey been?**

SH: My journey at Viacom18 has been an exhilarating one. I joined the network with the launch of its flagship Hindi GEC COLORS and am now driving brand and corporate communications for the media conglomerate across all its lines of businesses, in addition to driving its sustainability agenda. With the expansion of the network both vertically and horizontally, my portfolio expanded to add more skills and responsibilities. My decade-long journey motivated and challenged me to gun for more. Building brand communication strategies, implementing them at scale, bridging internal communication across a geographically and demographically diverse workforce and crafting the identity of a 'network with a humane purpose' through partnerships with various government & industry bodies and social impact organizations have been some of the most important aspects of my

Viacom18 journey. In my journey so far, I have seen the media and entertainment industry move from being focussed on traditional media to now integrating communication across platforms.

**RT: What has been your most significant achievement at Viacom18?**

SH: For a marketing and communications professional, the most important achievement can come only from the impact that their work has. I have been fortunate to expand my understanding of communication to bring about social impact. Earlier this year, I strategically and creatively led creation of the show Navrangi Re! – the first original on COLORS Rishtey that was a general entertainment show with an underlying social message of faecal sludge management. About 70% of India's urban faecal sludge goes untreated and there is immediate need to #GiveAShit about it. It was an opportunity to use behaviour change communication and cause-based marketing for social impact.

**RT: What are some innovative aspects that you introduced for Internal Communications?**

SH: As communicators, sometimes our biggest challenge could be to communicate with our internal audience. In 2017, we initiated VIABUZZ – the Voice of Viacom18, an internal magazine, with the idea to involve the employees wholly in the content creation process and make them the owners of the content. We led an extensive communications campaign on the theme #OneTogether which was conceptualised and executed for a period of four weeks, across offices to create excitement and give a sneak peek into the facilities of the new building through installations, creative mailers and giveaways that created buzz and anticipation amongst employees. Also, we recently concluded an internal communications campaign called 'Socialpedia' wherein everyday life scenarios were taken and converted into a playbook that could guide employees to use the freedom of





expression responsibly online.

To blend in the agenda of community service and employee engagement, we introduced Viacomunity, an annual year-long initiative that provides an opportunity to employees across our offices for volunteering work right in their city. To engage with them further, we do a week-long celebration called 'Viacommunity Week' where groups of employees visit NGOs through the week and volunteer.

**RT: How have you shaped the CSR activities for the network?**

SH: Viacom18 is one of the fastest growing and most successful networks in the country. However, we do this with a focus on the triple bottom line of social responsibility, economic value and environmental impact with an aim to be a network with humane purpose. Our projects are primarily focused in the areas of Education, Water, Sanitation & Hygiene. We identified WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) as one of our key focus areas in the year. We believe that sustained change in behaviour is at the helm of creating long-term impact. Our sustainability projects are not only limited to work with NGOs and social sector, but also transcends into behaviour change communications for the larger masses. Hence, every sustainability project is leveraged to have a larger impact than the immediate beneficiaries with behaviour change communications.

**RT: Story-telling has become a buzzword and is the driving force in PR. What makes a good story?**

SH: A good story is about something the audience may find interesting or important. Being relatable is the key ingredient for good story-telling. In times of digital media being the real-time communication tool, relevant stories are driving the business. It is important for a brand to be consumer-centric and engage with content that relates to end consumers. A good story should allow companies to better connect with their audience and ultimately stimulate ideas to align with their marketing goals. Now-a-days, consumers want to experience brands and know the real story behind them, and the people and

ethos that drive them thus bringing more authenticity into business.

**RT: With tight work schedules, how do you manage to strike a work-life balance?**

SH: I believe, it is natural for women to ace at multi-tasking. Having said that, we are at a juncture where we are experiencing a shift from work-life balance to work-life fusion wherein we have been integrating work with personal life thus maximising output at work and also at home. Performing roles at both places is hence swift, considering lines have blurred and technology has only been a catalyst in achieving our goals and completing daily tasks. We are in an environment where we are forever connected – professionally, socially and personally. In such a scenario, it becomes imperative to periodically disconnect, unwind and rejuvenate. During these times that I disconnect, I prefer spending time with my family and by myself.

**RT: Where do you see yourself five years from now?**

SH: Insight, Innovation and Impact are the three pillars of growth in a professional's career. Hence, in my journey ahead I would like to see myself contributing to both my organisation as well as a leader, who can innovate using insightful learning and create an impact at the top line as well as at the societal level.

**RT: Recently you wrote about why 2019 is going to be the year of new beginnings for Communications. What are you looking forward to?**

SH: As the country gears up for its General Elections, communication will take the centre stage in this socio-political environment. I am looking forward to a revolution which will be created by connecting marketing and PR. Coming from an industry that gives voice to messages, the media and entertainment sector will lead cause-led communication which will connect brands with consumers. I believe, to lead internal communications, stories that reflect real life will be trendsetters for the near future. Going forward, data will revolutionise the way we

contemplate communications and will impact the way we communicate our propositions. Overall, there will be a magnificent swift change in the communications business.

**RT: What is your advice for young graduates entering the PR profession?**

SH: According to me, at the time and age where everything is about real-time communication, it is important for young graduates to keep themselves updated with the happenings of the industry. Reading, writing and news scanning should be a part of their daily routine. It is critical to spend time reading about events that could impact their client. Gaining knowledge is of utmost importance and therefore young graduates must keep up with trends and continually sharpen their skills to adapt to a changing media landscape. Along with this curiosity is an element which every individual entering the PR profession must have. It is important to learn as much as you can to derive success.





Registration Desk



Of Deccan and Dakhani: How Islam and Hinduism Influenced each other:  
● **Gautam Pemmaraju**, Documentary Filmmaker, **Ratna Rajaiah**, Writer and Culture Commentator and **Vidya Shah**, Singer and Music Historian



Parenting Challenges in the Digital Age - (L - R) **Prof Malavika Kapur**, Visiting Professor, National Institute of Advanced Studies, **Sebastian Edassery**, Director - Security Office Deloitte, India and **Samar Halarnkar**, Editor, India Spend



Incredible Tales from Bollywood -  
● **Tisca Chopra**, Actor



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● **Chandramouli Venkatesan**, Corporate Leader & Author



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Music in the Black and White Era - **Vidya Shah**, Singer and Music Historian accompanied by **Sandesh Bhat** and **Meghna Bhat**



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Our Cities, Our Rivers: Reimagining the Relationship - **Rohini Nilekani**, Founder-Chairperson, Arghyam in conversation with **Dr Mihir Shah**, Former Member, Planning Commission, Government of India



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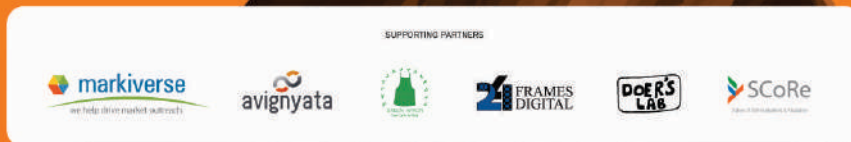
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Former Member, Planning Commission, Government of India



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Director-Security Office Deloitte, India



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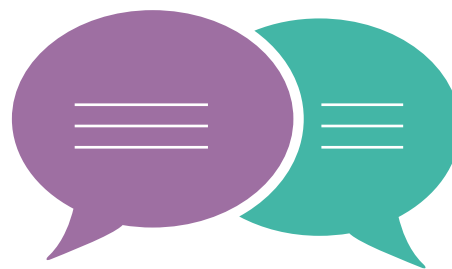
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# DEBATE



*Are brands doing enough to reach out to consumers in Middle India? Two professionals from the business share their perspectives.*

## BRANDS ARE NOT DOING ENOUGH TO REACH OUT TO MIDDLE INDIA

India is a complex yet growing market, bursting with consumers wanting to come into the mainstream from all corners of the nation. It has never been this fast paced ever. Sure, these consumers have bought washing powder and shampoo sachets for a rupee, but that is not what they wish to do through their lives. They are wanting to consume terabytes of data, everyday making way for content that is local, creators that are local and consumption that is local.

So, the question - 'have we done enough' is only true and reflective of our own aspirations to be with this population. On the one hand there are brands that are satisfied with the top layer of the consumer pyramid and on the other there are brands that are born out of the sheer pull of middle India consumers, creating products & services to help serve this emerging and ever-growing base. While sometimes it is about expanding boundaries for existing products to serve this base and, on other occasions, it is about opening new doors and opportunities with completely new set of offerings, business models and consumer engagement.

As consumers from new emerging regions climb the learning curve quickly, mere lip service won't help the brands, companies will need to shed the conventional wisdom and adopt methods that help fast track the inclusion of the middle India into mainstream commerce. While there have been consistent efforts to solve for this reach and complexity, be it the financial products, smart phones and feature phones with language support, low bandwidth apps etc. the work has just begun.

The shifts will definitely have big implications for how companies position themselves now.

### Sheetal Singh

Associate Director  
External Communications,  
Flipkart

Backed by 14 years of work experience, Sheetal has crafted communication campaigns and advised leading Indian and Global brands.



## BRANDS ARE DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY TO REACH OUT TO MIDDLE INDIA

If I was writing this in 2005 (when Fuzion was formed), I would start by explaining the importance of regional India, 80% population that resides beyond Metros, increasing disposable incomes and majority of business for brands across sectors moving towards the tier 2-3-4 zones. If it was 2010, I would have a few examples of brands having an edge over competition, by understanding the need to have a different communication strategy for Regional India. By 2010, Indian corporate communication teams had started realising the potential tier 2-3-4 zones had to offer and also that having a specific strategic outlook was needed instead of replicating the campaigns devised for consumers residing in Metro regions. That was the time when the term 'Regional PR' started being mentioned in annual plans and specific budgets were allocated and Regional Communication was on its way to becoming a specialised domain in the overall communication strategy sphere.

Today, Regional is the new National. Brands, communication firms, political parties and even celebrities from every strata realize the huge impact Regional India can have in achieving their communication objectives.

The saturation hitting the metro regions is an indication to a sphere where 'Regional Trumps National' in the communication business. Even in the digital domain, Regional India is catching up and in the next five years it would be the primary pillar in any brand's communication planning.

With every brand waking up to this transition, the struggle will be to understand the rapidly-changing consumers and adapting our communication strategy accordingly. Brands have now understood that they cannot feed the entire country the same communication, and expect them to respond to it. The time now is to treat the different geographies individually, to understand their social fabric and devise communication in the same thread of emotions.

### Mukesh Kharbanda

Managing Director  
Fuzion PR

A strong believer in the potential of regional PR in India, Mukesh has been at the forefront of looking beyond the metros to increase the role and scope of Regional Communications.



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# LOOKING GLASS

*Aakriti has spent over 15 years in the field of PR and Marketing Communication. She feels that the technology in PR is underwhelming, and is the **point of change** for massive growth for the industry and its people.*

## AAKRITI BHARGAVA

Co-Founder - BoringBrands & Wizikey



### The PR tribe: Decoded

Getting by on your own, is a path to master many skills. Hiring is not that skill. To most of us, hiring is a baffling process. One hour, and you got to determine a lot. Most likely even at the end of it, you'd be unsure, despite sheets of data that can help in determining if you are doing right. It's just unfair.

Like Yoga, you can see that if you are into hiring, it will hone you everyday. Sweet pain. Hiring makes you learn, not just from how you should do it, but also from the people you meet and what they have done to get where they are. And it takes headstands for an upside down view of what you can learn from the person sitting across the table.

The PR fraternity, unlike most others is not a homogeneous one. There are professionals from diverse backgrounds like Engineering, Law, English, Maths, Physics, Management that believe their innate skills can be put to better use in the world of PR. Despite the rigors of managing multiple relationships, the field continues to draw the charming ones with its charm. When you are sitting across the table wooing them in to your own firm, you marvel at the eloquence, and as soon as you step deeper into the conversation you

wonder if they ever sleep, date or sometimes even find the time to breathe. Therefore, this piece is a not so exhaustive list on powers we possess:

**OPTIMISM:** The life of a professional is almost like entering a 'Sagar Manthan', churning the ocean, practically month on month, day on day, in hope for the nectar of immortality. 'The Amrit' - that article with perfect messaging that will turn around the perception of the client / company, and go viral. It is the only field where impatience and optimism go hand in hand. Impatience of the client goes hand in hand with the optimism of a well researched article. Impatience of the journalist goes hand in hand with the optimism of getting accurate information within the stipulated deadline.

**FINESSE:** You ask me the closest parallel to a PR professional of a super hero and I'd say that we are our own cult. Give it a stretch and it would be 'elastigirl' in my opinion. Oh the stories of how PR people can stretch and leap. One moment there is a fantastic article and the next moment a crisis. From being called out on missing a piece in coverage tracker to finding reasons for the headline that makes no sense. I have seen fanatical cases of some candidates, who started career

with reporting to CEOs with just one reporting line in between, handling themselves with much grace, the responsibilities thrown so early into their lives. And what is grace without humility, which is a trait that is to be well learnt from PR.

**WORLD - VIEW (Unmath-ed):** Do you know why most people in the profession would tell you that they do not like Mathematics, cos 'there is no story there'. Having said that, do not underestimate the comprehension skill that they bring to the table. A hard earned salary comes from hours of scanning articles, going deep into corporate matters, from policy to culture. Give them a (analysed) set of numbers, and see how they craft it into words, spin it and transform perceptions.

Are you nodding your head, while reading this? You think, I am missing something very obvious? Would love to meet and decode. Write to me at [aakriti@boringbrands.com](mailto:aakriti@boringbrands.com) with a subject line of Lets Tribe Up and let's catch up over coffee.



# ENGAGING STROKES

*Shree Lahiri has spent over two decades in the field of communication, as a journalist and being involved in reputation management and relations. She can be reached @shree\_la on Twitter.*

## SHREE LAHIRI

Senior Editor - Reputation Today



Coming across the term “Middle India” immediately reminded me of a collection of short stories I had read of Shri Bhisham Sahni, who is considered to be one of the best modern Hindi writers. I remember he examined what was called “middle India”, which was described as “not rich or famous or educated in convent schools, not cosmopolitan but urban or semi-urban”. And some of the short stories that I recall are - 'Dinner for the Boss', a tale of a man trying to please his employer and a mother's attempt to please her son and 'Sparrow', a story of love and loss in marriage.

Middle India is a domain which offers a lot. There are opportunities galore and innumerable creative challenges to tell stories that appeal to audiences in middle India and various sub segments within. Brands have realised this; they can dig in their heels and lead the way.

Evaluating the lay of the land, many brands have made progress in generating huge appeal. Mostly, it is driven by the existing tastes and preferences of customers that brands are trying to fulfill in Tier-2 and Tier-3 terrains. It may be a very rigorous, elaborate process, both on the

creative side, as well as from an insight and strategy point of view. But, for brands, variety is critical and it is important to look at genres that matter.

Is it only the number game that attracts? Change is always good, but it comes with a new set of challenges. Brands like Videocon, dared to take the step and nothing stopped them from taking the plunge, and penetrate deep into the rural and semi-urban areas. Like Videocon, other brands too made this move, consciously aware of new challenges. Oriflame (the direct selling beauty brand) also ventured out looking to expand its operations in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities - to be accessible to people across the country. Other examples include ITC's e-Chaupal, Hero Honda's 'Har Gaon, Har Aangan', LG launched Sampoorna TV and so on.

So how are brands trying to engage with Middle India? First by focussing on the need that has to be fulfilled, and then, by strategising on how to create more brand value. Unfurling brand storytelling that will appeal to the TG beyond urban boundaries. While discussing the attraction for

Middle India, we can't leave out cricket and the lure of IPL. What determines the fan following of the IPL team? The league itself has made efforts to garner more viewership by holding matches in smaller towns. In fact, IPL was a tool to increase television viewership, as the small-town strategy not only increases eyeballs, but also increases advertiser pull.

A range of other sports too are going the cricket way. Ad inventory for sports such as football, kabaddi and futsal has been going at a premium, as they attract eyeballs in both metros and smaller towns.

Another outstanding case in point, is that Singapore tourism is now eying smaller Indian cities! They are making attempts to attract more tourists from India and have increased focus on Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities. So, the road ahead seems to be teeming with opportunities. The future of consumerism is in Middle India. There is a lot of potential for brands and communicators beyond the metros that is waiting to be tapped.





# TAKING PRIDE

Amith Prabhu is the **Founding Dean at the School of Communication and Reputation (SCoRe)**. He is also the Founder of the **Promise Foundation**- the only organisation from India which is a member of the **Global Alliance**. He has also been elected to be part of the International Board of Management of the Global Alliance for one year. He can be reached at @amithpr on Twitter.

**AMITH PRABHU**  
Advisor - Reputation Today



It is always a joy to share some thoughts with fellow professionals. I am sure you have been enlightened by reading the contents of this issue that focussed on Middle India (or what in simple words is Beyond Metros). Well, the future is in Middle India. I have spent half my life in Middle India and I am grateful for that. It has so much to offer in terms of culture, cuisine and customs.

The PR profession is in the middle of interesting times. My tweets and columns in the first few months of 2019 are running commentary of my observations ranging from how there are several senior corporate communication leaders who are looking for work and not able to find the right job or about the lack of training among younger professionals leading to avoidable embarrassments for the fraternity to the challenge that the Top 20 PR firms will face in two years to find 60 branch heads to manage their main offices.

We started the year on a high with a plethora of platforms that have now become annual offerings from Knowledge Factory in Bangalore to the Innovation First Communication Conclave in Gurgaon to Super Night in New Delhi. Each of these offered participants enriching moments of learnings and sharing.

Now we are all getting ready for PRAXIS 2019 in Goa. I sometimes find it hard to believe that we have come a long way. Some global professionals recognised this adventure and invited me to contest for elections of an international think tank and I got elected to be part of the International Board of Management of the Global Alliance (GA) of Public Relations and Communication Management. Among other things, GA organises once in two years the World Public Relations Forum. The next edition is in Auckland in October 2020. If you would like to be part of the Indian delegation write to my colleague at [roshan@promisefoundation.com](mailto:roshan@promisefoundation.com). You can read more about the GA here [bit.ly/GAAP2019](http://bit.ly/GAAP2019)

Another idea that is taking shape is for the explicit purpose of continuous development. Project CommUnique is a platform where a team of two professionals sign up to avail a set of benefits through the year. One can read more about it here - [bit.ly/RTCommUnique](http://bit.ly/RTCommUnique) and join the movement for better professional growth.

Lastly, the School of Communications & Reputation is having its tipping point this year. Already twelve young aspirants have signed up to be part of

the fourth batch and to build a career in Public Relations. SCoRe is open to taking those who would like to make course corrections to their careers and especially those from the airline company that had to suspend operations overnight and are looking for an alternative career path. Get in touch with [hemant.gaule@scoreindia.org](mailto:hemant.gaule@scoreindia.org) for more details.

As I sign off, I request you to keep being part of the various ventures we bring to the fore. The least you can do is attend one or more of them. Be a contributor to the portal and keep sending your ideas and suggestions to [anubhuti@promisefoundation.com](mailto:anubhuti@promisefoundation.com)

See you in Goa from 27th to 29th September.



Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> May  
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## INFLUENCE IN MIDDLE INDIA: REACHING CONSUMERS BEYOND THE METROS

**Godrej Hubble, Vikhroli, Mumbai**

9:00 am	Registration
9:25 am	<b>Welcome Address</b>
9:30 am	<b>Sunil Kataria</b> , CEO, India & SAARC - Godrej Consumer Products <b>The Connectedness Paradox</b>
10:00 am	<b>Viji Venkatesh</b> , Region Head, India & South Asia – The Max Foundation <b>How an International Non-profit Influences an Audience of Patients in tier 2 India</b>
10:30 am	<b>Govindraj Ethiraj</b> , Journalist & Founder, PING Network <b>The Influence of Misinformation</b>
11:00 am	Tea Break
11:30 am	<b>Supriya Paul</b> , Director & Co-Founder, JOSH Talks <b>How JOSH Talks used the Power of Influence to make In-roads into Middle India</b>
12:00 pm	<b>Babita Baruah</b> , Managing Partner, GTB India <b>How Brands Influence Middle Class India to make Choices</b>
12:30 pm	<b>Vishal Malik</b> , Senior Management Consultant <b>A Special Session with Live Music</b>
1:30 pm	Closing Remarks
1:40 pm	Lunch

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