

Walking the tightrope

Media owners in Mumbai having hoardings on rooftops and terraces have been in the BMC's line of fire for quite some time, although they have resolutely carried on with the business



By Bhawana Anand & Pray Jani

Media owners in Mumbai having hoardings on rooftops and terraces have been doing business with the grim prospect of losing their rights on such formats given that the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is not favourably disposed toward allowing such media in the city.

Earlier in May, the Mirror reported that the urban local body was swooping down on hoardings on rooftop and terraces, to bring them down. Although that report was found to have been untrue, Nidhi Choudhari, Deputy Commissioner - Special, BMC told Media4Growth that BMC has never been in favour of allowing rooftops sites for advertising, particularly for two reasons – city aesthetics and public safety issues. She added that rooftop hoardings are not there in most other cities, and there is no reason why this format should be allowed



Nidhi Choudhari, Deputy Commissioner - Special, BMC



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in Mumbai. “We wish to make Mumbai organised and safe,” said Nidhi emphatically.

Pointing out that rooftop media is not permitted in the existing ad policy too, Nidhi said that the format is still there only because some of the media owners had obtained a stay from the court on removal of those sites. But that by itself does not mean that rooftop hoardings will be permitted once the new ad policy comes into effect in the city.

Nidhi also said that license for rooftop hoardings are not being renewed by BMC in keeping with the provisions of the draft ad policy that is now pending approval of the BMC Commissioner Praveen Pardeshi. “The policy has been submitted to the commissioner and whenever he calls for the meeting, we will present the policy to the entire team and it will be released once he approves it,” said Nidhi without stating by when the policy would come into effect.

A few of the media owners when contacted by Media4Growth to comment on this matter said they had not received any notification on removal of rooftop hoardings and those atop terraces, as was reported in the Mirror. They also said that should the BMC initiate any such move, they would take the matter to the court as these businesses have been following the existing ad bylaws. “There are no illegal media sites in Mumbai and we adhere to all rules and regulations issued by the BMC and we pay 10% escalation in tax every year despite de-growth in the business,” said a media owner. The media owners have already been grappling with another issue whereby the traffic authority had issued

a notice to switch off lights on OOH sites that are within 25 meters of the road. This has particularly hit the business of some 300+ gantries in the city. This move was apparently initiated to control what is seen as a traffic hazard. While some of the media owners have obtained a stay from the court on this matter, some others are still dealing with it.

However, it also emerges that there are instances of hoarding put up on buildings that are not particularly well-maintained, as was seen in a random field survey conducted by Media4Growth.

There are rooftop hoardings, perhaps a few in number, that blemish the city’s skyline. In some cases, the media units per se are well maintained, but the buildings that have them on the rooftop are crying for better maintenance.

On the Goregaon-Bandra stretch and adjoining areas there were rooftop media units that were not adding to the city’s aesthetics in any way, more so because the buildings having the media units atop are not well maintained.

Perhaps, if all media units are well maintained and pleasing to the eye, and the building having those media are well maintained, the drive to remove all rooftop media in the city could have been forestalled more easily •



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