

‘OOH is the soul of advertising’

Rakesh Sharma, Dy General Manager – Marketing, Bank of Baroda talks about the banking major’s approach to OOH advertising in an interview to **Pray Jani**. Edited excerpts:



**Rakesh Sharma, Dy General Manager – Marketing
Bank of Baroda**

What role does OOH play in your marketing mix?

OOH is very prominent in the BFSI (Banking, Financial Services and Investment) segment. To show your presence, you have to leverage outdoor media and online presence can never make that impact. A message that is seen in the outdoor will always be instilled in the minds of the consumers. Now electronic media is also coming into the picture that grabs more attention. And when consumers get exposed to the outdoor campaign repeatedly, their inner sense will tell them to go to the bank and see what they have to offer. Hence, to keep your brand in a hygienic position and

to get returns on investment, it is very important for a brand to be available in the outdoor advertising space. If I have to explain through an allegory, OOH is the soul of advertising.

What are the key cities that you target for your OOH campaigns?

According to our planning, we cover majority of the cities. However, depending on our product, we essentially target A-class and B-class cities in India. For these cities, if we are advertising in transit media options, around residential areas, where working population is in large proportion, we have a variety of products to offer to them. Bank of Baroda also has offerings for C-class cities. To promote our rural-based products for rural and agricultural development, we also target C-class cities. Coming back to A-class cities, we essentially target large corporates, business houses and other such economic zones.

What formats, according to you, perform best for your OOH campaigns?

I believe, presence on hoardings at key locations in any city is a must during an OOH campaign. Alongside this, there are many innovative options available in malls and cinema. Moreover, a large population of TG is found in malls as well, and for that reason, mall advertising is also a key part of an OOH campaign. With that said, one must maintain a hygienic presence in the malls. By hygienic, what I mean is, when my brand’s colour palate, the meaning that I give through my creative, the brand’s philosophy, all of these factors must sync together and be maintained in every campaign.

We make sure that the vermilion of our logo is always of the same shade wherever it is used. More than just a location, it is important for a brand to keep regulating their creatives so the consumers can get the idea that it is a happening organisation. Having one creative run for six months or a year will not fetch great returns as having creatives regulated will.



What parameters do you look into when planning a campaign and designing the creative?

We look into the facts about which product is being advertised, and which city is being targeted. We have a mix of various advertising medium, where OOH is a must. We believe that the creative should explain the strength of the product, and the product should speak for the brand. Placing only the brand's logo does not work, at least in our BFSI segment. Hence, to answer this question, the parameters being considered are, the product that we want to advertise about and the city that we are advertising in. That will help us define the advertising medium we have to pick, whether it is radio jingles or print format. However, OOH is always a part of the campaign in any city. This is because an OOH campaign, when executed correctly, will be visible to every section of the city.

As against a radio jingle that lasts barely 12 -15 seconds, to a television ad, which is visible only for 30 seconds at a time, an OOH campaign near a junction is visible throughout the day, which generates high frequency.

Moreover, it allows the recipient to image the product while stationed at the junction. It is simply unmissable. It is true what they say that successful people do things differently and that is what we try to incorporate in our campaigns. If you look at our site at the Amritsar airport, you will see that it stands out from other formats. That is exactly the kind of uniqueness we want our OOH campaigns to project

As a frequent advertiser on the OOH media, how do you see the industry evolving?

If we see the last decade, it has grown many folds, with newer formats coming up and opening more opportunities for outdoor. Earlier, OOH focused only on pamphlets, leaflets, and static media like hoardings, gantries and pole kiosks. Today we see a different culture. Demographically, the working population comprises 25-40 year olds and a vast majority of this segment are tech savvy, which has resulted in evolution in technology. For this reason, OOH consumers do not want to see what we want to show, and now brands will have to think innovatively and show the consumers what they want to see.

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Digital OOH media is the new age of OOH, which is shifting the trend from pasting static creatives on large hoardings to neon boards, LED mesh, digital screens and so on. Media has changed entirely in the last decade and this change has made outdoor advertising more beautiful. Some media are such that it will tempt the consumers to wait there and behold the site.

Another mentality that the brands follow is that they require a lit hoarding. This is because, when a hoarding is non-lit, it creates negative publicity during the evening. Earlier, brands did not consider this aspect so strongly. Now, the expectations of the audience have grown from the OOH campaigns and as a brand, one should meet those expectations.

Do you believe that integrating an OOH campaign with multiple formats drives bigger impact?

Being in the BFSI segment, our target is to capture maximum audience, and we plan our campaign accordingly. In my understanding, malls are highly active zones where advertising can happen. People visit malls not only to purchase but rather, they have turned into leisure spots, especially during the weekends. Be it for movies, or enjoying some fast food, people are going to malls for several reasons today, and as a brand, we should be present in the malls.

Recently, DLF Cyber Hub came up in Gurugram, and we made it a point to show our presence there. We are present on transit media formats as well, with Delhi metro wraps, airport media, both inside and outside. We also take traditional formats to showcase our product across cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Coimbatore, Amritsar and so on. Bank of Baroda has multiple products and our campaigns need to position them at the right place. Leveraging multiple formats help us in doing so.

Have you leveraged DOOH media so far?

All our media in DLF Cyber Hub are digital OOH and we have been taking digital OOH media for many campaigns that we run. OOH has helped increase the users of our online banking platform. It is upcoming and offers unique campaign options.

What changes do you expect to see in the OOH industry in the coming years?

In the coming years, there will be fierce competition



among media owners and solution providers to come up with innovative media for the market. Traditional methods of campaigning will not work and media owners and agencies will have to go out of their way for a unique campaign. Only the ideas that get accepted and executed will survive this race. Today, consumers are not ready to accept traditional media. Their minds are so fertile, and quick, they need innovative means and periodic changes in the way OOH is being conducted. And this need for change has been coming for quite some time. We changed our logo in 2005, and it was a historic decision taken by a PSU, and it was taken after a lot of market study and research. We have dared to act upon our data and it has worked wonders for us. Similarly, in OOH, a lot of campaigns will be backed by research and study, both from the brand's end as well as the media owners' end.

How do you monitor your OOH campaign?

We monitor our OOH campaigns very closely. Bank of Baroda has 128 administrative offices in the country and the marketing officer in each office has to upload a picture of a BOB campaign in outdoor at least once a month on our online application for auditing. Then the central team will look at it and examine if it falls in line with our requirements. If there are any changes to be made, they are made immediately.

What are your plans for the coming year?

Today, Bank of Baroda stands at the 23rd position in the list of top 50 companies in India. We want to achieve single digit number here and come in the top 9. We also want our brand to reach a higher number of audiences. ●



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Goa OOH – At the threshold of a makeover

Even as the industry has had to tackle the menace of unauthorised business, multiplicity of OOH norms and jurisdictions, there are visible signs of positive change with forward looking administrators wanting to usher in digital OOH media and regulate the business expeditiously



By Pray Jani

Goa, recognised for its holiday destinations, sea-side resorts and New Year eve celebrations, is also an important OOH market. The cities of Goa see significant OOH advertising by various national brands during this time of the year, but several developments through the year 2019 have had a major bearing on the local OOH business.

To assess the changes one would have to go a little back in time. The Goa civic body has always favoured the tourism industry over any other, as it brings in maximum revenues for the body. The excessive focus on seasonal tourism at the expense of many other industries has meant that the OOH industry had a rather limited local clientele to reach out to.

Relying solely on the peak season and regional brands during the rest of the year, media owners operating



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in the state were known to seldom make profits. Gradually, from month-long campaigns, advertising brands began to settle for shorter-duration one and two week campaigns.

Goa's numerous industries largely depend on the numerous events—Sunburn, India Bike Week, Serendipity, Carnival, also known as Mardi Gras, and



so many more, spanning from the first week of December, all the way to February. Many of these events – Sunburn for instance, returned to Goa after two years, bringing with it the opportunities for more income to the OOH players.

Keith Fernandes,

Founder of Slipdisc Advertising and Events which holds the rights for Sunburn's outdoor branding, said, "Events are a major crowd-puller. Sunburn and its sponsors spend around Rs 1.5 crore on outdoor advertising and they bring with them, immense economic benefits. I will be advertising for Kingfisher, Magic Moments, who are two of their biggest sponsors, and Sunburn event itself."

A variety of formats are used for the branding of those events. And with Sunburn appearing after a 2-year break in Goa, the media owners have almost doubled the cost of their media after maintaining a standard rate since the last 5 years. Keith notes that even with the increased media cost, the amount is quite low as compared to other cities of India. Another key aspect of this period is that some 20 Lakh tourists visit Goa, which adds to the existing 15 lakh population of Goa. That offers a great opportunity to the brands to engage with their target audience. In other words, at a cost, almost 50% lower than some major cities in India, Goa offers a multi-cultural audience of about 40 lakh who visit Goa to spend their money. For any brand, that's an unmissable opportunity.

A question that arises is whether the 3 month period of campaigns is enough to keep the OOH industry afloat over the long haul. It is true that the peak season is highly

desired by national brands, but during the off season, there is a high population of Indian tourists, especially from Northern India visiting Goa. That prompts the regional brands to maintain their presence on the OOH canvas. Moreover, the casinos, holiday resorts and jeweller brands are regular spenders on OOH through the year.

In response to the advertising demand, in recent years many new formats have come up in Goa. Panjim, for instance, sees innovations on pole kiosk media, after the Corporation of the City of Panjim (CCP) banned the use of flex on this format. Serendipity made an innovative use of this opportunity, and came up with a format that can never go unnoticed by the audience. A bicycle wheel with fabric attached to make a fan-like structure, with Serendipity written on it, rotates as the wind blows past it. Large formats such as hoardings and unipoles dot the highways, with gantries, pole kiosks, digital signages, mobile vans and bus shelters (metallic and cement made) visibly present on the roads. These are the major formats available in Goa, with a small proportion of cab wraps also available.

Goa has several cluttered media locations, but they do not belong to any single media owner. The clutter is particularly seen at prime locations, on the highways and near the airport. The fragmented media ownership also poses certain challenges to the brands in buying the right sites for their respective campaigns.

Against this backdrop, Goa's top agencies Slipdisc Advertising and Events and Think Big Advertising have a network of media that they tap into. These agencies are essentially into trading of sites, and achieve reasonably good business results even when the overall market is tepid.



Some of the top brands that advertise in Goa run similar campaigns in the overseas markets too. **Pradeep Palekar, Director of Primeslot Events**, says, "All those campaigns are executed keeping in view the international standards."



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Goa's civic structure that has different corporation bodies and panchayats. This has also created certain constraints for the industry owing to the multiplicity of authorities governing the OOH business. Goa is merely a dot on the map of India, and yet it has 120 village panchayats. Divided into North Goa and South Goa, the state's OOH is governed by what is called the Panchayat raj. The corporations of some cities run their business in a planned fashion, but the major highways that connect north and south Goa come under the panchayats where the media regulation is not very organised.

Sanjit Rodriguez, Commissioner of CCP, says, "Outdoor advertising industry is also responsible for the beautification of any city. The way the hoardings



are organised, the quality of media, all these factors directly or indirectly contribute to the beauty of a city. Due to the poor organisation of OOH media in my city, and irresponsible media owners, I will not be giving any more licenses

for hoardings. In my opinion, advertising needs to be subtle, and not loud. A media that can engage with the audience at eye-level, and manage to stand out from the elements of a city, is what will actually make an impact on the people."

The city of Panjim, as of now, prepares to welcome digital OOH media. Today, individual LED boards, set up by brands themselves face the city. Kingfisher and Vimal are two brands with prominent presence on LED boards. Sanjit Rodriguez believes that this media is not only eco-friendly, but also contributes to the beautification of the city. He urges media owners to bring more DOOH to the city. With Goa Miles, a government operated network of cabs performing well in the state, the opportunity is there to set up digital cabtop media.

The CCP commissioner has some interesting plans to change the OOH in his city. Sanjit who took over this office a few months ago has been working on waste

management. A part of that plan sheds light on single-use flex for OOH advertising. The commissioner plans to eradicate every last trace of that from the OOH industry in Panjim, and is working closely with the Government of Goa to implement the flex ban across the state. Not only this, Sanjit's immense knowledge on bio-degradable waste will assist him in ushering in the right kind of material as a replacement for flex PVC. "Flex has become a major problem for the state, but if replaced by bio-degradable options, I will personally test it at the waste management unit, and only if it passes that test will I offer the permit," says Sanjit Rodriguez.

Another important change that needs to be brought about is the placement of hoardings on the highways. He believes that there needs to be a designated stretch on the highway where hoardings can be set up, and be monitored rather than cluttering them, one on top of the other. "This setting compromises the beauty of the surrounding open space. These hoardings not only cover the entire stretch of the highway, they are also so poorly maintained that they have become an eye-sore. The way the OOH industry is functioning in Goa today, it is sure to get penalized. It is time that the media owners take some active responsibilities," says Sanjit.

When interacting with the top media owners of Goa like Adcity Advertising, Natekar Publicity, Primeslot and so on, they expressed positive opinion on DOOH media.

Angelo Nunes, Proprietor of Adcity Advertising states that "digital media can sure bring more vibrancy to the OOH industry, and many brands can advertise at the same location. Of course, there will be some difficulty, and there are high investments involved but I would gladly assist anyone who wishes to introduce any digital media to Goa."



Pradeep Palekar, Founder of Primeslot is hoping to bring digital screens to the bus shelters. Working closely with the corporation, Pradeep is positive that in



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coming months or years, digital screens will be seen on his vast network of bus shelters. "We are also working to replace flex with eco-friendly fabric as soon as we find the right alternative. Primeslot is in talks with some fabric providers as well to implement this change. We are also on the lookout for some digital signage manufacturers for Goa market since there are plans of setting up some digital screens in the city of Panjim," says Pradeep.

With the state's major authoritative bodies inclined towards organising the OOH infrastructure, what is holding back the state? As mentioned earlier, Goa is dominated by the Panchayats, with each body following its own policy. The city's OOH is monitored within the norms of The Goa Land Development and Building Construction Act of 2010. The Act assigns the power of permitting hoardings or any OOH media to the Panchayat, Municipal Council and Municipal Corporation. There are many specifications that the hoarding owners should comply with when erecting a hoarding. The authorities are also given the responsibility of verifying whether the media owners actually comply with these specifications. To point out, there are a few compliances that the hoardings need to follow with regards to positioning and size, across Goa. Under point 17 – control on erection of hoardings along on roads/on roofs of buildings, of the document, subsection 17.3 suggests:

Road (right of way) in meters	Maximum vertical size of hoarding in meters	Maximum horizontal size of hoarding	Set back from the R/W line in meters
More than 50 meters	5.0	15.0	10.0
From 20 to 50	3.0	12.0	5.0
From 10 to 20	2.5	10.0	3.0

Other points state that no hoardings can be higher than 10 meters, and have at least 3 meters from the ground. The document highlights that no hoarding will be permitted where the roads are less than 10 meters wide.

Other subsection that specify the nature of a hoardings are:

17.6. No hoarding shall be permitted, within a distance of 100 meters from the intersection of the roads. This distance is measured from the intersection obtained by joining two points on the adjacent edges of the Right of way of the roads. No hoarding shall be erected on road on a curve/bend of less than 135 degrees up to 100 meters stretch of road on either side of the bend.

17.7. Any hoarding, containing the words "STOP", "LOOK", "DANGER" or other similar words that might mislead or confuse the traveller or which is likely to be

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confused with an authorised traffic sign or signal shall not be permitted, unless specifically authorized by concerned authorities.

17.8. Hoarding on roof –

(a) The size of hoarding on roof shall be 1.00 meters x 2.50 meters, subject to maximum of 2.50 meters x 10.00 meters.

(b) No hoarding on roof shall project beyond the existing building line of the building on which it is erected.

17.10. The minimum distance between clusters of hoardings shall be 200.00 meters but the minimum distance between two hoardings shall not be less than 5.00 meters and not more than five hoardings shall be permitted in a cluster.



It is necessary that each hoarding follows these norms strictly, and for the authorities to grant permission within these norms. However, the hoardings seen on the roads barely comply with these norms. Goa has many roads that are less than 10 meters wide, which have heavy traffic. There are also several traffic junctions. Although these locations are not open to advertising as per the existing norms, the panchayats are known to be giving the permissions for putting up media there at nominal rates. Media owners give a license fee to the panchayat on a yearly basis, at a rate of Rs 2 lakh per year. However, those hoardings do not comply with the terms of Land Development Act of 2010.

In 2008, a case was filed against such hoardings, where the All Goa Hoarding Owners' Association (AGHOA) played a big role in removing them. By 2013, they had helped take down 3,000 hoardings that did not comply with the norms of Land Development Act 2010. Speaking to Angelo Nunes, the treasurer



of AGHOA, and a key figure in the case against the questionable hoardings, about the threat caused by them to the industry, he said, "The Land Development Act of 2010 was passed because of certain safety reasons and to uphold the infrastructure of the city. When these hoardings appear with the permission of the panchayat, they not only challenge the laws, but they also become a threat to the safety of property and life. Today, these hoardings appear at important junctions where OOH is not permissible, they curb our business, and put OOH industry in bad light." It is certain that some actions need to take place against the questionable hoardings urgently.

Presently, the case is ongoing, and the High Court has ordered the North Goa and South Goa Collectors to examine the hoardings across their territory and determine whether they follow the norms or not. The case is being supervised by the association members and a verdict is due in the latter part of January 2020. The concern is that the panchayat bodies are handing out permissions to media owners without verifying the facts of the norms of the Act of 2010. To these panchayats, OOH industry is still a big part of their revenue. Media owners need an NOC from the PWD, traffic department and other bodies before they can request for a license from the authority figures. A certain panchayat body surfaced during this ongoing case where they permitted the erection of the hoardings without the media owner presenting the applicable NOCs. Such malpractices are hurting the industry in general. However, soon the things are expected to fall in place, and officials like Sanjit Rodriguez are working hard to bring that change. •

