



With over 17 years of experience across industries, **Madhuri Sapru, managing partner, Kinetic Worldwide South Asia**, has worked with brands like Nestle, Blow Plast, BPL Mobile and the Tata Group. For most part of her working years, Sapru has played the role of a manager with independent charge in most situations. From vendor development for confectioneries to developing brand strategies and brand identities to implementation of marketing communication, from actual marketing of a brand to overall media buying, Sapru has done it all. She spoke to network2media's **Abhijeet Mukherjee**

. Excerpts:

Since Kinetic is a media buying and planning organization, how do you look at the recent economic slowdown? How has it impacted you?

Economic slowdown is into recovery mode now. We have got a number of new campaigns that have come in the last couple of months. If you look at the daily newspaper, you see how certain categories have done quite well, especially the automobile sector. I think there are positive signs of growth in the economy. As far as the OOH sector is concerned, definitely there are more campaigns coming up now and there also the occupancy level on media inventory is more.

I think what happened as a result of the slowdown is the change in the way in which media is bought. There is far greater competitiveness in the market now. There are many more cases where media vendors are now going to clients directly. Where clients are now focusing on how much media they can pick up and how they can pick volumes at low cost. Because if you are buying volumes of sites without actually looking at the locations or without planning out where your target audience lies, even a square footage of display is not worthwhile. So there is wastage of money.

Everybody has focused a lot more on efficiency and it has been a good learning experience. As a result of this, what has happened is a price correction because in some of the places, prices were somewhat on the higher side and it had been more of a demand- supply correction rather than the ROI kind of correction.

Is the buying pattern of clients changing due to the slowdown? If yes, how? There have been certain changes in the buying pattern. Clients are expecting more for the same amount of spends. In some cases, spends have dropped a little bit but there are different categories that have come up and within the same categories also whenever launches had to take place. We do not think clients have postponed launches except for a few weeks at most, which is again a production-led problem.

How is advertising behaviour changing in different categories like real estate, financial sector, etc? How are you approaching these companies now compared to the period before the slowdown?

I think credit concerns play an important role in approaching certain sectors that are not doing well. Money flow is also tight. We were obligated because we were buying media from our media vendor partners for our clients and we wanted both sides to benefit. That is something which is critical in deciding which industry and which client we are working with.

Internationally, Kinetic must be using certain measurement tools and technology in OOH. Are the same tools being used in India as well? If not, why?

The same tools are available for use in India but the catch lies in the fact that these tools need base data to work. India to that extent is data poor. We do not have geographical mapping, psychographic mapping of the target population. We do not even have official traffic counts at all junctions readily available for public consumption. In the absence of data, trying to operate a tool becomes difficult.

Indian outdoor industry still thrives on adaptations from print and television commercials. How do you think it impacts the industry? How does Kinetic add value in such a scenario?

I quite agree with you on this. It is a weakness of the outdoor industry. Actually OOH is a very visual media and the beauty of some of the best international and Indian creatives lie in their simplicity and that does not come by simply copying TV commercial or print ads.

We add value in terms of our understanding of our medium. How the creative works in the medium is what we advise our clients upon. In addition to that, we have tools that showcase to our clients how their ads would look before they go for production. So, before they spend the money and before the production puts it up, they know exactly how the creative would look like. In addition, we have partnerships with creative agencies which understand OOH. We believe that this can add huge benefits to the client because it is not about having an advertisement in multiple places but also the ability to get measurement of the advertisement.

What are Kinetic's future plans?

We are trying to raise the bar on our services. We have been including more products as well. We need to expand to a few other offices and that would depend on our clients' requirement. In addition, we are also pitching for businesses. There is some further software development going on which would help us in improving our operations and improve our controls to a large extent. These basically are the key areas where we are focusing now.

What would be the implication of Steve Ridley's coming on board as COO of Kinetic Worldwide?

Steve has been at the front end of some of our planning tools. I feel Steve is bringing back more know-how to the rest of the world. More importantly, it is the question of strengthening the entire management team at Kinetic.

Ambient media has not evolved in India. What is the reason for it?

It is not that ambient media has not evolved in India. Rather, it has to evolve more. We, in India, have a lot of regulations about certain aspects and no regulations at all about other aspects of media. The number of permissions you need to take is also immense. Compare that to countries abroad, the ease with which you do things is very different. For example, in China, if they introduce anything innovative, it is much easier to do things than in India. These are the areas where we suffer as we are unable to do things that are very different and innovative.

Excessive regulation is the reason why we are stuck to rigid formats. Still, I think we see a lot of digital screens that has come up in India in the last two years. There are more and more activities in malls and multiplexes now. There isn't any metro airport where there is not one or the other activation going on. I think there is lot more that we can do out here.

What outstanding creative has Portland done recently?

One that comes to my mind is the Pepsi's Nimbooz launch that I think was really nice. Another was Del Monte's campaign which used designer bus shelters in Delhi. Apart from this, another outstanding campaign that I would add is the Loop Mobile campaign.

[You can contact Madhuri Sapru here](#)