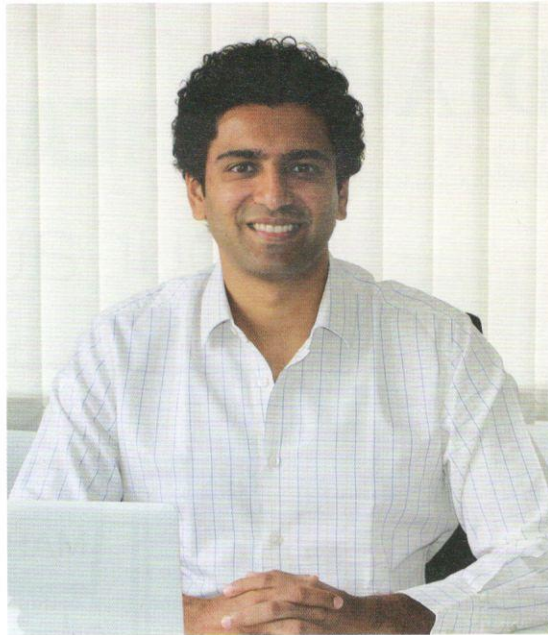


‘Consistent, long-term policies will drive rail media growth’

Shriranga Sudhakar, Managing Director, Vyoma Technologies, is extremely bullish on the future of the railway media. Shriranga’s optimism stems from his firm’s highly successful foray into the railway media space, with adroit use of digital display technologies.



Railway media commands arguably one of the biggest captive audiences for advertising, and yet it is seldom projected as a powerful OOH media. Would you agree with this viewpoint, and what is your own assessment of the importance of railway media for brand advertising?

10 billion people use the train network annually and the captive audience opportunity has never been in question for brands. Which mass brand would not like to own the mind space of this large audience set? The question marketers and brand owners want to understand is – who is this Railway commuter? How do I engage with him in a measurable manner? It is up to the stakeholders of the Indian Railway eco-system to showcase this to brands and only then will its true potential be unlocked and the importance realised.

With the advent of intelligent digital platforms, a better understanding of these commuters is now emerging and the perception of the Railway traveller is dramatically changing. Vyoma Media has its presence where 98% of Indian Railway travellers come for a transaction (ticket purchase) and we have massive data points. We will be launching a comprehensive White Paper over the next month with insights on rail travel patterns with demographic and purchase intent insights of the commuters that will be a revelation for marketers and

brand owners. Like the transformation happening in India with mobile nuclear family structures, the Railway travellers are transforming to an upwardly mobile and aspirational society who are both willing to spend and have the purchasing power. If this perception shift happens amongst brand owners, then the importance of railway media will automatically happen.

Do you think that media planners today have railway media on their radar when they make plans for advertising brands? Is there a way to grab their attention?

TOI reaches around 2 million people each day in Mumbai, and Railways connects with 6 million people each day in Mumbai alone. Railway media can be a much bigger influencer on purchase decisions than TOI or any other platform in that city. 70% of the working population of Mumbai city uses the Railways on a daily basis. Now, if that does not grab the attention of media planners, they are in the wrong profession.

Having said that, it is very important to provide deeper data and derive meaningful insights to the media planners on what this can do for their campaign / brand. For example, if we are able to showcase that 32% of these suburban train travellers are searching on job sites in the evening time between 6pm - 10pm, then that becomes a quantifiable data point for the planners for Naukri, Indeed, Monster, Qikr etc.

Similarly, if we are able to showcase through data that 69% of rail commuters in a market own a smartphone with Xiaomi occupying the top spot with 21%, it provides a solid reason for many smartphone brands and importantly planners to actively engage with this audience set.

Looking ahead, would you suggest a highly decentralised approach to tendering of rail media, in small packages, especially since the large media packages that the Non-Fare Revenue Deptt had come up with did not find many takers?

The discussion should not be about decentralisation / centralisation. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. The most important discussion should be about viability and execution. The tenders have failed because of poor ground level understanding and execution of the tenders. Railway authorities need to realise that it is not just about tenders failing, but the massive loss in