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### India high on O&M Worldwide's radar screen: Shelly Lazarus

Indiantelevision.com Team

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MUMBAI: The "Mumbai version of O&M Brand forum" as O&M CEO India and South Asia John Goodman described it, which was held in Mumbai today, was high on attendance from the clients' side. From Hindustan Lever Limited (HLL) to Star India to Hutch to Pidilite, they were all there.

Some of the names to reckon with were Hutch India MD Asim Ghosh, Pidilite Industries Ltd CEO (construction chemical/paints) Sanjay Bahadur and senior vice president sales and marketing BO Mehta and HLL executive director (new ventures and marketing services) Dalip Sehgal.

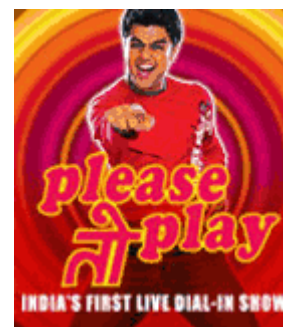
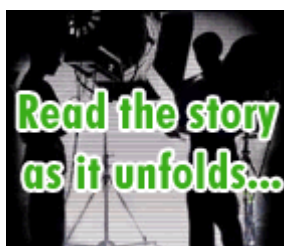
We'll tell you first.



The speakers - O&M Worldwide chairman and CEO Shelly Lazarus, Star India CEO Peter Mukerjee, Indian School of Business (ISB) and Wharton School professor of marketing strategy Dr Xavier Dreze and O&M India executive chairman and national creative director Piyush Pandey - threw light on the "fine art of building brands."

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The most charismatic speaker of the day, Lazarus, threw light on the global power of brands, while emphasising that India was very high on O&M Worldwide's radar screen as it had great potential waiting to be explored. "Today, the marketplace is so unforgiving that no one can pass second rate stuff to the consumers. And just upping the standards of the brands is not enough. One has to innovate to survive and thrive in the clutter," she warned.





Using wordplay, Lazarus said that a product is not always the same as a brand; as within every brand is a product but not every product is a brand. "Brands are created in the hearts and minds of the people. And apart from attracting them through innovations, it is very important to gain their trust as they don't buy innovative products from companies they don't trust," she stressed.

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Citing the example of US coffee chain Starbucks, which changed people's notion of coffee, Lazarus said that instead of stressing on media advertising, Starbucks concentrated their efforts on giving their consumers a great store experience and that's what has worked for them.

Dr. Dreze, who spoke on the role of brands in developing markets, began by saying that 79 per cent of the US population was over 18 years of age and identified with Nike's slogan "Just Do It". On the other hand, 47 per cent identified with the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as set forth in the Declaration of Independence! His point being that the youth is out there waiting to lap anything that comes their way and that; brand can benefit from this. Pointing out the difference between products and brands, Dr. Dreze said, "Products are tangible, can be copied, can be outdated where as brands are intangible, unique, potentially timeless and form basis of relationships."

Zeroing on India, Dr. Dreze said that Indians were changing from being purchasers to consumers. Referring to psychologist Abraham Maslow's theory of hierarchy of human needs, he said that as the needs of the consumers evolve, so does their requirements from brands.

Mukerjea went the whole nine yards on how brand "Star" had evolved from the time it was launched in 1991. Picking up from Dr. Dreze's point on how the number of young people ousts the number of old, Mukerjea said, "India has evolved from being an ancient civilization to a young country where there are 56 per cent people where below 25 years of age. Almost 336 billion are below 15 years, 121 billion are between 15-20 years and 760 billion are below 70 years. The consumers today are moving from the 'saving now and buying later' mindset to 'buying now and paying later' mindset."

Star's brand philosophy was the 'e' (enhancement) factor, wherein they enhanced the channel's look and feel, moved from analog to digital, got superior and compelling content and held a strong grip on the

consumer's pulse. "Our aim was to create a strong brand equity and value to all our stakeholders - clients, employees, investors (Rupert Murdoch), business partners and cable affiliates," Mukerjea said.

Star stressed on localisation by enhancing the brand value and when BBC and MTV moved away from their platform, the media conglomerate went the whole hog in making Star News and Channel [V] more localized. The objective of the 'Next Wave' as Mukerjea described it as was to have a high presence in cable and satellite homes, which was 100 per cent owned by the terrestrial player Doordarshan. "Thinking big is very critical and hence we created a show (read *Kaun Banega Crorepati*) that would give us more ratings that an India Pakistan cricket match and would cut across all socio-economic groups.

The launch of Star News, Star Gold, Star Utsav, Star Vijay, Radio City and most recently Star One has been an effort by Star to make itself a multi-service and multi-platform brand. "If we launched Star One without the Star brand, it would mean that we are not extracting full value of our brand," stressed Mukerjea.

Gazing the crystal ball, Mukerjea said since India has multiple languages, in the coming years the next big thing will be regional channels and their steady rise, which would tap newer markets. Apart from that, broadband, wireless, DTH and international syndication would be the way forward.

Pandey, on the other hand, assembled a vintage collection of ads churned out by O&M based on different themes of love, humour, drama and music and how each struck a different chord with the consumer irrespective of what the brand's image was. Citing the oft repeated example of the Cadbury's worm controversy, Pandey said, "When you connect a brand to people's heart, you have a right to be forgiven. In three months, post the controversy, Cadbury's changed their packaging and in six months consumers forgave."

Indian School of Business deputy dean Ajit Rangnekar wrapped up the forum by saying that ISB was associated with it because the school was conceived by the industry and this was a way to give back something to it.

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