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## Aircel's Save the Tiger: shoe-horning conservation into mainstream biz

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The depleting numbers of India's national animal triggered the 'Save Our Tigers' initiative at telecom major Aircel, which decided to take up the cause of the big cats a time when only 1,411 tigers were left in the wild. The move helped the company not only connect with the masses, its target audience, but also generate funds for the cause and channelise them towards on-ground projects.

Anupam Vasudev, Chief Marketing Officer, Aircel, said the company has worked since 2008 on a sustained and long term strategy for the cause. "We followed a two pronged approach. First, we

had to create awareness and highlight the need for tiger conservation. Given the urgency of the matter, and the fact that tigers were on the brink of extinction, we needed to lend support to on-ground tiger conservation projects and cover as much ground as possible," he said.

Speaking to *BusinessLine* about how the company shoe-horned a conservation project into the mainstream business, Vasudev said, "We introduced a 360 degree communication around 'Just 1411' campaign. With key influencers supporting the cause, we were able to grab the attention of the masses."

Simultaneously, the company worked in close coordina-

tion with credible non-government organisations and Forest Departments, to support and run on-ground projects across Protected Areas in India. Over time, Vasudev said, the company was able to create nationwide awareness and ownership on the need to save the magnificent animal from extinction.

Incidentally, from a high of 72 tiger deaths in 2012, some 51 tiger deaths have been reported this year. The last tiger census in 2010 recorded 1,706 tigers in the country, with the number expected to grow in the next census.

### Social media

Being in the communication space, Aircel also felt it had an

opportunity to give voice to the cause of tiger protection. "Since Aircel is a telecom service provider and its key target audience is the youth, 'Save Our Tigers' was taken up as a cause, so that we could secure the environment for our future generation, the tiger being one of the key enablers for ensuring ecological balance," he said.

Stating that the youth of today are much more aware and passionate about causes related to the environment, Vasudev added that the young tend to act as key influencers in spreading the message of tiger conservation... through the digital media, blogs and social media platforms. The initiative has seen good trac-

tion on social media. Currently, Aircel has over 5 million fans for its 'Stripey the cub' (the mnemonic for Save Our Tigers) Facebook page, and 9,866 twitter followers. To engage with them on a regular basis, Aircel posts on tigers on an alternate day basis, with recent news on tiger conservation, facts on tigers, etc. Since January 1, 2014, the company has been able to reach out to 6,284,701 people through its Facebook page alone.

On ground, some of the focus areas that the company concentrated on included increased involvement of local communities, emphasising the need for political will, mitigation of man-animal conflict and tackling poaching.