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## Videos are the future of digital advertising and brand opportunities: Anupam Vasudev

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Anupam Vasudev, Chief Marketing Officer, Aircel Limited leads verticals such as sales management, product development, distribution channel management, marketing communications, pricing, market research and customer service. He has over 22 years of experience in marketing, communications and branding. Vasudev has worked with SC Johnson, Hindustan Lever and has successfully commercialised new products across 35 countries with a common marketing mix at SC Johnson, US. Prior to joining Aircel, Vasudev served as Executive Vice-president, Marketing & Communications of Star India, where he spearheaded the core marketing strategy and process. In addition to his marketing responsibilities, he also thrived while leading Licensing and Merchandising, Research, Communications and Events division.

In conversation with exchange4media, Vasudev spoke about the impact of growth in digital medium on telecom industry, mobile strategy, media mix and more...

### **Being a telecom player, how do you leverage the digital medium?**

Aircel was quick to realise that the telecom industry would always go hand-in-hand with mobile technology and mobile internet. The idea was to first create a market by creating innovative products like Pocket Internet and then offer our best services and communications to the online audience.

Given the fact that India's demographic curve is leaning heavily towards the younger generation, it has become imperative for brands to have a strong social media engagement strategy in place as this is where the Generation Y likes to spend most of its time. Consider this, according to industry reports, 75 per cent of India's online audience is under 35 years with 25 per cent of the time spent on social networking.

As a young telecom company with a focus on data and youth, Aircel has always believed that Digital is the way forward in establishing a deeper connect with its customers. We have integrated social media platforms into the brand's overall marketing strategy with an aim to create a bond with our key target segment- youth. Realising the importance of reaching out to the youth through social media, Aircel is, in fact, concentrating on extensive online campaigns, where social media plays a pivotal role. Our exclusive social media campaigns such as 'Dad I am in Ad,' 'The mouse that saved the tiger' have been extremely well received. Aircel also launched the 'Recharge Store' on Facebook last year which allows Aircel prepaid customers to recharge their number on the Facebook fan page itself. We have also particularly made social media a common thread across all aspects of business - be it listening to customers, customer service, marketing or product innovation.

We are focusing on delighting the youth, driving conversations around Aircel, and effectively tracking consumers' needs and feedback. We believe that digital media will only complement our traditional media presence and enhance our reach to our target segment.

**Which medium gets the largest share of your marketing spends and how much have you been spending on digital?**

Since we target the youth, our share of marketing budget has been growing year on year on social media platforms, mobile ad space and so on. At Aircel, we take this medium very seriously. Though in absolute terms, TV as a medium takes the lead due to higher reach and addressability, digital plays a key role in enhancing the overall experience of a brand.

**How has the growth in digital space impacted the telecom industry?**

With the dramatic increase in the number of smartphone users, more and more eyeballs are now leaving the TV sets, and seeking entertainment on digital. For telecom players, the path of digital helps create an extremely meaningful connection with its target audience. The digital platform has helped the industry engage with and delight customers like never before. With daily interactions on social media or via our digital campaigns, we are able to gain insights that help us understand youth better, which ultimately translates into relevant and smarter offerings.

**How does apt digital marketing help in mainstream campaigns?**

While mainstream campaigns help in brand awareness at a large scale, smart digital marketing draws the potential customers nearer to the purchase counter. Apt digital marketing helps convert the emotional connect created via TV, print, etc. into conversations, long-term relationships, and finally into sales.

### **How has advertising on digital helped the brand?**

A brand must undergo a metamorphosis with time. Until the age of digital, the changes used to happen only after a sales review. Today, Aircel has evolved, thanks to interactions with customers, every day.

People nowadays share their habits, their inner most emotions, interest points, and a lot more. All this helps brands like ours, to understand the customers better, get a deeper insight into their lives and needs, and create communications that make a long-term connect.

Our digital media strategy is well aligned with our marketing objectives. Going forward, we see ourselves keeping up with the latest trends and opportunities and adapting to engage with our customers effectively.

### **Please share one of your most impactful digital campaigns.**

For the IPL season last year, we launched a bloggers contest – Aircel All Access. We created content on IPL 2013 and gave people a chance to be the official blogger for Chennai Super Kings, travel with them, get up close and personal and finally write about the experiences in a real time basis. The response to Aircel All Access was heartening and we were able to garner a high PTA (People Talking About) score of 9.5 along with 16k+ twitter mentions.

This year too, we launched the Aircel High Flyer campaign for IPL season 2014. The campaigns revolved around giving our fans the chance to realise their dreams - fly with the team and win a lot of CSK merchandise. This year, besides the one major campaign, we also focused on small contests around almost all matches that were played by the Chennai Super Kings.

### **Tell us of some of the interesting ways you are using social media.**

We've used social media as a medium that goes beyond information about telecom. We see it as infotainment. For this, we have created many conversation points on Facebook, such as #IWikiWhen, Techie Tuesdays, Friday Film Check-In, and more.

For Aircel, it will be right to say that social media is our lens into the business and relationships that are created between brands and customers. We believe that it is important for Social media to be unlocked across the organisation and not aligned to just one department or function. Aircel currently has more than eight million Facebook fans and more than forty thousand followers on twitter and we definitely plan to further spread our wings across all major social media platforms and strengthen our brand's presence.

**A lot has been spoken about the importance of videos in digital advertising. Do you think this is where the new opportunity lies?**

Definitely; there are no two ways about the fact that videos are the future in digital advertising. It is essential to understand that people have shifted screens and have moved from TV to internet on mobile phones for customised and abundant entertainment. In fact, videos have helped people transcend the language barriers. This is where the opportunity lies as brands find a window of creating the entertainment enjoyed on digital, and pushing our products to them. There are many ways to engage the viewers, but none better than videos.

**Where does mobile figure in your digital strategy?**

Mobile is indeed an integral part of Aircel's overall digital strategy. The potential that this medium holds is immense. Moreover, these days a mobile is the first screen for youth and their first experience of internet is on a hand-held device. Right from apps to WAP site, the idea of being present wherever a potential customer is present, is being tackled strategically by the brand. We are also into mobile advertising and have been steadily increasing our focus on this space. We were one of the first telecom players in India to launch app store called 'Pocket Apps' and since then we have been expanding our portfolio. We offer a range of apps to our customers from mobile recharge app- 'Pocket Payment', mobile TV app- 'Popkorn TV', to offering the regular apps for games, utilities etc.